

Three Decades of Peace Education  
in the Philippines:  
*Stories of Hope and Challenges*



Editors:

• Toh Swee-Hin (S.H Toh) • Virginia Cawagas • Jasmin Nario Galace

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*Three Decades of Peace Education in the  
Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges*

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# **Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges**

## **Editors:**

Toh Swee-Hin • Virginia Cawagas • Jasmin N. Galace

**Assistant Editor:** Anna Kristina M. Dinglasan

## **Publishers:**

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**&**

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## PREFACE

Three decades ago, in February 1986, the historic and inspirational people-power revolution in the Philippines ended an era of dictatorial and repressive rule. For the Filipino people, it also ushered in an opportunity to rebuild a society based on principles and processes of democratic participation, human rights and social justice. At the grassroots, many civil society movements, NGOs and individuals expanded their work and advocacy in peacebuilding, while a new Constitution was proclaimed that enshrined fundamental freedoms and the foundations of a just and humane society. It was in this renewed democratic post-EDSA space that the field of peace education began to take root, initially within the Mindanao context where armed conflicts arising from movements for Moro self-determination and the CPP-NPA-NDF revolutionary struggle were still unresolved. Peace education programs also began to develop in schools, colleges and universities through nonformal and community programs in other islands and regions. Through the advocacy of the Peace Education Network (PEN), peace education centers and programs, nongovernment organizations and with support from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), one significant milestone was attained in 2006 with the signing of E.O. 570: Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education by then Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Among educators seeking to build a culture of peace, there is a consensus that transformative processes of educating are both long-term and lifelong. After three decades since the organized emergence of peace education in the Philippines, it was timely to engage in a retrospective clarification of the state of the field. On June 27 and 28, 2016, more than 50 educators from diverse formal institutions, NGOs and other civil society organizations gathered at Miriam College to share stories of hope and challenges of their initial and continuing efforts to promote peace education. Co-organized by the Center for Peace Education of Miriam College and the UN-mandated

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University for Peace in Costa Rica, the Forum was envisioned as a space to be inspired by, as well as to learn lessons from initiatives and programs in Philippine peace education.

It was a meaningful and fruitful gathering of educators in all levels and forms of education from formal basic and higher institutions to non-formal and community programs. While almost all of the participants are Filipinos by nationality, there were also a few whose roots were in other societies but who have been deeply involved in the Philippines journey in peace education. Regrettably, it was not feasible for all individuals or institutions who have played a significant role and continue to contribute to peace education to directly participate in the Forum, such as Notre Dame University, Balay Mindanaw Foundation, the Schools for Peace initiative, the Mindanao Peace-building Institute and several others. However, within the stories presented, their role were often duly noted although the Forum cannot claim to provide a comprehensive narrative.

During the Forum, there were joyful reunions of many educators who collaborated in those early years of peace education formation and have remained committed to the vision, principles and goals that moved them to nurture the seedlings of which many have grown into successive generations of trees, flowers and fruits. Yet the stories did not only narrate hopeful signs of accomplishments and progress, they also understandably revealed some significant challenges and barriers that need to be constructively faced and overcome.

The conference would not have been possible without the support, co-operation and help of numerous people and institutions. To the leaders and staff of Miriam College's Center for Peace Education (CPE) including Dr. Loreta Castro, founding Director of CPE and former President of Miriam College, and Mirma Mae Tica, we express our gratitude for their energies and commitment in hosting the conference at relatively short notice. We thank Dr. Rosario Oreta Lapus, President of Miriam College, for her warm welcome to the delegates, and Dr. Francisco Rojas Aravena, Rector of the University for Peace in Costa Rica for co-sponsoring the Forum with Miriam College Peace Education Center. To the World Council of Curriculum & Instruction (WCCI)-Philippine Chapter, we extend our appreciation for their

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willingness to co-publish this book.

We are indebted also to Anna Dinglasan and Peter I. Galace for kindly volunteering their precious time and energy in editing and formatting this publication, and to Joshua Cawagas for creating the book cover design.

We are grateful to the five students in the Asian Leadership Programme of UPEACE (Abi Limpin, Bunthea Ly, Mabel Carumba, Chiho Kozaki, and Maya Mizuno) for their assistance in on-site registration, other Conference Secretariat duties and warm-up activities.

Last but not least, we sincerely thank the many dedicated peace educators who came from all over the Philippines and other writers who were not able to attend the Forum, for their contribution to this book of inspirational stories of hope and challenges in educating for a culture of peace in the Philippines.

**Toh Swee-Hin (S.H.Toh), Virginia Cawagas & Jasmin Nario-Galace**



# INTRODUCTION

*by Toh Swee-Hin (S.H.Toh)*

A Forum focusing on the theme “Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges” was attended by over 50 educators gathered at Miriam College, Metro Manila, in June 2016. The invitation to peace educators to reflect on their visions, goals and programs or activities as far back as before the EDSA revolution also included an opportunity for their stories to be featured in this book. However, due to personal and/or institutional circumstances, a number of story-tellers could not submit their reflections in time for the publication of this book. The editors and co-organizers of the Forum were able to gather 27 stories for sharing with the wider community of peace educators in the Philippines as well as globally.

The stories in this book are compiled into four sections. The first section reflecting the theme, “*Visions Crystallized, Seeds Planted*” recount efforts and initiatives of peace educators in the early 1980s or even earlier. The second section is a collection of several stories of “*Growing Seeds in the Education System*” in basic schools and higher education institutions. The third group of story tellers narrated their experiences and lessons in “*Nurturing Peace Education: Civil Society Cultivators*.” The fourth and concluding section features two stories exploring the theme “*Moving Ahead, Widening the Circle*.” The sections should not be viewed however as isolated compartments or segments in the journey of peace educators. Several stories overlap between the categories, such those of CSOs or NGOs, which engage with youth in schools or universities; schools whose teachers gain ideas and skills through non-formal workshops; and higher education programs or initiatives which often outreached to non-formal education activities (e.g, in-service teacher professional development; projects for communities, civil servants, military

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or police personnel). Some stories also include regional, international or global dimensions, such as the participation of non-Filipino peace educators, foreign NGOs and regional, international or intergovernmental agencies, networks or professional associations.

A number of story tellers reminded the Forum participants that their journey in peace education began well before 1986, including engaging in struggles against martial law, in campaigns for human rights and social justice or just development and in the people power movement that crystallized during the EDSA revolution. Others had been moved by stories told by their parents and other elders of such struggles. In listening to the 33 stories presented at the Forum, understandably no two stories can be the same, given the unique personal and social circumstances of the story tellers, as well as the complex histories, dynamics and societal contexts of each institution, organization or community. However, despite such uniqueness, it is possible to discern several common and key themes or dimensions from which lessons can be drawn. Two caveats are also needed here: first, over the span of three decades, it is not surprising that one or more programs or projects may no longer be active or have opted to change their focus (e.g., from peace education to peace studies and peacebuilding as in the Notre Dame University (NDU) case; and secondly that reference is also made to stories that were told during the Forum but have not been submitted for publication in this book.

**Promoting integration or infusion:** A number of higher education institutions such as NDU, Miriam College, Far Eastern University, Philippine Normal University and Holy Angel University have been able to introduce specific courses in peace education or peace and conflict studies in their curricula, including a graduate program in peace education that was pioneered at NDU. However, the favored curriculum strategy in all levels of formal education, from elementary (e.g., Ateneo, Miriam, Don Bosco), high school to higher institutions, is clearly the integration or infusion approach. The stories affirm the feasibility and value of integrating peace-oriented perspectives and pedagogies in diverse curricula or learning areas, from Social Studies, Civics and Culture, Geography and International Studies to History, Religion, Values Education, Health, Philosophy, Political Science and Environmental Studies. Furthermore, integration of peace education

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges goes beyond the formal subject or learning area. Rather, the story tellers also emphasized the vital role played in extra- or co-curricular programs and activities, such as student clubs (e.g., UNESCO clubs and ASPNet [Associated Schools Project Network schools] as later mentioned), celebration of UN Days (e.g., International Day of Peace, Human Rights Day, International Women's Day, etc.) and school twinning projects linking Manila with Mindanao students (e.g., Miriam College). A whole school approach is also evident in a number of stories, whereby the school or university integrates a culture of peace within daily life in the institution (e.g., Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Miriam College, Ateneo de Manila Grade School) and also engages actively with the wider community or society (e.g., Burying War Toys campaign appeals for peace talks and peace agreements, green school and other environmental care projects, conflict resolution and mediation programs, anti-bullying programs, etc.).

**Teacher formation:** No educational system or curriculum, no matter how extensively learning technologies including ICT are used, can function effectively without the presence of teachers who are knowledgeable, pedagogically creative and committed to key values and principles embedded in the vision of the system or institution. Likewise, as many stories in this Forum emphasized, educational formation of teachers is one of the key foundations for the progress of peace education programs in the Philippines. While in the Forum, there is no exemplar of a formal teacher education program in which peace education has been systematically mainstreamed, some programs (e.g., PNU, Miriam College, NDU, Holy Angel University, Davao Central College) have oriented pre-service student teachers or other undergraduates to one or more courses related to peace education. What the stories reflected has been the important work of non-formal in-service professional development of teachers through either the role of in-house or external Peace Education Centers or programs, Government departments and national educators networks (e.g., Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines) in offering training workshops. Teaching-learning modules as well as textbooks integrating peace perspectives have helped to encourage and facilitate teacher formation for implementing peace education. Teachers have also been engaged in mapping their curricula to find entry points for integrating a culture of peace.

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**Children and Youth:** In the world of transformative education for a culture of peace worldwide, it is now acknowledged that children and youth need to be empowered and given opportunities to actively participate in personal and social action in peacebuilding as individuals and as socially engaged citizens. A number of stories demonstrate creative and successful exemplars of initiatives and projects that reach children and youth directly, such as the Museo Pambata's programs to raise children's awareness of their rights, climate change and global peace; the GZO Peace institute's GenPeace program to educate youth to be active in promoting the peace processes, in fostering respect and understanding across Christians, Muslims and Indigenous Peoples, and linking human rights to a culture of peace; the "Teach Peace, Build Peace Movement" catalyzing youth and children via games, comics, sports, talks, art, and ecological projects; Miriam College Pax Christi's activities for students to campaign against nuclear weapons and the arms trade, and express solidarity for Bangsamoros and the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law; Xavier University's interfaith youth camp; and the work of the Zamboanga Peace Advocates in promoting a Youth Solidarity for Peace network active with adults in the annual Mindanao Week for Peace celebration.

**Intercultural Understanding, Interfaith Dialogue and Gender Equality:** A majority of stories highlighted principles and practices of intercultural understanding, interfaith dialogue and gender equality as vital dimensions of peace education. Already mentioned are programs in formal educational institutions and children or youth-oriented programs to raise deeper understanding and respect among the "tri-peoples" of Mindanao and more generally among all ethnic and indigenous groups within a society with such great cultural diversity. Likewise, a number of NGOs and CSOs have linked education for building peace across or within cultures, including the Mindanao People Peace Movement's project to build community peace plans in response to the painful effects of "all out war" policies against Moro splinter insurgent groups; the Interfaith Center for Conciliation & Nonviolence's efforts to work with Indigenous Cordillerean peoples promote conflict resolution with CAFGUs (Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit) and promote healing and reconciliation in Mindanao after the Mamasapano clash and massacre; and a peace educator's work at St. Paul's University and the Asian Social Institute which emphasized the need to integrate indigenous



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knowledge and spirituality in peace education.

In addition, a number of NGOs and CSOs presented stories of how interfaith or interreligious dialogue can and have contributed to peace education and peacebuilding to bridge historical and existing conflicts, distrust and enmity between major faiths in the Philippines. These include the Sililah Dialogue Movement which originated in Zamboanga City and has steadily expanded its educational and social programs to foster active harmony for peace and justice among Christians and Muslims as well as indigenous peoples. The Peacemaker's Circle began as a part of the global United Religions Initiative (URI) to promote dialogue among diverse faiths in Manila that resulted in social action for mutual respect of freedoms and rights to practice their beliefs. In Mindanao, the pioneering and broader role of the Bishops-Ulama Conference in promoting interfaith dialogue for peace also deserves mention as another enabling catalyst for peace education.

In the pioneering NDU program, educating for intercultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity was a core component to remind peace educators of the need to overcome intolerances, racism and xenophobia, while also addressing the links between structural violence and cultural self-determination of especially indigenous peoples affected by mining and other facets of a dominant paradigm of globalization from above. The Ateneo de Zamboanga University story noted the establishment of an Institute for Intercultural Understanding in addition to a Peace Institute.

Within the Forum, there was also a constant reminder of the principle and goal of gender equality within all cultures. Educators from the formal educational institutions and non-formal sectors affirmed this goal, while one NGO in particular, the GZO Peace Institute, firmly reminded participants that women must not be excluded from peacebuilding and peace processes and hence peace education needs to fully integrate themes of gender equality and justice. Miriam College's Center for Peace Education also served as the secretariat for the Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE Act 1325) network to push forward the agenda on women, peace and security, notably to help monitor and implement the Philippine National Action Plan (P-NAP) on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

**Government Participation:** Several stories in the Forum related

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initiatives, projects or programs in which Philippine Government agencies and units directly promoted peace education within their policies and strategies or as co-sponsors or co-organizers of activities within formal and non-formal institutions or organizations. In this regard, a story presented (but not written as a chapter in this book) affirms the catalytic role of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) going back to the post-EDSA period. OPAPP co-sponsored workshops, seminars and conferences were very helpful in launching the initial peace education program of NDU and other Mindanao universities or NGOs and CSOs. OPAPP continued to cooperate with partners in Government, especially the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education and international partners (e.g., UNICEF, UNDP) to promote peace education in schools and universities. In 2006, the PEN (Peace Education Network) supported OPAPP's initiative in gaining the approval of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to issue *E.O. 570: Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education*, that was then followed up with the *Implementing Rules* in 2008. Regrettably, a policy decision was made within OPAPP to discontinue its Peace Education unit. Some stories also revealed efforts for peace education in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, including early workshops for Mindanao soldiers through NDU and later by other universities or NGOs such as Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. and the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. Another AFP-related initiative recently emerged within the Philippine Military Academy enabling a peace education workshop in cooperation with the University for Peace for over 80 junior officers in 2014. Some local Governments have also been involved through non-formal education activities (e.g., ARMM, other Mindanao provinces, Naguilian in La Union; child protection policies in Davao City barangays). In Mindanao, the Davao Central College story also mentioned an initiative to integrate peace education in police personnel training.

**Engagement with Peace Processes:** Several story tellers spoke of the vital importance of engagement with the ongoing and protracted peace processes in the Philippines. Here, OPAPP's story is of course expected, being the lead Government agency to facilitate peace talks between government and various groups in conflict with the state. However, Forum participants agreed on the need for concerned citizens, institutions, organizations and

movements to be accountable and responsible in actively advocating for the lasting resolution and transformation of the conflicts. NDU, apart from its formal and non-formal peace education programs, also contributed to mediating peace talks between the Government and the Moro liberation fronts (MNLF, MILF). Konsult Mindanao, a Catholic church sponsored project, and NGOs or CSOs such as GZO Peace Institute, Interfaith Center for a Culture of Nonviolence (ICCN), Miriam's Center for Peace Education, Peace Advocates of Zamboanga (PAZ), Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM), and Pax Christi have continually educated citizens and lobbied Government and non-state groups on the need to make progress on the peace process. Students and educators of several universities or colleges and even schools mentioned in the stories have organized media campaigns, rallies, petitions and public for the same goal.

**Regional, International and Inter-Governmental Involvement:** As the forum proceeded, it was clear that over the past three decades, numerous external agencies, NGOs, professional networks and individual educators have also been involved as partners or co-sponsors in promoting peace education in the Philippines. One Australian/Canadian peace educator actively cooperated with Filipino colleagues in developing the initial peace education program at NDU and other campuses in Mindanao and in other regions. The Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute was co-sponsored by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to create a regional training institute whose annual program include a peace education course. UNICEF and UNDP (via the ACT for Peace program) have also been active partners, while the Forum ZFD has co-organized teacher education training and curriculum module writing workshops in Mindanao. The International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) also partnered with Ateneo de Zamboanga University in a community-based peace education institute to share insights of Mindanaon educators with voices from Moro, Christian and indigenous peoples. The Canadian-initiated Philippine Development Assistance Program (PDAP) engaged with the CIDA-funded Local Government Support program of Mindanao provinces to promote peace education and peacebuilding programs relevant to local governance.

The stories of four regional or international professional networks also demonstrate the interconnectedness of peace education in the Philippines

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with educators and programs beyond the national boundaries. Hence AP-NIEVE (Asia-Pacific Network of International Education & Values Education) facilitated the sharing of Filipino peace educators with other Asia-Pacific peers in international education and values education, which include key peace themes and perspectives. A network of formal and nonformal educators worldwide, the World Council of Curriculum & Instruction (WCCI) has a very active Philippine chapter that has even before EDSA promoted diverse dimensions of peace education and related fields of values education, global education, multicultural education and education for sustainability. Furthermore, through its founding director, Loretta Castro, the Center for Peace Education, Miriam College, has engaged actively with the Global Campaign for Peace Education, which was established at the Hague Appeal for Peace in 1999 as a network of institutions and individual educators to foster a culture of peace in communities around the world.

The Philippine Council for Peace and Global Education (PCPGE) was initiated in 1979 by like-minded school heads after a seminar with Gerald and Patricia Mische, founders of Global Education Associates. The founding president was Dr. Lourdes Quisumbing and the other PCPGE leaders then included Br. Rolando Dizon, FSC, Sr. Luz Emmanuel Soriano, RA, and Fr. Ernesto Javier, SJ. The PCPGE sought to bring together schools and encourage them to promote human, future-oriented and world-order values of peace, economic equity, social justice and ecological integrity. In its seminars with educators, the PCPGE also emphasized not only a local perspective but also a global perspective and has used a well-known motto, "Think globally, act locally." Its leadership had a prominent role in the EDSA people power revolt of 1986 and after its founding president assumed the position of Education Secretary, a values education thrust was carried out by the Education department.

Certainly, UNESCO as one of the United Nations' lead agency for peace education has cooperated closely with Filipino educators and institutions, including the National Commission for UNESCO and the UNESCO ASPNet or Associated Schools Project Network, whose story in the Forum recounts many exemplars of students and teachers in schools or universities engaging in activities focusing on peace and related themes of human rights, education for sustainable development, intercultural learning and

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world concerns and the role of the United Nations. As one story mentioned, UNESCO partnered with OPAPP in holding the International Culture of Peace Forum in Manila in 1994 in which peace education was one of the key themes drawing on formal and non-formal initiatives in the Philippines and globally. It was also emphasized by a number of story tellers that Philippine-initiated peace education has flowed to many other regions and countries for fruitful and relevant sharing and learning, including the annual teacher training and other programs of the Asia Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under UNESCO auspices based in South Korea and programs of various universities in ASEAN nations, Australia, Canada, South Pacific islands, USA, Africa, the United Nations-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica and the Global Campaign for Peace Education that now links educators for a culture of peace worldwide. In sum, since its post-EDSA emergence, peace education in the Philippines has gradually attained a global visibility, respect and recognition.

**Nurturing Spirituality and Inner Peace:** Embedded in various stories as well as the dialogues among Forum participants, another key theme that significantly distinguishes Philippine peace education from other national programs is the vital need for nurturing spirituality and inner peace. In part, this emphasis draws inspiration from the long legacy of a strong cultural belief in religion, faith or other spirituality traditions. Even before EDSA people power, values education in particular has included perspectives affirming the role of spirituality and inner peace in daily living and social being. As the NDU story narrated, the program placed education for inner peace in a holistic circle with other themes such as dismantling a culture of war, living with justice and compassion, promoting human rights and responsibilities, building intercultural respect and solidarity and living in harmony with the earth. However, as the NDU framework and those of many other institutions affirm, it is vital that while inner peace and spirituality is indispensable, it needs to be integrally linked with social peacebuilding. In this regard, the GZO Peace Institute's story also urgently reminds all peace educators to ensure that inner peace is nurtured to care for and sustain the person or self of the peacebuilder whose work is often affected by stress and trauma.

In addition to the lessons and insights reflected in the above themes and issues drawn from the stories, three further points can be highlighted. To

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begin with, it is clear that “peace” or “a culture of peace” in the Philippine peace education context is necessarily a multi-dimensional concept. No longer just the popular notion of peace as the ‘absence of war or direct violence,” peace is viewed as overcoming diverse and multiple roots causes of conflicts and all forms and levels of violence, including wars, armed conflicts, injustices or structural violence, human rights violations, unsustainable futures, cultural discrimination and a lack of inner peace. Several universities and NGOs including Miriam College’s CPE, FEU’s Palanca Foundation, Holy Angel University, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Silsilah Dialogue Movement and Balay Mindanaw Inc. have framed their peace education programs in a paradigm that holistically conceptualizes “peace” or “a culture of peace” in terms of all forms and levels of violence and conflict. Some stories do reflect instances or exemplars of these multiple root causes of peacelessness, though perhaps not always in a systematic way. In this regard, many of the stories shared in the Forum indicate less emphasis on the theme of structural violence which is recounted in the MPPN’s story on marginalized fisherfolk challenging powerful interests and groups monopolizing marine resources and in NDU’s program linking studies on global/local unjust development with campaigns for the rights of exploited farmers and indigenous peoples. However, hopefully, as the stories continue to unfold, the participants, in their personal, institutional or organizational contexts, will be mindful and open to where and why there may be less emphasis on particular themes and their interrelationships with other themes. A fully holistic framework will ensure peacefulness in all parts, dimensions and members of the circle that embraces humanity and the natural environment.

Secondly, the stories and accompanying dialogue invariably stress the indispensability of transformative or critical pedagogical processes in educating for peace, namely avoiding banking and hierarchical relationship, as Paulo Freire eloquently critiqued, and instead, facilitating critical analysis, and dialogical, participatory, creative and empowering approaches. Although less systematically raised in the Forum, it in turn means that assessment in peace education should also be consistent with such pedagogical principles, leading to a shift from quantitative narrow cognitive criteria and methods to qualitative, more holistic and problem posing designs which integrate knowledge, analysis, psycho-emotional commitment and transformative personal

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges and social action. Most importantly, the Forum participants, through their stories, and the dialogues that followed, confirmed that peace pedagogies need to ensure that critical understanding is translated by self-empowered learners into personal and social action for transformation.

Thirdly, although peace education in the Philippines has attained more focus than in other societies, it is helpful for peace educators to recognize the complementarities and synergies of peace education with various other fields of transformative education, rather than assume a competitive or contradictory posture. If institutions, organizations or agencies may be promoting for example, disarmament education, values education, global education, intercultural education, human rights education, development education, education for sustainable development and more recently the UNESCO and UN initiative referred to as global citizenship education, a constructive dialogue can reveal how peace education and these other fields overlap in vision, concepts, goals and pedagogical practices. In other words, the notion of ‘peace education by other names’ becomes a pathway to mutual enrichment and strengthening. Indeed, if all fields seek to fulfill the principle of holism, may we, regardless of preferred identity, not be journeying towards the same destination?

Finally, during the last session of the Forum, participants raised the key question of sustainability. How can peace education initiatives be sustainable over time? Certainly there are a number of not surprising barriers to overcome, such as limitations in resources (personnel, learning materials); changes in institutional or organizational leadership which can diminish support for existing programs; ongoing armed conflicts, human rights violations and structural violence; and maintaining levels of energies and commitment or as one participant stated, “how to keep the fire burning?” It may be a courageous conclusion of positive affirmation the very fact that some three decades after EDSA and the emergence of peace education, over 50 educators from all over the country willingly gathered in this Forum to share stories of hope and challenges and a clear and hopeful sign that the “fire is still burning”! Even as they self-critically and realistically acknowledge barriers and challenges, the stories themselves speak of accomplishments and fulfilment of goals and purposes. Indeed, as the Forum ended, participants noted that in a few days’ time (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016), a new President of the Phil-

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ippines would be inaugurated, heralding an era of political uncertainty and significance if President Rodrigo Duterte's election campaign promises are indeed implemented.

Today, as this Introduction is being completed, some ten months of the Duterte Government's term have passed. Clearly, there are many outcomes that have raised political and social controversies and indeed even more challenges for peace education, including the relentless "war on drugs" campaign resulting in thousands of deaths (e.g., the "EJKs" or extra-judicial killings which have raised some local and increasing international concern), the proposed restoration of the death penalty, revival of the Reserve Officers' Training Corp program in senior high school, an increased public expression of gender insensitivity and sexism even by politicians and Government leaders of the highest level and the imposition of martial law over the whole island of Mindanao in response to the outbreak of armed conflict in one area (Marawi City), a decision which has raised considerable worries about its possible extension to the entire nation as happened under President Marcos. However, there has also been assertive actions taken by the Government to actively pursue the peace processes despite continually facing many obstacles and to regulate or even ban ecologically destructive and unsustainable mining operations. Hopefully, the renewing of energies and spirit among so many peace educators at this Forum will inspire us to face and constructively transcend these new challenges and continuing "older" barriers, as well as to synergize with the fresh opportunities for peacebuilding and overcoming structural violence. Amidst the many mountains and hills throughout the Philippines, it is possible to see plants struggling and succeeding to grow out from the cracks of rocky ledges and cliffs. Perhaps this can be a meaningful metaphor for the seeding, nurturing and growing of peace education in the Philippines for decades to come.●



*Section I*

*VISIONS CRYSTALLIZED,  
SEEDS PLANTED*



# *Journeying in Solidarity: Educating for a Culture of Peace from Mindanao to Manila and Beyond*

*by Toh Swee-Hin (S.H.Toh)\**

## **Introduction**

**T**he National Forum on “Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hopes and Challenges” held at Miriam College in June 2016, provided a much welcomed and heartfelt opportunity to share some memories and reflections on my engagement with the common vision, mission and goals that have brought so many educators to this gathering, namely the hopes and challenges of educating for a culture of peace in the Philippines.

In the span of average human lives, three decades constitute a fairly long time. However, my memories of working with so many Filipino friends towards the building of a more peaceful Philippines through education and advocacy continue to be fresh and vivid, as though it was only yesterday when I first stepped foot in Mindanao in late 1986, some months after the EDSA people power revolution. I recall the regular military checkpoints between the airport and the campus of Notre Dame University (NDU) in Cotabato City; and the vast fields of pineapples and banana plantations run by the large agribusiness corporations. I also remember the narrow, steep and winding road, then still under construction, that one had to take to

hike up the sacred Mt. Apo to witness the geothermal wells being built; and conversations with Lumad elders and their communities about challenging this project on their ancestral lands. I remember the marginalized farmers and fisherfolk struggling to survive while precious resources continue to be exploited and extracted from Mindanao for the benefit of elites and the national treasury; the campuses of NDU, Ateneo Universities, WMSU and other schools across Mindanao. I also have memories of the gentle T'bolis and other indigenous peoples and the Bangsamoro and descendants of settlers from other islands who make up the "tri peoples" of Mindanao, a land of "unkept promises;" and the educators, students, NGO and CSO workers, civil servants and soldiers who participated in exploring the vision, principles and goals of peace education, and in some cases, taking action towards implementing peace education in their personal, institutional and social contexts. However, it is also important to acknowledge that peace education in the Philippines did not commence only in 1986. For example, Professor Nagasura Madale had earlier initiated peace studies at MSU in Marawi City.

I also need to gratefully acknowledge a "prequel" inspiration I had gained from the story of Fr. Brian Gore, one of the two Columban priests whose voices and action for justice and human rights in Negros during the Marcos dictatorship led to their detention and expulsion from the Philippines. After returning home, Fr. Gore helped to awaken the consciousness of concerned Australians about the repression under martial law and in my case, strongly encouraged me to go to the Philippines and to contribute an educational role to the ongoing struggles for democracy and human rights. When I arrived on my first visit, it soon became clear that EDSA had provided for the emergence of a democratic space that enabled the wider rooting and flowering of peace education. Today, there is certainly a growth of voices in Philippine society that is querying the vision and outcomes of EDSA. However, from a peace education perspective, I feel it is vital to continue to affirm that EDSA yielded a facilitative context while of course it is also necessary to critically analyze the substance of post-EDSA policies in all spheres of life (political, economic, social, cultural) that created continuing or new obstacles to building a holistic culture of peace.

Though three decades have passed since 1986, when my journey in peace education or educating for a culture of peace in the Philippines

“commenced,” my commitment has not ceased. Furthermore, the path has not been linear or straight from the south to the north of the country. The journey has also entailed a global context. As an “outsider,” I have been able, where relevant, to bring ideas and experiences gained from both global North and South contexts, including North America, especially Canada; Oceania, notably Australia; Africa and the Caribbean; then later from North Asia, especially South Korea, and most recently Central America at the UN mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. Most importantly, my contributions have led to valuable and empowering insights and perspectives to peace education work in other countries and regions. In sum, this story of my Philippine journey also connects with stories of other journeys in the wider world.

Three decades is not simply a quantitative counting of years of theory and practice. It means that Filipinos who were children or youth in 1986 are now adults in their 30s or 40s, while university students are well in to their late 40s or even 50s. If seeds of peace education planted in the post-EDSA period have been nurtured and matured into plants or trees with flowers or fruits that generate more seeds and further generations of life, then it’s possible to see in the stories of peace educators at the Forum hopeful signs of transformation from a culture of violence and conflicts to a culture of peace. But along these journeys, many barriers have also been encountered, posing challenges to be overcome in more years to come.

Another underpinning theme in my journey in Philippine peace education is without doubt solidarity. While recognizing that I am an “outsider,” I don’t always see myself as a “stranger” and nor do I see myself as an external “expert” to provide and supervise “solutions.” Rather, I have endeavored to be a co-traveler, sharing food and simple lodgings, working hard with others to build communities of mutual learning and action or praxis, and sharing risks. In addition, the journey framed was a long-term association, returning continually even some after periods of absences. Most importantly, I humbly acknowledge the crossing of paths with many other peace educators whose stories are found in this collection and to whom I will always be grateful: Jean Cawagas, Bing Durante, Joe Bulao, Ester Sevilla, Boots Cantalopez, Loreta Castro, Jasmin Nario-Galace, Fr. Sebastiano D’Ambra, Karen Tañada, Jo Perez, Marites Africa, Marco Gutang, Serafin Arviola and innumerable oth-

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ers for their collaboration, sharing, encouragement, support and inspiration.

## **Sowing Seeds in Mindanao**

It was at the launching of Xavier University's peace centers in Cagayan de Oro where I had an unanticipated opportunity to present a draft multi-dimensional framework of peace education that Jean Cawagas and I had designed. When Bishop Fernando Capalla affirmed its relevance, I recognized the vital importance of critically grounding any framework in local and national realities of conflicts and violence and prevailing or emerging strategies to address their root causes, and to articulate strategies of action to overcome them towards a culture of peace.

The framework is still based on six themes, or what are now often referred to as petals of a flower metaphor of peace education: (1) dismantling a culture of war (overcoming militarization, ceasing wars, resolving and transforming violent conflicts, addressing micro-levels of violence such as domestic violence, bullying and sports and symbolic violence in media; war toys etc.); (2) living with justice and compassion (eliminating structural violence, challenging dominant paradigms of unequal elite-and growth-centered "development" and "globalization" and shifting toward people-centered, just and sustainable development paradigms); (3) promoting human rights (preventing violations and upholding all forms of rights for all individuals and groups; human responsibilities); (4) building intercultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity ( intercultural, multicultural and interfaith understanding, dialogue and respect; overcoming discrimination, racism, xenophobia ); and (5) living in harmony with the Earth (preventing environmental destruction, overcoming the ecological crisis, sustainable living and futures). The sixth theme especially relevant to the Philippine context was also integrated in the framework, namely (6) cultivating or nurturing inner peace, since in Filipino cultures, peace also has a deep inner meaning that transcends and necessarily complements the "outer" manifestations of peaceful relationships.

Furthermore, a holistic framework for peace education needs also to be based on some key pedagogical principles. These included holism, dialogue, values formation, and critical empowerment. Holisms recognize all the interconnections and interdependencies of all the six themes and the role played by all forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal). Dialogue

rejects a banking model of education, and advocates, as the Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire cogently reminds us, a participatory and democratic process of education and learning drawing on the lived experiences and realities of learners and using a wide range of creative methods and tools. Values formation emphasizes the need to motivate learners to understand and practice the values of peacebuilding (e.g. justice, active nonviolence, compassion, respect, reconciliation, integrity, etc. Critical empowerment means that learning is not just abstract, cognitive and understanding; it needs to be translated into action for personal and social transformation.

Notre Dame University (NDU) in Cotabato City provided the first institutional opportunity to implement this holistic framework of peace education. With support of NDU administrators, notably Oblate priests Jose Ante, OMI and Alfonso Carino, OMI, who have both passed on, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), and the Australian Universities aid consortium, the first Philippine graduate programs in peace education commenced. Courses for the MA and Ed.D. degrees were designed and implemented in a blended model whereby I and other peace educators visited NDU for residential workshops followed by distance learning by the graduate students. This was a challenge especially since the students were themselves full-time faculty members responsible for several courses per semester. But despite these difficulties, a majority of enrollees were able to graduate and became instructors and supervisors for newer graduate students in the program. Later, a core undergraduate course in peace education was also set up for all Faculties as part of the challenge of NDU to transform its whole vision and mission as an Oblate institution. However, such curriculum integration was easier in some areas (Arts and Social Sciences and Nursing) than in other professional schools (e.g., Law and Engineering), which suggests the need for peace education programs to find creative and constructive ways to be infused in the formation of professionals who would later play influential roles in government and the private sector of Philippine society. Eventually, as its programs gained recognition, NDU was invited by CHED to serve as the lead institution to expand peace education in a network of other Mindanao universities and colleges (e.g., Ateneo universities, MSU, WMSU, Marist institutions).

As earlier noted, the principle of holism means that peace education is

integrated not only in formal educational programs or institutions. It also needs to be integrated in non-formal education. Hence, NDU established a Center for Peace Education which reached out, via workshops, seminars and/or curriculum development projects, to teachers and students in schools, civil servants, military, NGOs and CSOs and educational networks such as the Notre Dame Educational Association, a congregational and regional affiliate under the 1000-member Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). Directly or indirectly, the NDU program and the holistic framework of peace education also linked with several other peacebuilding initiatives such as the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, Silsilah Dialogue Movement, Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc, Local Government Support Program (Philippine Development Assistance Program – Canadian International Development Agency), United National ACT for Peace program (notably the Schools for Peace) and other externally funded NGO programs. The holistic framework of peace education was often adopted and/or adapted for local integration. In this regard, the source of the framework was not necessarily acknowledged but we do not view this as a problem except if it is not cited in research or publications (e.g., theses and books) as long as the framework is seen as relevant and helpful to building a culture of peace within communities and institutions.

One interesting aspect of my journey was, and still is, the challenge of building trust in engaging with various institutions, organizations or communities. For example, one university administrator asked if I was being influenced by the publication *"Philippine Society and Revolution"* written by the founder and leader of the Communist party of the Philippines, Jose Ma. Sison, under the pen name of *Amado Guerrero*. Later, in a workshop for soldiers, the colonel in command took me aside for a personal interview. Revealing that he had undergone training in Langley (USA), which is the headquarters for the CIA, he then asked me several questions which made me feel like it was a "security check" of my background. Even later, I learned that other key participants in the NDU peace education program may have also come under intelligence surveillance. This was not surprising, since peace education does raise critical questions and analysis of structural violence in which the economic and social structures of societies are based on injustices caused by the concentration of power in local national and international elites notably in TNCs, the World Bank and the IMF. It also questions the political



domination by powerful nation states such as the US, with its long-standing alliance and influence on Philippine politics and economic systems.

Many facets of such critical analysis are likewise articulated by the revolutionary “left” movements. However, peace education cannot be labelled as a Marxist or neo-Marxist ideology, and peace education advocates differ in terms of action, namely achieving transformation for justice via active nonviolent strategies rather than armed struggle. Nevertheless, where such struggles have already emerged, as in the Philippines, peace education works for a nonviolent and principled resolution based on justice, human rights, cultural diversity, inner peace and in the current context, sustainability. However, by advocating active nonviolence, peace educators can also sometimes be viewed by revolutionary armed movements as potential “agents” of state and external bodies, helping to “undermine” the strategy of “armed struggle.” Maintaining credibility and integrity in the midst of such contesting perspectives remains a challenge. It is so vital in peace education theory and practice to be open to critical engagement with all sectors, but at the same time taking care to avoid cooptation by any institution or organization.

On another hand, during the military workshops, questions were raised by soldier participants about “human rights,” which is understandably a “sensitive” issue. They argued that the military was unfairly criticized for human rights violations, when it is the other side (NPAs) who should be so charged. Our response as peace educators was to say that whoever commits human rights violations (whether NPAs or the AFP or PNP or any other agency or individual) should be held accountable. Another colonel said that peace education workshops should be given to the NPAs, why only to the military — to which we answered, yes, if it can be arranged for the facilitators to safely give a workshop in the mountains, we would be open to the suggestion provided we are not then later charged as “collaborators.” Moreover, such a workshop may not necessarily be amenable to the NPA-NDF.

A vital lesson from these experiences is, whatever the audience, there is a need to be honest and consistent in representing views on all peace issues. Peace education cannot be reduced to “diplomacy” serving the interest of a nation, group or party. Nor can it “dilute” its critical tone for fear of repression, although in terms of pedagogy, it is crucial to be sensitive to

the participants' context. So with soldiers, we usually began with the "inner peace" theme and more challenging issues (e.g. human rights, dismantling a culture of war) would be introduced later.

Another exemplar of building trust is related to the Moro peoples' response to the holistic framework. A strong argument by some Moro educators is that a peace education framework should be based on Islamic principles and beliefs in order to be relevant for their communities. Certainly, peace educators need to respect this perspective as sensitivity to cultural diversity and rights. Nevertheless, we feel a holistic principle also needs to be affirmed across cultures. For example, as a part of Moro self-determination (GPH-MILF, MNLF), should not Moro leaders and peoples also be concerned about the need for a paradigm shift in development, from dominant neo-liberal assumptions and practices to alternative people-centered paradigms based on justice, human rights and sustainability? Would not a peaceful and just resolution to the decades of suffering caused by the conflict not only ensure Moro identity and rights, but also the rights of indigenous peoples and non-Moro communities for Mindanao is also their home?

Furthermore, the NDU experience is grounded firmly in non-banking mode of education as Freire puts it. The principle of dialogue calls for participatory, democratic teaching-learning strategies. Learners are given opportunities to share personal experiences and perspectives and a mutually respectful dialogue is promoted. Various creative pedagogies are always integrated (e.g. role playing, simulation, brainstorming, art, music, poetry, story-telling etc.) in the learning, and invariably these pedagogical strategies have been very helpful in motivating critical thinking and empowerment, even for soldiers who have usually been trained in top-down hierarchical methods with often a strong dose of ideological formation. Of course, peace education does not diminish the need for cognitive knowledge and critical analysis, but the teaching-learning process must not be authoritarian while acknowledging the authority (knowledge, experience) of educators.

As earlier stated, values formation is another key pedagogical principle in peace education. Values such as justice, compassion, nonviolence, respect, integrity, reconciliation, gender equality, sustainability and so on are infused in the learning process. However, in our workshops and seminars, learners

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are reminded that values cannot be abstract, reflecting not only personal and interpersonal dimensions but also institutional, structural and systematic manifestation. Hence peace education is different from some models of values education which focus primarily on individual expressions. Moreover, an institution promoting peace education such as NDU needs to look within, and practice a self-critical orientation to the values it espouses. This resulted, for example, in conducting a workshop for NDU faculty seeking a more democratic culture of management. In another example, my colleagues and I were able to persuade the university to change its policy so that Muslim students would not need to serve their thesis defense committee members meal during Ramadan as a mark of intercultural and interfaith sensitivity.

Regarding the vital pedagogical principle of critical empowerment, I admit that this continues to be a challenge — how do we educate in ways that motivate educators and learners to translate theory into practice and action (personal and social and political)? Given that in peace education, learning cannot be abstract or remain simply as knowledge to be reproduced in exams and papers etc., the NDU peace education courses sought to actively connect classroom learning with issues of conflict and violence in the wider community and society (e.g. the Lumads' struggle against the Mt. Apo geothermal project; structural violence in lives of the poor and marginalized such as poor farmers breaking into government rice storage warehouses in times of hunger, or street children. This likewise reflects the whole school approach in educational transformation.

### **Engaging in Manila and Other Contexts Beyond Mindanao**

In my journey, the peace education movement can be seen as moving from the periphery to the center. Hence, my experiences in Mindanao provided lessons and insights for developing programs and initiatives in Manila and other parts of the Philippines. It is heartwarming to see that various universities, colleges, schools, CSOs and government and intergovernmental agencies (e.g. UNESCO, UNDP etc.) have been steadily promoting peace education and interrelated fields such as global education, human rights education and education for sustainable development. These institutions include Miriam College, Far Eastern University, Philippine Normal University and the World Council on Curriculum and Instruction, whose stories are also included in this collection. Jean Cawagas and I have also engaged

in textbook writing, in which peace education themes and processes have been mainstreamed into the prescribed syllabus of the Department of Education. It is also vital for people outside of Mindanao to be educated towards a culture of peace — since Mindanaoans need people in Luzon and Visayas to deeply understand the root causes of conflicts in Mindanao and to lend political voices for peaceful resolution based on justice, human rights and sustainability.

As my journey took me and other peace educators to the various regions of Metro Manila, Sorsogon, Iloilo, Antique, Cebu, La Union and Palawan, I realized that the Mindanao conflict may often be seen as “distant” and somehow “irrelevant” by non-Mindanaoans. However, as the workshops I have been involved we emphasize, conflicts in Mindanao need sustainable transformation towards peace if the Philippines, as a nation and society, is to move forward. Ultimately, peace education is for all Filipinos across all regions—who are all interconnected politically, economically, socially and culturally. An alternative people-centered paradigm of development will be for the wellbeing of all peoples, including those in more industrialized and “wealthier” regions. Conflicts that accompany structural violence, human rights violations and environmental destruction affect all citizens.

Finally, successful advocacy of the Peace Education Network (PEN) in Manila led to E.O. 570, which requires all educational institutions to integrate peace education in their programs, including teacher education. However, over the past decade, the challenge remains as to what extent the E.O. 570 has been implemented. In this regard, research and curriculum development initiatives that look at how different learning areas (e.g., Social Studies, Language and other Humanities subjects, Science, Mathematics, etc.) have, and can better integrate peace education would be helpful. Furthermore, under current administration policies (e.g., war on drugs, EJKs, de facto rejection of human rights by key political leaders, etc.), how will E.O. 570 face these new challenges? Hopefully, in the next National Forum on peace education, such challenges can be taken up.

My global journey has greatly benefitted from the lessons and experiences I gained from peace education work in the Philippines. At the University of Alberta in Canada, I, together with Jean Cawagas, have drawn extensively

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on Philippine insights and inspiration for our programs in teacher education (e.g. the commonalities between indigenous peoples of the Philippines for their rights and the First Nations of Canada; social justice awareness of Canadian citizens to structural violence faced by Filipino marginalized peoples; advocacy and solidarity with Filipino OFWs in Canada serving especially as caregivers). In Australia, where my journey has taken me to the task of establishing the Multi-Faith Centre of Griffith University to promote interfaith dialogue for a culture of peace, I have been able to draw ideas and wisdom from the stories of interfaith dialogue in Mindanao (e.g., Bishops-Ulama Forum; Silsilah Dialogue Movement) and later in Metro Manila (e.g. Peacemakers Circle). In this regard, I recall one interfaith dialogue workshop in which I found myself with a small group of participants, including a Catholic priest and a Muslim NGO leader. As the dialogue turned to various issues of conflicts and societal problems, I referred to the Catholic Bishop's 1989 Pastoral Letter entitled "What is Happening to our Beautiful Land." Yet, despite this moving and inspirational appeal for ecological stewardship, and to care for the earth, there continued to be unsustainable environmental destruction. What if, I suggested to the participants, that the Bishops gather together in front of Malacañang Palace and fasted as a nonviolent strategy to persuade the President and the Government to take decisive action to protect the Philippine environment? On hearing this, the priest disagreed with the proposal, since in his view, "fasting" would not be consistent with Christian teachings as it constitutes self-harm to one's body. In contrast, the Muslim participants responded by pointing out that in the Bible, Jesus had fasted for 40 days and nights in the desert; surely then a fast by the Bishops would be permissible. Later, I shared this story with a Bishop, who confirmed that the Muslim participant's view was indeed correct!

On a wider level, in my involvement with UNESCO agencies, (e.g., the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for international Understanding (APCEIU); UNESCO offices and bureaus) and the UN-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica, I have drawn fruitful links between peace education and complementary fields of transformative education such in Education for International Understanding (EIU); Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and now GCED or global citizenship education. In other words, it is possible and essential to be open to practicing peace education by "other

names” through exploring and promoting complementarities and synergies. One especially meaningful event was the International Forum on a Culture of Peace held in Manila in 1994, jointly organized by UNESCO and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). In my presentation as one of the invited “experts,” I shared the experiences of peace education in Mindanao and emphasized the need to practice education based on linkages between all forms and levels (formal, non-formal, informal). Apart from the official delegates from member states, some represented by their ambassadors to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, the participants gave much visibility and affirmation to Filipino peacebuilding advocates such as the zone of peace in Negros and other grassroots movements working for the peace processes in Mindanao. In my role as conference rapporteur, I presented the final declaration and recommendations to President Fidel Ramos. Also present was UNESCO’s Director-General Federico Mayor, who was central in establishing UNESCO’s Culture of Peace Programme and the eventual adoption at the United Nations of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001–2010).

## **Barriers to Overcome**

Clearly, a major barrier to overcome in promoting peace education in the Philippines, or elsewhere in the world, is the sustainability of programs and initiatives. The NDU case provides a meaningful example, where over time, there was a shift from peace education to peace advocacy, and conflict resolution and transformation due to changes in institutional leadership and priorities. Certainly, peace education and peacebuilding are not contradictory in vision and values, but regrettably the progress made in peace education that commenced in 1986 could not be built on and expanded. Likewise, while a number of institutions in the CHED consortium did have peace education graduates, this outcome did not translate into systematic institutional programs — in part due to changes in leadership or the core members leaving institutions. In sum, institutional priorities can change. In this regard, the recent major change in the national educational system towards a K-12 structure is likely to reduce the role of peace education for one university program.

Another significant challenge faced by peace education is the competitive logic of neoliberal educational systems, where the stress is on the education,

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or more accurately, the “schooling” for productive workers. As a result, the potential of E.O. 570 may not be fully realized. In this regard, even in the MDGs and the new SDGs (sustainable development goals), the paradigm of development can remain unquestioned. As shown in the Philippines, the dominant paradigm of development based on globalization or corporate-led globalization from above has maintained inequalities and injustices while furthering environmental destruction. Quality of education has often also focused on school enrollments and literacy rates — but then what kind of literacy? In peace education, a holistic literacy paradigm necessarily includes critical social and political literacy.

Furthermore, existing curriculum structures are often a key barrier to dialogue and critical empowerment. Through a fixation on consumerism, unlimited growth economies, culture industries which numb critical consciousness and create passive citizenship education, the younger and older generations are entrapped and captivated and are therefore less likely to respond positively to peace education.

As I am writing this chapter in a time labelled as a “state of lawlessness” the emergent politics of authoritarianism in key aspects of government policies and strategies pose an even greater challenge to peace education. The current “war on drugs” provides a key example of the use of militarism and violence to “clean up” the drug addiction problem (e.g., high rate of EJKs and police tactics) rather than understanding it to be a health problem to heal. The rising culture of fear and intimidation can dampen openness to opportunities for peace education and it is really surprising that even a number of peace advocates seem to “support” those policies even if these are leading to human rights violations and injustices.

However, despite such barriers and challenges, I have witnessed in my journey that peace education continues to be inspired by values of assertiveness and hopefulness. Many signs of hope still shine through the clouds and shadows of apathy, repression and fear. The stories in this collection show that in more than three decades since its beginning, educators who initiated peace education soon after EDSA remain committed. There are exemplary members of the youth who have overcome a culture of consumerism and passivity and have begun to question with courage and knowledge, un-

democratic institutions and governance; human rights violations; local and global injustices; various forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and environmental destruction. They have also been moved by stories of elders who build peace in the face of violence and injustices. So as on a mountain ledge, even if the soil has been hardening and drying up, it is possible for seedlings struggling to emerge through the cracks. This reflects the essence of the universal story that the human spirit remains undaunted whatever the odds, by forces of violence and repression, and continues to break through with a spirituality for peace, justice, compassion sustainability, human rights, intercultural respect and deep inner wellbeing. Let us, as one ancient Chinese proverb advises, continue to live with the wisdom that a journey of ten thousand miles begins with a single step. All the stories in this collection are already several steps, not only of the Philippines' but also of the global journey of humanity towards a truly holistic culture of peace for all beings and parts of the earth and universe. ●

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**\*Toh Swee-Hin (S.H.Toh)** is a Professor Emeritus in Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta and formerly Distinguished Professor, University for Peace (Costa Rica) and founding Director of the Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University (Australia). He has been promoting formal and non-formal education for peace, human rights, justice, intercultural understanding, interfaith dialogue, sustainable futures and global citizenship in the global North and South as well as in UNESCO and various networks or institutes including the International Peace Research Association, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, and the WCCI. He is also a Visiting Fellow in the Center for Peace Education, Miriam College. In 2000, he was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.



# *Peace Education: Reflections of a Mindanao Educator*

*by Dr. Ofelia L. Durante\**

## **Introduction**

I am from Mindanao, Philippines, which used to be called a land of promise but is now known as the land of conflict. Mindanao is an island in Southern Philippines, characterized in recent history by unpeace due to the armed conflict between the Moro Fronts and the Philippine Government. The armed conflict in Mindanao emanates from the recurring call for the fulfillment of the right to self-determination of the Muslim population. Almost forty years of on and off fighting between Muslim armed opposition groups and the Philippine military forces, resulting in a high toll on human lives, continuously pose a challenge in peace building, particularly for the formal and non-formal education institutions in the area. As an educator I responded to this challenge through peace education.

Join me as I walk through this peace education experience which I will present in three phases. Phase 1 showcases my central Mindanao experience, specifically in Notre Dame University, Phase 2 shows my peace education encounter in Western Mindanao, particularly in the Zamboanga peninsula and the island provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan, and Phase 3 narrates how peace education can directly contribute to the Mindanao peace process.

In all three phases, I highlight the experiences which touched me most, the milestones of my unforgettable peace education journey.

### **Peace Education: Notre Dame University**

I was the Dean of the College of Art & Sciences of Notre Dame University, Cotabato City when we started peace education, offering a graduate program, and forming a Peace Education Center. It was quite a struggle initially since it was our first encounter with peace education when back then, it was unheard of by the community, and there were no peace education resources available in the local libraries and the market. With the guidance of our mentor, Dr. Toh Swee-Hin, we were able to pull through and claimed successes for running these two complimentary components of the program. Through these two programs, Notre Dame University became the peace education catalyst not only of Mindanao but also in some areas in the Visayas and Luzon. The Notre Dame University Peace Education Center successfully guided a chain of schools in Mindanao in a 3-year program with the support of the Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). These included more than 100 schools of the Notre Dame Educational Association, and the Assumption Colleges.

Among the major contributions of the Peace Education Center were the hundreds of peace education workshops conducted among teachers and administrators of various educational institutions. Memorable were the workshops conducted among members of the military, including officers, and the religious and lay leaders of the Catholic Church. A series of workshops were also conducted among public school teachers in North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat. The workshops were conducted without external support. The public school teachers individually paid for their board and lodging and the NDU teachers volunteered to conduct the workshops. We did this every weekend for one year. After a year we gained the support of the Department of Education Supervisors and Superintendents, when they too, requested to be given a peace education workshop.

With peace education is a recognition of the need for positive action to address the issues underpinning the Mindanao conflict. History tells us that the Muslim armed struggle in Mindanao began in 1969, sparked by discrimination, Islamic revivalism, opposition to the Marcos dictatorship, and

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the Jabidah massacre of Muslim soldiers during their military service. The need to understand the conflict, and the search for the right path to peace in Mindanao also required outreach to other members of the community. This we did by initiating a multifaith/multicultural dialogue to promote intercultural understanding, with the formation of a tri-people organization, the “Sectoral Alliance for Cultural Solidarity” (SACS). Notre Dame University Peace Education Center became the secretariat of the organization.

All these endeavors led to the Peace Education Center receiving the Aurora Aragon peace award in 1990 for pioneering a peace program in Mindanao.

### **Peace Education: Ateneo De Zamboanga University**

In 2000, I joined Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center and eventually became its Director. This opened a new window for peace education through peace research. Some of the researches that were conducted include: “Recycling War Trash for Peace;” and “Peace Education for Women in the Lives of Mindanao Combatants.” There were also initiatives to look into the development of the Sulu peace education program; and Rido: managing clan conflicts. The highlight of my peace education involvement in Western Mindanao was the sponsoring of the Mindanao Community-based Institute on Peace Education.

Recycling War Trash for Peace was a very meaningful experience for all of us involved in the project. It was a project that sprung from community consultation so it became a participatory research project integrating peace education. The idea was to eliminate the instruments of war — the bullets that proliferated in the Basilan communities; contribute to the improvement of lives of war victims; and provide for the healing of the community scarred by a series of armed conflicts. Peace education became a major tool in this endeavor. The project collected the empty bullets, the symbols of war which proliferated in the community. These metal bullets, most of which made of bronze, were recycled into ornaments by 25 out-of-school youths who were victims of war. Most of them are orphans whose parents were killed by the bullets collected. Peace education was integrated into their training, and became the source of their healing.

At Ateneo de Zamboanga, the opportunity to teach at the graduate

school also became very fulfilling, especially when students, after taking a 3-unit peace education course, become convinced that peace education should be part of all their activities. Of course, teachers and principals started to integrate peace education into their programs, but innovative approaches such as giving peace education training to the employees of Jollibee and developing modules to integrate peace education in the exit training of overseas seafarers were very heartwarming.

One of the highlights of my journey was the successful implementation of a community-based Peace Education Conference at the Ateneo De Zamboanga University. This was a 3-day forum attended by national and international speakers on the themes: Educating toward a Culture of Peace; Interfaith Dialogue; and the Mindanao Peace Process. The goal of the conference was to provide opportunities for formal and non-formal educators in local communities to learn with, and from each other about “the role and possibilities for education to contribute to the Mindanao peace process.

### **Peace Education: Contributions to the Peace Process**

In 2008, the Supreme Court rejected the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) of the GRP-MILF peace talks. This resulted in a big war causing the evacuation of more than 600,000 people. The breakdown of the peace process made the Philippine Government realize that the peace process cannot simply be a negotiation between the fighting forces. There is a need to hear the voices of the people, and to reflect on the values of the diverse groups of people—starting from those who are directly affected by the conflict and extending to those whose lives are also impacted by the war. The need to open avenues for dialogue was felt by the various stakeholders. This led to the formation of Konsult Mindanao (KM), a participatory research group composed of the members of the Bishop Ulama Conference, researchers from the academe and members of some nongovernment organizations.

In KM, peace education became the backbone of the research framework used to surface issues and concerns, values and attitudes of people in Mindanao. We employed the visioning of a peaceful world exercise to achieve our goals and open avenues for dialogue among those directly or indirectly affected by the Mindanao conflict.

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As an offshoot of this research, the Ulama saw the need to include peace education in the basic education curriculum. Under the leadership of the Secretary of Department of Education (DepEd) in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and in partnership with the Phil-AusAid Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM), we embarked on the creation of an instructional material development project. The instructional materials were completed but with the change in leadership, implementation became very difficult.

It was also at this point when Regional Offices of the Department of Education in Mindanao were convinced of the urgent need to implement E.O. 570 s. 2006, institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education. DepEd Region XI created a peace education unit to oversee the integration of peace education in the basic education curriculum.

The positive response of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Region XI was to require a 3-unit peace education course in all teacher education institutions. But CHED didn't just issue an order. A consultation session was conducted among the Presidents and Deans of Colleges and Universities offering Teacher Education in Region XI. This was a one-day peace education workshop yielding support of the heads of the institutions. To successfully implement this mandate, the need to produce a teacher's manual surfaced. *ForumZFD*, a German non-government organization graciously accepted the challenge, so a training was organized alongside the development of a teaching guide. This is one of the best experiences I can share working with *ForumZFD*, CHED Region XI and teachers of Teacher Institutions.

Worth sharing is my engagement with the International Children's Action Network, a Japanese funded NGO in its project for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a peace-building Project in Pikit, Maguindanao particularly in the villages called "M7 Barangays." These 7 barangays were the seats of conflict in 2008. Classrooms were donated to the public schools in these barangays and with it, peace education trainings were conducted, which included the development courses of syllabi. All the teachers and principals of these schools participated in the peace education trainings. As an offshoot of this project, a similar package was developed for the officials

and teachers of the Department of Education Region XII.

It is also interesting to note that Mindanao leaders now recognize that peace education is the best way to make the people understand the peace process. The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed in March, 2014 concluding 17 years of negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The Bishops of Mindanao wanted to find out what role the Catholic Church should play for peace in Mindanao with the signing of CAB. A huge conference of Bishops, priests, lay leaders and the academe was convened. It was unanimously agreed that people should be made to understand the CAB and this can be done through peace education not only in Mindanao, but in all schools throughout the country. Through the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) a team conducted a series of conferences on the CAB.

Completing the tapestry of my journey is my experience with the Mindanao Peace Building Institute as a facilitator of the Peace Education course for 15 years. The Mindanao Peace Building Institute (MPI) brings together peace builders of diverse cultures from the Asia-Pacific Region to participate in an annual peace building training. The coming together of peace builders, having a variety of experiences, becomes an arena for sharing strategies and learning for both participants and facilitators. Every MPI course meant an enriched person in me. I always looked forward to these summer sessions where participants from different contexts share peace and conflict experiences; and where together we find ways of making peace education a meaningful peace response.

## **My Reflections**

This journey yielded general abstracted themes that speak to the heart of the stories. These are the themes that continuously light our path as peace educators in Mindanao.

*Commitment.* This is the theme that sustained us in the journey—our commitment, developed through peace education, and the commitment we continue to nurture among our workshop participants and students. The people, because of their commitment to peace building, continue to invest

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considerable creative energies and strategies to bring about the fruition of their efforts, despite all the obstacles encountered in introducing and sustaining the program. Commitment to peace education also brought to the fore creative strategies to integrate peace education in all undertakings.

*Partnership and Collaboration.* The success of all these programs may be credited to collaborative efforts of academe and the community, government and nongovernment institutions, local, national, and international partners. The collaboration exhibited by CHED Region XI, *ForumZFD*, and the Teacher Training institutions in Region XI is worth emphasizing. Peace education in teacher training programs was successfully implemented with all institutions supporting the program. The academe, nongovernment organizations such as the Nagdilaab Foundation, the Catholic Church and the Community are exemplary models of partnership showing that greater success in implementing a project (recycling war thrash for peace) may be achieved when institutions support each other.

*Institutional Leadership and Committed Institutional Support.* The success of the programs I was involved with may especially be credited to the leaders of the institutions I worked with, as in this case Notre Dame University, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, and the Bishop-Ulama Conference, and their partner institutions. Their support provided the impetus and the strength to sustain the programs.

## Concluding Challenges

*Teacher Education.* Teachers are the best catalysts for peace education. Hence, developing a commitment to peace education is a must among the Teacher Education institutions. E.O. 570 should be assertively implemented all over the country. The Region XI experience may be used as a model.

*Academe and other stakeholders.* All other sectors including the government, the civil society groups, parents and media should likewise recognize their responsibility to promote and develop a culture of peace. A holistic approach should be applied with the key actors as educators and role models. The academe should establish good partnership with all these stakeholders.

The narration showed that the formal and non-formal education sectors need to play vital and catalytic roles in helping the citizens develop under-

standing, values, wisdom and courage to work for peace. When an increasing number of people are empowered to transform a culture of violence to a culture of peace at the individual, family, community, national and global levels of life, only then can we move toward our vision of a peaceful world.

But the biggest challenge is **sustainability**. All the programs I was involved with were successfully implemented only when a commitment to peace education especially of the leaders are sustained. It becomes a challenge in the Philippine setting when education leaders have terms of office. What should be the formula?

This is my story. Let me end by acknowledging the major roles played by noted peace educators, Dr. Toh Swee-Hin and Dr. Virginia Cawagas in my formation and their guidance to be continually involved in this endeavor. They are my inspiration in all these efforts. As was said in a poem written by an anonymous author:

*“There are many mountains to climb and rivers to cross;  
The journey may be tiring, with obstacles, risks and dangers;  
But with constant faith and commitment, with hopes and dreams,  
With our small successes, it is possible to move mountains.”*

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***\*Dr. Ofelia L. Durante*** is currently a peace education consultant of the International Children Action Network and senior research consultant of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG), Cotabato City. She is also one of the research reviewers of the International Peace Research Association Foundation.



# *Three Decades of Peace Education — My Story*

*by Loreta Navarro-Castro\**

One cannot underestimate the influence that a training or seminar-workshop can have on a participant. This perspective has guided my own involvement in the work of peace education. In 1979, after I participated in a two-week institute in New York organized by Gerald and Patricia Mische, founders of the Global Education Associates (GEA), I felt that I reached a turning point in my life. I had been a teacher for 10 years when this awakening happened. The experience made me see that educating the educators towards becoming peace educators was a strategic approach. I realized how a new vision of education—one that is holistic, human and ecological—could be built from the ground up, by training and exposing teachers and administrators to the learning content and processes that comprise peace education. Upon my return from the New York Institute, Dr. Lourdes R. Quisumbing, founding president of the Philippine Council for Global Education (now called Philippine Council for Peace and Global Education), invited me to share my experience with Miriam College (then called Maryknoll College) where I was a teacher.

Hence in the 1980s, the school started its peace education thrust by infusing peace and global perspectives into subject areas such as Social Studies. In 1988, a three-unit college level course entitled “Introduction to

Peace Studies” was introduced in the curriculum of the International Studies Department. This initial course has evolved into a whole academic minor program called Peace Studies, with a good number of enrollees and with many of its graduates working in civil society organizations (CSOs), and in government agencies such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. Another curricular milestone is the inclusion of a three-unit Peace Education course in the Teacher Education major curriculum.

In 1991, Miriam College committed itself to being a Zone of Peace. In its “Declaration of Miriam College as a Zone of Peace,” the community pledged that it would promote caring relationships, nonviolent conflict resolution, and cooperation instead of aggressive competition, a simple lifestyle, and peace action/activities of social concern. It was also in the 1990s when the “Whole School Approach” to peace education was embraced. This means that the school has been attempting to infuse the ideas, perspectives and values of peace in the various aspects of the school’s life—curriculum, teaching-learning processes, student development programs such as education sessions on conflict resolution, peer mediation, challenging prejudice and bullying, faculty and staff development program, materials development, organizational structures and policies, and its socio-political actions. It is an approach that Miriam College has tried to share with other academic institutions in the country during talks and workshops, believing that this is the way to be effective, so that the transformation we are seeking happens not only in the classroom but also in the whole school and even beyond. This peace education advocacy has also been advanced by other national organizations such as the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction- Philippine Chapter (WCCI).

A challenge in the 1990s was the lack of teaching materials and this was the time when I attempted to write a textbook entitled *Tungo sa Isang Mapayapang Mundo* (Towards a Peaceful World) for Grade 7 Social Studies. It was soon adopted by other schools as either a textbook or reference. In 2008, my colleague, Jasmin Nario-Galace and I worked on a book addressed more to educators, *Peace Education: A Pathway to a Culture of Peace* (2008, 2010). We have used this as our basic material for our teaching and training work.

In 1997, the Center for Peace Education (CPE) was formally established

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at Miriam College, as a natural development in the evolution of the school's peace education efforts. I was its founding director and I continue to work for the CPE to this day. Although based in a school, the CPE's mission is much bigger than just serving Miriam College. Hence, the CPE has the following goals: to institutionalize and strengthen the peace education thrust of Miriam College through faculty training, curriculum development, research, and student development programs; to help promote the culture of peace in the larger society by sharing Miriam College's inspiration, knowledge, and experience with other groups and educational institutions, including those that are underserved; and to network and develop partnerships with peace-oriented groups and with all people of goodwill towards advocating and building a culture of peace.

The establishment of the CPE enabled a more systematic training of Miriam College faculty and students. Faculty members were given an orientation workshop on Peace Education before the start of a new school year. The students received conflict resolution skills training and selected student leaders received peer mediation training.

Recognizing the need to be more organized in our education work and advocacy as peace educators, I initiated the first meeting of the Peace Educators Network (PEN) and was its coordinator until March 2013. The PEN is a loose network of organizations and educational institutions throughout the country that undertake peace education or are keenly interested in promoting education for peace and nonviolence in either the school system or through the community-based or alternative learning system.

The PEN became active in writing joint letters, statements and appeals addressing issues on education. For example, the PEN appealed to the Education Secretary urging the then Department of Education and Sports (DECS) to "undertake a more systematic teacher orientation and human resource development for peace education and a more systematic utilization of peace education materials such as the modules co-produced by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and DECS." In 2003, the DECS and OPAPP conducted a nationwide launching of the revised peace education modules. It was accompanied by a series of basic orientation training where Jasmin and I provided the orientation in peace

education. The PEN also sent appeals in connection with the internal conflicts in Mindanao, calling for ceasefire and resumption of the peace talks each time they were stalled. One PEN statement was against the return of the mandatory Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) which certain members of Congress were proposing at one time.

During the resurgence of war between the government forces and the MILF in February 2003 that resulted in hundreds of thousands of evacuees, the PEN members engaged in fund-raising for the displaced war victims.

Soon after the war of 2003, PEN joined the Mindanao Solidarity Network (MSN). The MSN is a group of Metro Manila based groups that work in solidarity with the Mindanao peace advocates. PEN members have also cooperated among themselves in the conduct of multilateral and bilateral peace education efforts such as the conduct of youth conferences and faculty workshops in PEN member-schools. In 2009, the PEN had a conference on Good Practices in Peace Education to celebrate PEN's 10th year anniversary.

In August 2004, the CPE launched, with the help of Balay Rehabilitation Center (a PEN member), a Twinning Project with the theme "Building Bridges of Understanding and Peace" between the Miriam College's Grade 7 and high school students and students of Rajah Muda High School (RMHS), a public high school in Pikit, Cotabato attended by Muslim students. The project's overarching goal is to challenge prejudice and to build understanding and solidarity between the two youth groups, through exchange of letters, the publication of joint newsletters and joint training workshops. The teachers involved in the project have also held a joint seminar.

The project is still ongoing and in June 2012, I did an assessment of the effects of the project, using content analysis of the themes of the reflection-essays that the student-participants have contributed. The findings showed that the theme mentioned most is "aversion to war." This is followed by the students' realization of their "role in building peace, including raising the awareness of others," and their conviction that "despite their differences, Muslims and Christians can be united and can help each other in promoting peace." Another theme, "Friendship can be created despite diversity" was a belief mentioned by many participants. The subsequent group actions by the student-participants after their return to their school communities have

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In the case of the RMHS students, one of their most significant initiatives is the establishment of a Peace Club named "*Suara No Kalilintad*," Maguindanaon for "Voices of Peace." In the case of the MC students, they organized short re-echoing seminars for their fellow students. A distinctive activity to which they contribute very actively every year is the annual celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace. The regular features of the Mindanao Week of Peace are awareness-raising activities and fund-raising to help their twin school, the RMHS, as well as to help Mindanao and peace-related causes. This assessment indicates that there have been positive effects of the project on the participants' beliefs and attitudes as well as on actions they have taken as a group.

In 2006, a significant peace education policy framework was signed by then President Arroyo, Executive Order 570. It was entitled "Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education." I was invited to be a member of the technical working group (TWG) for E.O. 570 to work on the implementing guidelines addressed mainly to the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, the two main agencies tasked to implement the order. This E.O. 570 was welcomed as a hopeful sign because it provided us with a policy framework. However, a challenge that goes with it is the realization that there could be a huge variance between having an Executive Order and having it implemented widely.

From 2007 to 2010, I organized four Peace Education workshops for eight Southeast Asian countries in collaboration with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). These workshops were facilitated by Jasmin and myself. The participants were formal educators, community-based educators and curriculum officers of ministries of education in Southeast Asia.

Beginning 2010, the CPE focused on conducting training workshops for teacher-educators or faculty of Colleges of Education in the Philippines. To date we have conducted seven such workshops with teams coming from various parts of the country. We view this as a strategic move because of the multiplier effect inasmuch as teacher-educators teach hundreds of pre-service or prospective teachers each year. In a monitoring survey that I conducted

with two batches of participants at least six months after their training, the results show that all the respondent teams were able to integrate peace education themes in various subjects in the Teacher Education curriculum.

I have also cooperated mainly with two leaders in the interfaith peace-building work, Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra of the Silsilah Dialogue Movement and Marites Guingona-Africa of the Peacemakers' Circle. Together in a group called Uniharmony Partners, we have organized events to mark the UN-declared World Interfaith Harmony Week every first week of February since 2013.

I have endeavored to link with many kindred groups locally and globally. As former CPE Executive Director (November 1997–March 2013), I have been active in various local networks such as the PEN, PCPGE, Waging Peace Philippines and Mindanao Solidarity Network. It is mainly through these local peace networks that I have worked for the promotion of peace education and the ongoing peace processes between government and non-state armed groups.

As for the international networks, I continue to be active in the Global Campaign for Peace Education and the Peace Education Working Group that started as a group under GPPAC, as well as with Pax Christi International (PCI). I was a member of the PCI planning committee that recently co-organized a conference in Rome and came out with an “An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence” which is now beginning to be part of the discourse within Church circles. I have found that when we work with networks, the results are more fruitful. I continue to believe that despite the challenges, we need to persevere, and take inspiration from something Aung Sang Suu Kyi once said, “A perfect peace may not be possible because it is not of our world, but still we should journey to it...”●

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**\*Loreta Castro** is the Program Director of the Miriam College-Center for Peace Education. Among the programs she is currently handling are: interfaith peacebuilding, including a twinning project between Christian and Muslim youth; peace education mainstreaming in Philippine colleges of education; and advocacy for a global treaty banning nuclear weapons.



## *Section II*

# *GROWING SEEDS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM*



# *Personal Insights on Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education*

*by Emily T. Lambio\**

**M**ore than eight years ago, the Implementing Guidelines for Executive Order 570, *“Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education”* was signed. It was an exciting and momentous day for me. Assisting the multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group (TWG) for E.O. 570 as a Peace Program Officer at the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) was one of my first foray into peace education. While we were fine-tuning the implementing guidelines, I was also helping coordinate and was co-facilitating peacebuilding trainings for regional line agencies. It was a period of learning and discovery for me. Whatever I know about peace education, I owe much to peace educators from our partner NGOs and academic institutions, my boss, and colleagues in the office.

Listening to all of them and reading through the works of Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, Swee-Hin Toh and others, made me realize, just as Gandhi had said, that the *“world is full of violence — not just those that kill but also those that deprive us of our human dignity and capacity to reach our full human potentials.”*<sup>1</sup> If we don’t act now to nurture the sensitivity of our children to

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<sup>1</sup> J. Galtung (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 167–191

manifestations of violence (i.e. corruption, poverty, gender inequality, human made environmental degradation, prejudice against minority groups, marginalization of indigenous people, etc.) and equip them with the skills to proactively address them and build a culture of peace, then we lose an opportunity to break the cycle of violence for the next generation.

It is with this perspective and the optimism and idealism of a newbie peace advocate that I regarded E.O. 570 as an enabling policy that shall help lay down the structure for a transformative education in our country. I believe it carries with it the opportunity to make a big difference if only we would take on the challenge. It wasn't long before I realized that I signed up for a really difficult task. Advocating for the institutionalization of E.O. 570 and the promotion of a culture of peace requires more creativity, persistence, strategic partnerships, and of course, political will for it to gain momentum!

Looking back at my experiences in coordinating and advocating for peace education, I've learned some lessons and insights on institutionalizing peace education. They are not necessarily original but they speak well of my experiences and still remain relevant to today's challenges.

### **Insight 1: WORK CLOSELY WITH CHAMPIONS FROM WITHIN**

***Collaborate with, or advocate for the establishment of strategic organizational structures within key implementing organizations that can provide strong technical advice to agency executives and champion the cause from within.***

I've observed that the opportunity to engage and advocate with a few, yet influential members of partner organizations, could help immensely in moving the peace education agenda within their organizations. I've seen this happening in 2009 at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), when we engaged its Technical Panel for Teacher Education. In our first meeting with them they advised us of the need for, which they later on facilitated, the gradual integration of peace education into the Social Dimensions Course — a core course taken by all teachers during their pre-service training.

On that same year, a peace education module was included in the textbook for Social Dimension. This was authored by Dr. Loreta Castro, then the Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education (CPE) of Miriam

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges College. In May 2010, CHED also conducted a pilot training among instructors in selected Centers of Excellence on the integration of peace education in Social Dimensions. This was designed and facilitated by the CPE.

This achievement did not happen quite easily. The E.O. 570 Implementing Guidelines was signed at a time when there were changes in leadership within CHED. This inevitably affected the implementation of the agency's peace education institutionalization plan. We felt victorious however, in mid-2009, when we were granted an audience with the new Chair and in that meeting he released a memo enjoining all teacher education institutions to integrate peace education in the special topics.

Three weeks after our meeting with its Chair, we presented E.O. 570 to the CHED's Technical Panel for Teacher Education. Together with Dr. Loreta Castro, we updated them about E.O. 570 and presented a sample course outline on peace education. They found merit in it and advocated to the Chair that it becomes part of the Social Dimensions Course in order to strategically integrate peace education in teacher education.

Since the panel is an established structure within CHED, and has the power to influence policy, it paved the way for our initial breakthroughs. This, and our partnership with Dr. Castro, a charismatic peace education champion, and her team at CPE, became our winning formula. Dr. Castro is also an active member of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on E.O. 570 who helped formulate its Implementing Guidelines.

Of course, the role of this strategic insider group in E.O. 570 implementation could change as the organization matures in its implementation of the peace education program. When the necessary organizational structure (i.e. peace education focal persons) has been established and peace education is being implemented as a regular program, they can still be engaged to continue to provide technical advice to the Executive Committee of E.O. 570.

If, however, there is no existing strategic group from within an implementing organization that can champion E.O. 570, efforts must be geared towards the creation of such.

## **Insight 2: REPLICATE OR SCALE UP GOOD MODELS**

*Find promising peace education models that can be tested in other settings or scaled up to a wider audience. Implement this as a strategy*

***for advocating a robust implementation of E.O. 570. The results of this initiative should be communicated well to relevant stakeholders in order to sustain the gains and create opportunities for institutionalization.***

When we were advocating for the implementation of E.O. 570 in 2008-2009, we knew that civil society and academic institutions in Mindanao would respond well to our call. They have been active in the promotion of peace education even before E.O. 570 was enforced. In fact, the Mindanao Peace Education Forum (MinPEF), a network of civil society and academic institutions in Mindanao, facilitated the Mindanao-wide consultation in 2007 that gathered input for the implementing guideline on E.O. 570. The challenge at that time was in advocating for a more-coordinated effort on the integration of peace education in basic education and teacher education nationwide.

There is a wealth of resources and rich experiences on popularizing peace education in Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines. This needs to be harnessed, and hopefully incorporated into the overall strategy of key implementing institutions within various levels of governance (i.e. school, division, region, central office). This was our intention when we linked Department of Education (DepEd) teachers from Mindanao with teachers from Bicol when we supported the modeling of the ‘school of peace’ approach in Castilla, Sorsogon in Bicol.

In this initiative, we partnered with the Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT) for Peace Program, a UNDP-funded government initiative (2005–2011) in Mindanao, Philippines. One of the program’s aims was to mainstream the promotion of a culture of peace by enhancing capacities of teachers and schools to transform their schools into a School of Peace (SOP). The SOP is a model that engages all school personnel and stakeholders, including the community surrounding the school as partners in building a culture of peace. Within these schools, teachers integrate peace principles, concepts and values in all subject areas of formal and non-formal education through enriched lesson plans and role models.

Act for Peace shared its model and brought DepEd teachers who are members of the Mindanao School of Peace Speaker’s Bureau to Bicol. With its assistance, teachers from the pilot in Bicol learned how to integrate peace into key subject areas, and how they can implement the School of Peace approach in their school. Through the strong leadership of their principal,

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they were able to develop and implement enriched lesson plans and conduct peace education activities and programs in their schools. This pilot testing activity was also conducted in collaboration with Bicol University and funded by the UNDP Conflict Prevention and Peace Building (CPPB) Program.

### **Insight 3: USE CREATIVE AND POPULAR TOOLS IN POPULARIZING PEACE EDUCATION**

***Teaching peace should be made easy and popular by using tools that are already familiar to teachers. This could promote wide participation and help drum up support for the promotion of a culture of peace.***

During the peace month, on September 2009, DepEd and OPAPP launched a nationwide peace storytelling initiative that enjoined all elementary school teachers to teach peace to their students through a storytelling session. We created sample lesson plans that used children's stories as springboard for teaching the values and skills on conflict prevention and resolution. Teachers were also encouraged to use other local and culturally appropriate stories. The activity helped promote E.O. 570 Implementing Guidelines and provide teachers with practical tips on how to integrate peace into their lesson plans.

### **Insight 4: SUPPORT LOCAL INITIATIVES ON PEACE EDUCATION**

***Local initiatives on peace education builds competencies on peace education and could help strengthen constituencies for peace and champions for wider institutionalization efforts.***

When we started advocating for E.O. 570, we had difficulty advocating for a robust program for implementation. Although it is disappointing, we were not discouraged. We believe that local initiatives could provide the necessary momentum to create ripples of change. By engaging and supporting local stakeholders and civil society partners in popularizing peace education we were hoping to contribute to building competencies of teachers, and bringing forth innovative approaches in promoting a culture of peace.

In the early years of E.O. 570 implementation, I had the privilege of witnessing the inspiring leadership of the likes of then Region 10 DepEd Regional Director Estrella Babano, who, even before the implementing guidelines for E.O. 570 was signed, had led the region-wide planning for the peace education program of DepEd Region 10. They take peace education seriously conducting an annual youth conference on the promotion of a culture of peace. DepEd Region 12 is also a trailblazer and active peace edu-

cation advocate. I am moved by the passionate leadership of their Regional Peace Education Coordinator, Agney Taruc, who is also one of the School of Peace advocates. He later served as one of the field experts in the crafting of competencies for the K-12 curriculum. These includes peace education.

Peace education is now being integrated into the K-12 curriculum. I believe this feat would not be achieved without the leadership and wisdom of those educators who have been actively integrating peace into basic education and promoting a culture of peace in their communities.

### **Moving Forward**

The stories I shared here are just a few of the initiatives of the government in advocating for the institutionalization of peace education in basic education and teacher education. There are also more strategies that can be employed given the many challenges in pursuing this. However, I believe that more than just being strategic, we need to put more work on sustaining efforts and endeavor to sustain the program for the long haul. We also need to communicate effectively lessons and gains of peace education towards a wider audience because its promotion is not merely the responsibility of the government.

If we want children to choose integrity, fairness, and generosity so that they might contribute to a just society; choose dialogue, collaboration and other peaceful means of resolving conflict so that there would be no more war; choose to protect this earth so that all may have enough...we need to seriously invest in a transformative education that will develop their character and ability to make these choices. ●

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**\*Emily T. Lambio** currently works with CARNO, through the Basic Education Systems Transformation Program of the Department of Education. She worked with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and handled its Peace Education and Advocacy Program from 2008-2009. She holds an MA on Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Sydney.



# *Checkpoints and Chokepoints in Integrating Peace Education in Teacher Education in Davao Region*

*by Venus Budoy-Betita\**

**I**n 2012–2014, the Forum Civil Peace Service (*forumZFD*)-Philippines Program and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Regional Office XII embarked on a collaborative project entitled “Integrating Peace Education in Teacher Education” in Davao Region. It was a project that concretized a regional response to the national mandate stipulated by the Executive Order No. 570, s. 2006 which is “Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education.” This mandate enjoins the Department of Education, CHED and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) to establish/enhance mechanisms to mainstream peace education in the educational system (i.e., basic formal and non-formal curriculum, in teacher education and in private schools). The project sought to include ‘Peace Education’ as one of the Special Topics in all institutions offering teacher education in Region XI (i.e., about 60 private and state universities/colleges including local colleges, spread across five provinces in the Davao Region). The project is an innovation in terms of integrating a standardized content of Peace Education in teacher education at the regional level.

The principal idea that steered the direction of the project was that ‘peace education is an integral part in setting the foundation of building peaceful

societies.’ It was guided by the framework that peace education is a process where teachers and students and their institutions become aware of the conflict contexts and realities of their schools and communities where they are situated; develop their capacities to address these conflicts; and take part in building sustainable and peaceful communities in the region.

The project focused on teacher education as an entry point considering teachers as natural multipliers in society and are in the frontline in developing critical thinking among students, especially in understanding and analyzing social issues. By providing an activity-based learning environment for students to understand relevant peace and conflict issues on different levels of society, the students can be empowered to address such conflicts nonviolently.

### **The Partner Institutions**

*forum*ZFD recognizes CHED Regional Office XI as the most suitable partner for this endeavor because it is one of the lead implementing agencies for Executive Order 570 particularly in higher education, and has the authority to enjoin all institutions offering teacher education to incorporate Peace Education through curriculum content, methodology, and activities. CHED’s role was mainly to identify entry points in the teacher education curricula; provide the necessary policy support such as issuing a regional mandate enjoining all teacher education institutions in the Davao Region to offer Peace Education as one of the Special Topics; act as conduit between *forum*ZFD and the teacher education institutions, assist in the production of the teaching guide; facilitate the monitoring during the roll-out phase, among others.

During the pilot phase, *forum*ZFD and CHED XI worked with 15 teacher education institutions/partner schools across the Davao region, which were carefully selected based on a set of criteria (a mix of state university, private sectarian and non-sectarian colleges and universities, and local colleges). These institutions sent their representative teachers who underwent rigorous trainings and workshops on peace education, participated in the writeshops on the development of a teaching guide and were prepared to become trainers for the roll-out/implementation phase. Most of the partner-schools adjusted their syllabus to accommodate the CHED XI mandate to integrate peace education as one of the Special Topic Courses in teacher

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education curriculum.

## Guiding Principles

Several principles guided the planning and implementation of the project not only embodied in the goal. Equal emphasis was likewise given to ensure that these were rooted in the processes in achieving the goals.

**Contextualization.** Students are able to maximize their learning curve if they can relate theoretical concepts into their own experiences and realities. This approach facilitates the deepening of the learners' understanding through the drawing out of practical knowledge (experiential learning). The contextualization of the lessons in the teaching guide to the conflict issues of Region XI helped the students build a connection between the social issues and peace concepts highlighted in each corresponding module to their distinct environment.

**Participatory methods and structures.** A participatory or inclusive environment means having a safe space for all actors to have equal opportunity to be involved in the design, development, and implementation of the project. Such a democratic environment nurtures dynamic discussions that create positive solutions. As a pioneer project in institutionalizing Peace Education in teacher education in the region, allowing all the stakeholders (students, teachers, program coordinators, deans, heads, and CHED) to actively participate in the decision-making processes, especially in producing a contextualized teaching guide, not only contributed to the realization of the project objectives but also validated the outputs as a product of collaboration of all stakeholders. This approach cultivated a sense of collective ownership of the project among the stakeholders.

**Process-oriented approach.** The partnership between *forumZFD* and CHED was not bound by a formal agreement or structure from the very beginning. Although both envisioned the initiative to contribute to the institutionalization of peace education in teacher education in Region XI, the specifics of how to achieve that goal were not, however, spelled out at the earlier stages. Each major step taken is based on the reflection of the previous step. This is done through regular and open communication between the key personnel of CHED and *forumZFD*. The partnership was informal and flexible that cooperation and trust-building between the implementing

organizations are key contributing factors. According to the partner teachers, the capacity building workshops, manual development writeshops and actual implementation of the teaching guide were all transformative processes because of the ample time allotted for processing, discussion, reflection and internalization of the concepts and values.

## **The Checkpoints**

The project was able to reach some milestones because of the following factors:

- A strong policy environment conducive for the integration of peace education in teacher education reflected in the existence of legal mechanisms that support such (E.O. 570) greatly contributed to the direction-setting and realization of the project. Hence, a thorough screening of appropriate policies and mandate from the local to the national level was done during the project planning.
- Given the timeframe and the wide scope of the project, the commitment of partner teacher education institutions is important to ensure effective implementation. Genuine commitment primarily rests on building trust through openness and inclusivity among key individuals from the institutions.
- Participatory methods and collective decision-making in the planning and implementation stages provided impetus for more positive engagement from all stakeholders and, in the end, a high degree of ownership of the output from all directions. However, this entailed a relatively long process which means working hard to sustain the commitment of each by setting up a mechanism for regular communication and feedback.
- Multi-partnerships benefited significantly from a flexible and loose structure in so far as it encouraged complementation and active participation from the implementing partners and stakeholders. However, it is also necessary to have clear coordination of key responsibilities especially when there are changes in the nature of partnership.

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- Contextualizing peace education to the area's peace and conflict issues, specifically the content and pedagogies, fosters critical consciousness among learners because of the connection that is built between personal and community realities to bigger social issues. It further creates a community of peace educators in the area with a common framework.
- Recognizing that peace educators should constantly equip themselves with the current developments on the issues/themes that they were discussing in classrooms based on the realities of their students. There is a need for them to continuously acquire new peace education strategies and approaches as well as relevant teaching materials.

### The Chokepoints

We also met glitches along the way as we worked with the different partner schools who have different structures and priorities and accepted the project with varying motivations and interests.

**Commitment and cooperation.** As in any start of a project, one of the major challenges in integrating peace education in the academe is gaining the support and ensuring the commitment and cooperation of all stakeholders. From the start, it was difficult to work with the piloting universities because of changes posed by adding Peace Education as one of the Special Topics. Others believed that it will only cause unnecessary overlapping and overloading since the concepts, issues and values entrenched in Peace Education are already included in other subjects. This disinterest and passive behavior resulted in other challenges such as identifying focal persons, lack of institutional support for teachers to attend trainings and workshops, and clashes of opinion between co-teachers. But some of these challenges were addressed with the constant engagement with the piloting teachers through regular meetings and school visits thereby nurturing a strong relationship with them.

**Challenges during the implementation of the Teaching Guide.** The teachers found the implementation of the teaching guide challenging because of the limited time allotted for the one-unit course (only 17–18 hours in one semester). They addressed the constraint by being more selective of the lessons and the activities. In some instances, they had to sacrifice activities that required liberal time such as processing and group discussions

which should ideally steer students into deeper critical discussion of the topic. Some teachers would do seminar-type, and conduct whole day classes during Saturdays and even if it went beyond the required number of hours.

In terms of the teaching guide's content and structure, some lessons and activities were challenging to the teachers and students. Some teachers were reluctant in delving into particular issues that represent realities in their own personal lives and communities for fear of 're-opening the wounds' or provoking conflict among the students. Others expressed that some lessons were too heavy for them to discuss due to lack of personal knowledge and because of personal biases. On the other hand, some lessons were only relevant to specific areas. In these challenges, teachers had to think creatively and resourcefully so as not to forego the lessons while also addressing and accommodating the context and realities of their students. Teachers had to assess what are appropriate and applicable to their students.

**Sustainability of the project.** After the piloting phase, *forumZFD* turned the project over to CHED XI for the region-wide implementation and monitoring. CHED-XI agreed to include the monitoring of the project in their regular monitoring mechanisms. However, *forumZFD* is aware of some challenges within CHED Region XI during the time of turnover such as lack of personnel focusing on the project, internal transition challenges due to movement of personnel among others. Added to that, there was no formally agreed plan between *forumZFD* and CHED on how the rollout process will push through. On the part of *forumZFD*, we offered to support the rollout phase through funding the participation of our trained partner teachers to conduct trainings in non-pilot schools.

### **Postscript**

One interesting observation in our project in teacher education integration was how our partner-teachers evolved as peace champions. They began to explore and apply peace education framework and pedagogy through their efforts and creativity in classroom teaching and learning, in their other roles/responsibilities in their school, and in their personal and professional relationships. One of our partner teachers, Mr. Lorenzo I. Balili Jr., of the Davao Central College is sharing in a separate story how his peace education formation challenged his perspective and pedagogical approach as a teacher.

## Further Steps in Contextualizing Peace Education in Other Academic Programs

Learning the ropes in integrating peace education in teacher education, *forumZFD* also reflected on how peace education can be contextualized in communication programs. In partnership with the Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON) and CHED-Regional Office XI, we introduced the conflict-sensitive journalism framework as a response to the need to counter media's strong and often negative influence on conflict dynamics through its power to shape public opinion and decision-making. The project considers that to successfully incorporate a conflict-sensitive view into regular media practice, journalists should reflect as early as possible upon their roles and responsibilities, before perceptions and attitudes are shaped by the day-to-day work. Through the introduction of conflict-sensitive journalism's philosophy and practice as a pre-service training, students are encouraged to examine the concepts and relationships between peace, conflict and violence already during their formation. The integration of the framework does not mean radical change but provides an enhancement of the current journalism training and practice. One of the highlights of the project is the introduction of some conflict analysis tools (mostly used in conflict transformation field) contextualized into journalistic practice, i.e., the timeline, conflict triangle, actor mapping, onion/PIN tool. Conflict-sensitive journalism proposes these techniques for journalists for use in data gathering and analyzing/choosing relevant story frame, among others. These tools allow journalists for more rigorous thinking, more analytical, to question and re-question, and discover truths behind truths, thus improving their journalistic practice of accurate, fair and comprehensive reporting. ●

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**\*Venus Budoy-Betita** is one of the senior project officers at Forum Civil Peace Service (*forumZFD*)-Philippine Program based in Davao City, a German non-government organization promoting nonviolent conflict transformation. Her recent work focused on the contextualization of peace education in Davao Region in the following higher education programs: teacher education, communication/journalism, and political science.





# *Transforming The Head, The Heart, And The Hand Of Preservice Teachers Towards Building A Culture Of Peace*

*by Arlan Dela Cruz\**

## **Context**

Schools all over the world are integrating peace education in their curricula as a practical and ethical response to the demands and challenges of the 21st Century. Broadly defined, peace education is transformative education that promotes a culture of peace. Peace Education is an education where future generations of citizens are transformed to be tolerant of differences and appreciative of the diversity of humanity as the world becomes smaller technologically, socio-culturally and politically. However, such culture of tolerance among students will only be possible if there is also transformation among teachers who are important agents of students' school life. This is crucial most especially during their training as preservice teachers. It is within this backdrop that Holy Angel University (HAU) ([www.hau.edu.ph](http://www.hau.edu.ph)), a private higher education institution located in the province of Pampanga, Philippines, pursued peace education integration in its undergraduate teacher education curriculum since 2012.

This paper aims to present HAU's journey of integrating peace education in its undergraduate teacher education curricula and how these efforts are translated into sustainable community service projects in government

day care centers and public elementary and secondary Schools in Angeles City while in the process providing its pre-service teachers with integrative, reflective and service-learning experiences thus transforming their Head, Heart and Hand.

More so, this article also forms part of my personal reflections as a former Chairperson for HAU's teacher education department and once the Head of its outreach and community services office. I have been a teacher educator for more than ten years in HAU with academic training in values education, sociology and applied cosmic anthropology. The peace education integration which I initiated in 2012, supported by our college dean and faculty is now a five-year work in progress. While I believe that it is still in its toddler stage, we can already share the gains and challenges with peace loving citizens in different teacher education institutions who can learn from our experience and hopefully be inspired to espouse the same advocacy in their own vineyard. I sincerely believe that if it's worth doing, it's worth sharing.

More than improving HAU teacher education graduates' performance in the government's Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), our goal resonates Pope Francis' challenge to the youth, which he articulated when he spoke at the University of Sto. Tomas in Manila last 2015. He envisioned a youth that "Thinks Well, Feels Well and Be Well", a mind, a heart and a hand that work harmoniously to serve others for the glory of God. In the case of HAU, we do this by transforming our young preservice teachers as agents of peace: specifically as peace educators, as spiritual leaders in the classroom and as advocates of nonviolent conflict resolution for high school and elementary student leaders. It is also consistent with our mission and vision as a non-sectarian Catholic university of higher learning to provide quality education towards producing individuals of competence, compassion and conscience.

### **Where It All Began: Challenge Accepted**

Our integration of peace education in Holy Angel University undergraduate teacher education program is curriculum-based and theme-based. This came as a response to the call of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and with Miriam College to Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) with Centers of Excellence (COE) or Centers of Development (COD)

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status in teacher education through a national seminar-workshop which I attended in 2009.

In 2011, we accepted the challenge and started to look for *“integratable”* items in the CHED mandated teacher education curriculum and we found three subjects: Social Dimensions of Education, Special Topics and Practice Teaching. More so, to inculcate an understanding of their role as spiritual leaders, the teaching of catechism to pupils in the elementary schools is now a pre-requisite among sophomore and junior preservice teachers before they can take their Practice Teaching in their terminal semester.

The scope of peace education as a subject matter encompasses equally important and mutually interdependent themes. However, there are just too many themes to cover, we focused on three peace education themes which we integrated in the syllabi of the course mentioned: Upholding Human Dignity, Challenging Prejudice and Building Tolerance, Promoting Nonviolence, Resolving and Transforming Conflict, Cultivating Inner Peace and Caring for the Earth.

Our first attempt was including Introduction to Peace Education lessons in the Final Grading part of the Social Dimensions of Education course syllabus offered to preservice teachers in their second year. The book written by Dr. Loreta Castro and Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace of the Miriam College Center for Peace Education is used as the main reference. For the first time, our preservice teachers are confronted with discussions on the holistic understanding of peace using Johan Galtung’s negative peace and positive peace framework; as well as discussions on the multidimensionality of peace both at the micro and macro levels. I find this moment crucial for aspiring peace educators who have been nurtured under an outdated paradigm about peace as merely the absence of direct and physical violence.

The CHED mandated undergraduate teacher education curriculum requires the offering of a three-unit special topics course which TEIs can use for subjects which may not be covered by its Professional, Major and General Education course line-up. We use these Special Topics units to offer three separate one-unit courses using modules developed by UNESCO: Indigenous Knowledge for the Environment, Storytelling for the Environment and Values Education for the Environment. However, these three separate

courses were later integrated into one three-unit course entitled, Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies offered for the first time to senior preservice teachers in the first semester of school year 2014–15. A compilation of readings is used as the course's major reading material.

Catechetical Instruction Ministry among sophomore and junior preservice teachers is a co-curricular requirement in the teacher education program of HAU. This program employs team teaching methods and each preservice teacher-catechist maintains a weekly reflective journal of her/his teaching experiences. The Christian Living Education Department and Campus Ministry Office of HAU are in charge of the training-formation of the preservice teacher-catechists held during summer and semestral breaks. As an offshoot to this ministry, faculty members of the Teacher Education Department are currently doing a qualitative research (using the reflective journals as the primary source data) and quantitative research on the teaching experiences of these preservice teachers as catechists. These will serve as a source of evaluation to improve the catechetical instruction of preservice teachers to the public elementary schools around Angeles City.

Using the philosophical and pedagogical principles of service-learning, Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies led us to incorporate three community projects: City-wide ecoliteracy/storytelling to Day Care Centers in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare & Development (DSWD) of Angeles City, the weeklong celebration of the International Day of Peace every second week of September, and simulation training on facilitating workshops on peer mediation and basic conflict resolution. The book, *Mediators Training Manual (A Complete School Curriculum for Grade 6–8)* on peer mediation for junior high school accessed online ([www.peermediators.org](http://www.peermediators.org)), consists of twelve modules, written for American school students, is translated, contextualized and implemented by our preservice teachers in simulated setting with their peers as trainees. This simulation prepares them for their internship in public elementary and high schools in Angeles City where they are required to organize three-day intensive basic conflict resolution training workshop to school leaders as part of their internship requirements.

Since 2012, celebrating the International Day of Peace, which falls every 21st day of September, has become an event that high school Values Edu-

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cation teachers and students look forward to attending. This is a weeklong celebration that starts with the symbolic release of doves and balloons after a Holy Mass. The Peace Day celebration in HAU has also led us to meet with, and listen to peace loving individuals in the peace and human rights conferences we organize within the weeklong celebration. Since it began, the one-day conference has expanded its audience reach from community members within the campus into a broader and more diverse audience, with invited delegates not just within Angeles City (organized in 2012–2015). This year, made possible in partnership with UNESCO-APNIEVE Philippines (Asia-Pacific Network for International and Values Education), the conference delegates came from various provinces in Region III. To encourage wider participation, human rights workshops, photo and art exhibits, film showings, forum and inter-school competitions are simultaneously organized and are opened to the general public especially to teachers and students from basic and higher education institutions. Preservice teachers have also posted their Peace Day messages in their Facebook accounts, complete with peace hug photos or photos wearing Peace Day t-shirts.

### **What I Found Out: My Inspiration**

Integrating peace education in the teacher education curriculum of Holy Angel University is my brainchild, a reflection of my personal beliefs and convictions, a mirror of my world views and the declaration of what I would like the world to be in the future for its citizens. But I do not want these noble advocacies to find its grave near my grave. This is especially so when the fruits of our efforts are beginning to unfold.

In my paper entitled, *“Bring out the Gandhi in Every Preservice Teacher: Peace Education Integration in the Practice Teaching Program of Holy Angel University (HAU), Angeles City, Pampanga,”* which I presented during the UNESCO-APNIEVE Philippines National Convention held at First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAITH) in Tanauan, Batangas last April 14–16, 2016, I shared initial findings based on the thematic data analyses of our preservice teachers’ reflective journals in conducting peer mediation training workshops as well as the feedback from their trainees and the partner schools where these workshops were held for the past three years. Among the findings are the following:

First, there was a heightened awareness among the preservice teachers in their role as peace educator. There are realizations that after they received the peace education trainings, becoming a teacher to them means more than being trained to pass the licensure board examination, more than getting a tenured job in the public school system and teaching the subject they specialized in. The findings suggest that all the peace education lessons they learned since their second year of training was profoundly appreciated, especially when they experienced facilitating peer mediation/conflict resolution trainings with actual students during their internship. Some even toyed with the idea of replicating these activities (catechism teaching, storytelling for the environment, celebrating peace day, facilitating conflict resolution workshops) when they become full-fledged teachers themselves.

Second, our preservice teachers have come to realize the difficulty and joy of organizing and conducting school based conflict resolution trainings in their respective cooperating schools. In their journals were narratives of the need to closely coordinate with the school head, the teachers and the student trainees themselves. Our preservice teachers reported how to contextualize and translate the modules' examples and activities to fit into their own unique school settings given that the peer mediation module book was originally designed and implemented in American schools.

Third, there is the realization that their students can be taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully among their peers at such a young age and thus in the process avoid bullying behavior in schools. Personally, I find this a welcome development for our preservice teachers' mindset. It shook their paradigm about conflict resolution being confined only for adults.

And last, our preservice teachers reported their felt need to improve their facilitating skills. Foremost among what they have found to be most challenging is processing the trainees' answers after an activity; the art of questioning and linking their trainees' ideas to form a synthesis at the end of the workshop. Their experiences in facilitating conflict resolution workshops for student leaders have deepened their resolve to be a true facilitator of learning.

Indeed, by institutionalizing these integration efforts in our teacher education curriculum, and syllabi of selected courses sustaining these community

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projects seem like a journey half travelled. More so, our experiences have shown that sustained commitment and support, as well as a strong partnership with concerned public and private sectors both within and outside of our University, is vital to achieving our goals for the preservice teachers.

Transforming the Head, the Heart and the Hand of our preservice teachers means adhering to the principles of peace education throughout entire processes—from organizing and planning to implementing these activities. Since these are processes of teaching and learning, as a teacher educator and once a middle-level administrator for teacher education programs, I am always challenged by the need to uphold principles of student-centeredness, integration, collaboration, reflection and democratization of participation—that they do not remain as mere rhetoric but become the focus of our action. ●

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***\*Arlan E. Dela Cruz is Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy in Holy Angel University, Pampanga. He is one of the Regional Coordinators of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Network of International Education & Values Education (APNIEVE) Philippines and for Region 3. Currently, he is preparing his dissertation research for the Asian Social Institute's Applied Cosmic Anthropology doctoral program.***





# *My Journey in Peace Education*

*by Marco P. Gutang\**

I got into peace education by way of a family project. It was the mid 1990's when my late grandfather, Angel C. Palanca's birth centennial was then coming up. He was the chair of Far Eastern University for twenty years. As a way to honor him, the family decided to sponsor the development of a peace education program in the university. It was launched on October 1, 1998.

It so happened that at the time the family was planning this, I was at a "crossroads" in my life. A business venture didn't turn out so well and I was thinking whether to embark on another business or find a new job. My aunts, Sr. Vicky Palanca, ICM, and Angelina P. Jose, who spearheaded this initiative, invited me to join the core group and take an active part in the development of the program. As my background was not really in education, I was quite apprehensive (I finished a bachelor's degree in commerce). But with a little bit of "arm twisting" (in my aunt's words), and I had time on my hands anyway, I took the invitation with a "let's see what happens..." attitude.

After the launching of the program, a core group was organized, headed by the Dean of FEU's Institute of Arts and Sciences, the late Dean Angel O. Abaya. It was composed of professors of the institute representing Phi-

losophy, Psychology, Pilipino, English, and Social Science. Sr. Vicky, Mrs. Jose, and I, represented the family. We met about once a month, for a year, to discuss the nitty-gritty of how to go about implementing the program and what topics to offer.

There was no question that the Six Issue Peace Education framework developed by Dr. Toh Swee-Hin and Dr. Virginia Cawagas was to be used. This had already been agreed upon at the outset. It was also agreed early on that a participatory approach would be used for teaching the program.

We had to decide whether to create a stand alone course or integrate it in the curriculum. After it was decided that integrating was impractical at the time due to the resources needed for such an endeavor, as FEU was then composed of five colleges (and today even more), the core group agreed to offer it as a three unit course under the philosophy department.

The following year, the core group went on to develop a set of modules to be used by teachers. These modules are currently under revision today.

In 1999, we started the program with two pilot classes. During this time, I underwent “on the job training,” observing in one class, while team-teaching in another class. We also underwent training in facilitation to be able to implement the modules properly.

I realized then that many of the topics I was tackling in my classes weren’t really new. I remember my grade school and high school teachers discussing social, political, economic, environmental, personal, cultural, and human rights issues. But there wasn’t much emphasis placed on how these issues related to my life experiences.

What was new for me in peace education was the packaging as well as the delivery of the content. That made all the difference! These issues were now considered as peace issues. Coupled with the participatory approach, I realized I was guiding students to arrive at a deeper meaning of these issues, and helping them see how it played a part in their personal life experiences. Peace education was making my students think for themselves. Furthermore, it made them explore ways by which they can promote these issues in the hopes of becoming agents of change. I was reaching the heart level. It gave me a sense of purpose and meaning early on. I thought then that this was

something worth doing for the long term. I was not only promoting a way of life; I was also giving students a more meaningful education.

Training to become a teacher wasn't easy for me. I'm naturally introverted. I'm not good at small talk. I get tongue tied. I usually struggle for words when meeting new people. What more when speaking in front of groups and large audiences? I was always nervous at the start of every class. I still get "sweaty" every so often, especially when I'm trying out a new activity or game. But through the use of participatory methods, I just make it a point to follow the steps in facilitation, and let the activities "speak for themselves."

Since I deal with promoting certain attitudes and a particular way of life — a culture — people sometimes hold me up to certain expectations which, many times, I find too high and even stereotypical. I'm expected to be "peaceful" — mellow, soft spoken, never getting angry, always going with the flow. But the way to peace is never always smooth. Many times, it goes against the current, especially when speaking about injustice, and cultural transformation. I have my bad days and good days. I have my cranky days as well as sunny days. But I've found that I have to challenge myself to always be at my best when in front of my students. I have to keep bettering myself. I have to walk the talk, so to speak. I always remind myself that peace education is not just a subject matter.

This work can be quite taxing. There are times when I've felt that the general sentiment of the population is to take up arms, and here I am promoting peace talks in class. It can feel quite lonely, even futile — like pushing against a brick wall. There are times when it can be downright depressing whenever I look back and think that despite teaching for seventeen years, the world is still an unpeaceful place today!

There have also been times when I would run into a colleague, whom I haven't seen for quite some time, and he or she would ask me how I'm doing. When I tell them that I'm still teaching peace education, they'd be surprised and say something like, "*Buhay pa pala yan* (the program is still alive)?"

One organization that helped me a lot is the Peacemakers' Circle, an interfaith dialogue organization headed by Dr. Marites Guingona-Africa. Their Tuesday inner work circle which I attended regularly was a big help. I

made friends with people of different religions and faiths. It helped us, peace promoters, to express the burdens we were going through. It made me feel light even for just two hours. Most importantly, it reassured me that I was not alone in this work. That fueled me to keep going on. Even though I don't get to attend the group meetings these days, I can keep reminding myself that I'm not alone. There are people who believe in what I do.

Another organization that has helped me a lot is the Peace Education Network headed by Dr. Loretta Castro, Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace, and Ms. Mirma Mae Tica. It is a network composed of people from formal and non-formal education, NGOs, and government agencies that promote peace. It meets only once or twice a year but they have provided peace educators with a venue for regular updates on peace issues happening in the country and the world. For me, the “kamustahan” generates a feeling of community. It strengthens me and inspires me to continue with my work. It makes me feel that I am truly part of something bigger than myself.

In the FEU, we formed the Peace Council. This is the core group in our university that continues to formulate and promote peace education programs in the campus despite the drastic changes in the curriculum that will take effect in 2018. This is due to the effects of the new K-12 program. We may lose the stand alone course when these changes take effect. This little community of professors, administrative executives, and personnel keeps my hopes alive that our program will continue beyond 2018 in whatever form and shape that may be.

With peace education being a holistic endeavor, I've had many teachers and trainers who've deepened my understanding of the world and myself:

- Dean Adelaida Fronda of FEU trained me in facilitation techniques;
- Dr. Wilson Chua of FEU and Prof. Earnest Tan of Miriam College trained me in the psycho-spiritual approach;
- Dr. Victoria Narciso-Apuan of Miriam College immersed me in gender sensitivity as well as issues in aging and the elderly;
- Dr. Elizabeth Eviota of Ateneo de Manila, my “Origins of Inequality” professor, turned my world topsy-turvy and showed me a dif-

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fering perspective on capitalism and other social structures;

- Dr. Lourdes R. Quisumbing of Miriam College, showed me how values play a central role in our lives;
- Human rights educators Theresa Limpin and Aung Myo Min, formerly of the Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education, stressed the importance of human rights as an essential standard for peace;
- Dr. Feliece Yeban of Philippine Normal University, trained me in module-making;
- Dr. Vicky Segovia of Miriam College Environmental Studies Institute, showed me the connections between our culture and the state of our ecology;
- Fr. Arsie Lumiqued, MSC, of Miriam College and Ateneo Center for Family Ministries, trained me in family guidance and counseling and showed me the importance of wearing many hats while remaining rooted in who I am;
- All the people in Miriam College Center for Peace Education, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, Generation Peace, and Amnesty International, who educated me and enjoined me to campaign to control small arms and light weapons;
- Dr. Loreta Castro of Miriam-CPE, continues to remind me that nuclear weapons remain a grave threat to humanity;
- Of course, Dr. Toh Swee-Hin and Dr. Virginia Cawagas, retired professors of the UN Mandated University for Peace, Costa Rica, who started it all;

For those whom I've failed to mention, I pray they forgive me.

I cannot emphasize enough the value of having good mentors and trainers coming from various areas of specialization. To teach effectively, I've had to get a good grasp of so many topics in so many areas of study. The people I've mentioned above are just some who've supported me all these years — ALL THESE PEOPLE — just to equip me to teach one three-unit

course! What I've done and continue to do would not be possible without great people behind me.

Today, I have "leveled up" and I conduct training of trainers workshops aside from my teaching. I found it very crucial to have a system of continuity in place. There is a need to keep looking ahead and train the next generation of teachers who will take up the cause. I believe that the fruits of many of the things I work for today, I may not see in my lifetime. As Ed Garcia puts it, peace needs a "marathon mentality." We need to have a vision that sees beyond our lifetimes. ●

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**\*Marco P. Gutang** has been teaching peace education at the Far Eastern University (FEU) for 17 years. He also gives peace education workshops to youth and teachers within and outside FEU. He is a member of the board of Trustees of the Angel C. Palanca Peace Program Foundation, Inc. (ACP3FI) and the Philippine Council for Peace and Global Education (PCPGE). He is an MA candidate in Values Education and Development, and has a Master's Degree in Gerontology from Miriam College.

# *Peace Building and Peace Education Story in Ateneo de Zamboanga*

*by Perla Arlene S. Ledesma, Babylyn Verzano Tubilla,  
and Espiridion Atilano Jr.\**

Our story begins with our aspiration to campaign or crusade for peace in Zamboanga Peninsula. The crusade for peace is an innovation we utilize to address the very complex issues that beset society throughout history. These issues are often linked with violence. Some of these are caused by structural imbalances and social inequalities. Poverty and marginalization brought about by structural violence and extreme cultural ethnocentrism that result in strong prejudices against the marginalized sectors of the society are proof of how widespread social injustices are. The other forms of violence are the direct, physical and psychological threats and trauma brought about by the armed hostilities between state and non-state forces. Presently, a new face of conflict has emerged characterized by terrorism and extremism mostly victimizing the vulnerable sectors of our society.

With a strong determination to respond to the many challenges concerning peace and development that beleaguered our society, coupled with the desire to facilitate peace and development in Western Mindanao through cultural understanding, the Ateneo de Zamboanga (AdZ), under the leadership of Fr. William H. Kreutz, SJ, established the Institute of Cultural Studies in Western Mindanao (ICSWM) in 1991. The ICSWM is Ateneo's way of assisting the people of Western Mindanao, now Zamboanga Peninsula and

Isabela (ZAMPENIS) to work for peace in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. ICWSM used intercultural dialogue (reflective discernment) to help overcome cultural ignorance and to perpetuate harmonious relationships between and among peoples. Along the course of culture promotion led by the ICWSM, there came the realization of the need to complement the peace building task with peace education, both in the curricular and co-curricular aspects, and with the aspiration of addressing issues that breed violence which leads to armed hostilities.

Thus, the Ateneo Peace Institute (API) was created in 1999. Upon its creation, API assumed the following goals: 1. Coordinate, develop, implement and monitor peace education programs in all levels of instruction and formation in the curricular and co-curricular areas; 2. Link with and assist other schools (both private and public), in similar or related peace education and formation efforts; 3. Offer programs and activities related to developing a culture of peace in various government offices, non-government agencies church and mosque communities, military and non-school entities 4. Engage in research activities related to school's peace activities beyond school; 5. Develop persons to be peace advocates who will possess the expertise to actively assist in conflict management and conflict resolution activities among those who seek such aid; 6. Actively bring Ateneo to linkages and network with other similar organizations and groups engaged in the same peace endeavors, such as this one.

### **Peace Education in ADZU (Our story)**

Peace Education in ADZU started as a PEACE Formation Program meant to reach out to, and influence the faculty and staff. The first phase of the Peace Formation Program is the Orientation towards Peace (OTP). OTP seeks to orient the participants about the paths to peace concepts coupled with the understanding and appreciation of Ignatian values and ideals and the Vision-Mission of the Institution plus the Mindanao context.

The second phase is Transforming Hearts & Minds for Peace & Unity (THMPU). This phase intends to make participants learn, unlearn and relearn the history of our country, particularly of Mindanao, to better comprehend the roots of the present conflict that has beset our land. It also seeks to help participant(s) acknowledge one's historical biases based on "correct/



right” historical facts and information one had gotten from his predecessors. Moreover, this phase aims to bridge understanding and unity between and among multicultural groups in the area.

The third phase is the Culture of Peace (COP). The last phase aims for self and societal transformation where peace and justice become a way of life for everyone in the ADZU and the communities it serves. As such, it intends to engage (involve) each one to think globally but act locally; foster tolerance by recognizing the differences in cultures; respect human rights and human dignity; initiate mutual cooperation and openness to Inter/Intra Religious Dialogues, practice positive interaction with people in the community; and promote positive social responsibility and civic oriented attitude. This phase is very challenging yet very promising because it demands each one in the community to be a living exemplar of a culture of peace.

The faculty & Staff underwent 3-day Seminar Workshops for the first and second phase, while the deepening part and integration happen in the last phase. This is where the transfer of learning or the application of new knowledge takes place.

After several years of capacitating the faculty and staff on peace and developmental formation, Ateneo de Zamboanga (AdZ) saw the need to convey peace education to the students because Zamboanga City and Mindanao are situated in realms where multiculturalism exists and where the existential realities of our students are marred with structural violence especially poverty and discrimination. In the year 2000 the Ateneo Peace Education Program was begun.

The peace education program in the Ateneo de Zamboanga University (ADZU) is embedded in the curricula of each academic unit. The Framework or context it adopts is anchored on the Flower Shape Culture of Peace (COP) Model developed by Dr. Virginia Cawagas and Dr. Toh Swee-Hin. This model is anchored on the following paths to peace concepts: (1) Cultivating Inner Peace, (2) Promoting Human Rights (3) Living with Compassion & Justice (4) Building Cultural Respect, Reconciliation and Solidarity (5) Dismantling the Culture of War and (6) Living in Harmony with the Earth. In the process of integration (infusion) of peace teachings in the school curricula, the Ateneo identity in our peace education program(s) becomes

apparent because we “marry” the paths to peace of Dr. Cawagas and Dr. Toh with the Ignatian values and ideals of the Jesuits.

In the Basic Education Unit, Peace Education Integration is introduced in all subject areas. The integration is manifested thru its inclusion in the syllabi, course outlines and lesson plans in each subject area. In terms of format and lesson structure, the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) is followed. IPP supports peace education integration in the curriculum through its various components, requiring reflection and action from the learners. The paths and commitment to peace are also recited by the grade school students during assemblies and inside their respective classrooms before the morning sessions begin.

In the College Unit, peace education is also integrated in the curriculum of the general education subjects. To wit: Social Science subjects like History, Political Science, Sociology-Anthropology; Literatures, Philosophy and Religious Studies (Infusing the COP Framework coupled with the Ignatian Ideals. The implementation process differs from each College/school. In the School of Arts & Sciences (SAS) the subject teachers become the peace educators/facilitators in the classroom. However, in the College of Nursing peace education integration is infused in the Related Learning Experience (RLE) courses of the nursing students and the Ateneo Peace Institute personnel serve as peace facilitators. This Program is called the Catalyst for Peace Program (CPP). In the School of Education (SED) peace teachings are integrated in the Professional Education Courses especially on the Social Dimensions of Teachings, Teaching Profession, and Leadership Education.

Included in the preparation of peace education integration in the curriculum is building the capacity for our teachers through trainings and workshops. The workshops focus on the WHAT, WHY and HOW of peace education integration in the curriculum. The initial step is to revisit the curriculum guide and course outline of each subject area to identify learning contents where each particular peace petal or theme could be integrated and which Ignatian Values can wed (put together) in each peace theme. For example, nurturing inner peace can go with Ignatian Spirituality-compassion and mercy.

To enhance peace teachings in all academic units, logistical support was put in place by the administration. Peace education coordinators were des-

ignated in the respective units with 6 unit-service (de)loads. Provisions for some materials such as lesson designs/modules and other materials needed in the conduct of collaborative learning activities are made available for teachers and students. Capacity building Workshops on Peace Integration in the Curriculum are also rolled out among faculty members, specially the newly hired faculty.

Aside from the curricular integration AdZ, through its different units, colleges and offices, also extends its peace advocacy thru the co and extra-curricular activities such as the Conduct of Thematic Fora/Symposia/Conferences (on various topics including the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, Bangsamoro Basic Law, Power Forum, Water, Disaster Risk Reduction); Issue-based Discussion through Circles of Discernment (Understanding Extremism); Ignatian Conversation Growth Circle (ICGC); and Community based activities such as Outreach Programs, Livelihood Training, Peace and Psychological Healing, Face to Faith Dialogue, Inter and Intra Religious Dialogues, Solidarity Exchange, Lift A School Project (API/CCES), Ecological Garden, Peace Exhibits, Roundtable Discussion on Youth and Peace building, schools for the indigenous people. In the area of peace advocacy, we have the War Toys for Peaceful Joys activities. The activity was conceptualized to inspire children to live a life of non-violence. Young students were asked to bring two or more of their old war toys such as guns, tank models, and action figures which they traded for educational toys, bags, and school supplies. We were also engaged in two peace research projects undertaken by the Ateneo Peace Institute & Social Development Office—The Economic Capacities and Preferred Livelihoods of the IDPs in ZC; and Shared Space for Peace: Stories of Peaceful Coexistence from the Women of Mindanao-- completed in 2015–2016 respectively.

All these engagements are made possible through the support and partnership we have had with the civil society organizations (CSOs), international organizations such as The Asia Foundation, UNICEF, International Organization on Migration (IOM), the LGUs and National Government through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP), especially for the Symposia and Conferences. Our research partners are the USAID-Engage & the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). On the other hand, peace education integration in the curriculum is made possible through the support

of the entire ADZU administration led by our President(s).

## **Stories of Challenges**

Peace building work has yielded bittersweet experiences for us. There are pains and gains. As peace educators we faced lots of challenges, most of which we are still trying to resolve. Some of these challenges are the personal attitudes and biases we have been carrying all along, which are rooted in our historical past. Thus we believe that in order to work in the name of peace and progress a “conversion of, and among peace educators” should come before anything else. Our geographical location also poses great concern; it being home to multiculturalism and being “branded” as conflict-ridden areas by non-Mindanaoans. We know deep in our hearts that we have had an impact in our Ateneo community and the communities we serve when it comes to promoting and building peace, through the many peace programs of the University. However, after the Zamboanga Siege in September 2013, we felt that our faith in peace initiatives was shaken. Currently, we feel that there exists a “silent and psychological discrimination” between and among the cultural groups in Zamboanga City. It is quite difficult to talk about peace and justice with the community when all you can see is poverty, displacement, psychological threats, unstable security, fear of the unknown, and more. Perhaps, genuine healing has to take place first, before we can again start a smooth journey towards building peace for justice and development. More so, it is quite difficult to gauge the effectiveness of our efforts for peace because of the lack of a systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism,



*Chat Series:  
Workshop on  
Sustaining  
the Peace in  
Mindanao.*



*Understanding Youth Engaged in Sustainable Peace (YES) PEACE! Workshop.*

which we would like to address in the days to come. Further, the unstable peace and order situation in the region hampers the regular institutional Exposure Activities for our faculty, staff and students such as the Summer of Service (SOS) and Exchange Program.

But despite the many challenges that beset our peace education and peace building advocacy in this part of Mindanao, we continue to commit and work for peace because we believe that there will always be ways and means in addressing these challenges. One way is to continue capacitating the faculty and staff with the knowledge, skills and values they need to become effective and efficient peace educators and facilitators. Another is to enhance the formation and advocacy campaign through regular Information, Education and Communication (IECs), and to keep on innovating approaches and strategies that are research and evidence-based for effective program intervention. Furthermore, we need to improve our research skills to be able to come up with more studies that are relevant and have direct impact to peace building and peace intervention. We also need to heighten efforts towards monitoring and evaluation of our peace education programs, peace advocacy, peace research and communication, and interfaith or interreligious dialogues. There is a need to make it more systematic, cohesive and institutionalized. Lastly, we have to learn and gain insights from the experiences of other schools and recognize peace centers in or outside of the country through continuous benchmarking and knowledge and skills upgrading.

### **Lessons Learned**

In the course of this peace building journey, we have learned that there is no standard way or approach to teaching peace. Neither is there a single formula for peace advocacy and work towards the promotion of justice and development for the greater good. It is always dependent on the needs and

the current realities of those whose ways of thinking we seek to change. Mentors, partners, and collaborators are essential companions in this very challenging journey—of promoting, advocating and building authentic peace. We need each other to serve as one another's support group. No amount of hurdles will hinder our efforts to work for the greater good because in this very complex endeavor our enthusiasm and commitment to peace building and societal transformation are what really count and indeed matter.

## **Our Hopes**

Although, the various peace programs and activities demonstrated a way by which Ateneo could realize its role as an agent of social change and transformation, we hope Peace Education will provide an opportunity for the entire university community to reflect on the many problems besetting our society, and to come up with realistic and viable ways to develop a more favorable climate for community members needed to build a culture of peace.

We do hope, too, that peace and environmental education will be given more importance in the pursuit of a more peaceful, just and sustainable local and global society. Also, we are optimistic that more learning institutions will boost the implementation of the peace education integration in the curriculum as mandated by Executive Order (E.O.) 570, based on their current context and realities. Lastly, we desire and aspire for a more systematic, institutionalized and well-defined peace education program for our country, one that includes genuine participation from its people commencing from program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating processes.

We would like to end our story with this popular mantra “there is no other way, PEACE is, and the only way! *Muchismas Gracias Y Buenas Tardes A todo.* ●

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**\*Perla “Arlene” Soriano-Ledesma** is the Director of the Ateneo Peace Institute. She is a Professor at the School of Education, Ateneo de Zamboanga University (ADZU), teaching undergraduate and graduate programs. **Espiridion “Espie” D. Atilano, Jr.** is the Coordinator of the Junior High School Peace Education Program of ADZU. He is the Chairperson of the Social Studies Department of the same unit. **Babylyn “Babe” Tubilla** is the Coordinator of the Grade School Peace Education Program, ADZU. She also teaches Civics and Culture in the Social Studies Department of the Grade School Unit.

# *Challenges and Hopes of Peace Education in Mindanao State University – Maguindanao*

*by Dr. Soraya Q. Sinsuat\**

**E**ducation is a powerful tool for social change and the transformation of people. It is achieved not only in the formal classroom settings but also through non-formal or community teachings.

Even before the 2008 outbreak of violence, and the series of armed confrontations between the Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the province of Maguindanao and its people have been suffering from all sorts of difficulties and miseries brought about by calamities caused by human activities. This resulted in the evacuation and displacement of many people, estimated to have reached three million (3 million) in Mindanao, according to the International Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC, 2010).

The Mindanao State University–Maguindanao, has stepped up its program of helping students whose families live in the conflict-affected areas, seeing to it that their schooling is not disrupted by helping with some of their needs — financial or otherwise. As the Chancellor of the University, I spearheaded the initiative. The institution, through its Peace Education Center and Extension program, which has the aim of assisting nearby communities and developing them to be partners in realizing its Vision, Mis-

sion and Goals, initiated the Extension Program in Barangay Bago-Inged, Datu Odin Sinsuat, an adjacent barangay of the Municipality. The College of Education is assigned to facilitate the functional literacy and livelihood program for the community. This aims to develop the community to be socially and economically responsible in their field. This extension program has been successfully implemented through the support and assistance of various agencies working for peace and sustainable development in these communities especially in the conflict-affected areas. These partner agencies are the Department of Agriculture, World Food Programme, and Growth with Equity in Mindanao-USAID.

On October 15, 2009, Prof. Alibai Satol and Prof. Solayha Sam, two faculty members from the College of Education, visited the area to gather the participants. Consultation and planning were done to prepare the carefully selected participants. There were 25 parents chosen to be the participants/beneficiaries.

On April 22, 2010, Phase 1 of the literacy program started. The parents were illiterate, hence, lessons on the alphabet, numbers and basic computation were conducted. There were also lectures on climate change given to the parents, which were facilitated by Prof. Samaon Guiamla, a faculty member from the College of Forestry. After a series of classroom teachings, the livelihood program was implemented. The first part of the livelihood program was on food preservation and processing. The participants were taught various ways of cooking, preserving, and processing food.

While the program implementation was in progress, Prof. Satol and Prof. Sam submitted a proposal to the Department of Agriculture seeking its partnership in implementing the project. The proposal was approved by the World Food Programme (WFP) for implementation from May 2010 to 2013. Phase I of the Functional and Literacy Program for Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPS) and indigent parents ended with the graduation rites on July 28, 2010. The parents also exhibited their vegetables as their yield in the backyard gardening project of the program.

Through this program, the Mindanao State University-Maguindanao also extended their financial and moral support, working with program coordinators and facilitators of the Integrated Laboratory Science High School, and



Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges thus resulting in the implementation of Phase 2 of the Extension Program. There were 50 participants in the Vegetable Production Project phase. Farming activities such as weeding, landscaping, fencing and nursery making were undertaken on September 25, 2010 and ended on October 5, 2010. Because of the success of the program, the Department of Agriculture, together with some non-government organizations like the World Food Programme, GEM-USAID, gave additional help.

### **Value of Peace Education, Lessons learned and Commitment in Implementing Peace Education**

There is a need for continuing Peace Education in the community as armed confrontations between the Moro rebel group — the Bangsamoro Moro Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Government of the Philippines Armed Forces still occur even at this time.

Mindanao State University-Maguindanao is situated in the area where the armed confrontations happen in nearby barangays thus affecting the attendance of its own students in classes. Classes in the barangay schools affected by the confrontations are also disrupted; children, pupils/students, women and the elderly are traumatized; livelihoods are destroyed; cultural solidarity slowly disintegrates. There is, as well, the threat of terrorists recruiting the youth as fighters.

With Peace Education, the University can be an agent in capacitating the youth to resist adverse ideologies of some groups, be tolerant of diversity and eradicate their prejudices. The satisfaction of teaching peace ultimately comes from the appreciation expressed by those people who are affected by the armed conflict in Mindanao and from their realization that attaining peace means a better life for them. However, we are continually confronted with challenges in our desire to institutionalize peace education. In the nearby communities, some of the Bangsamoro are hesitant to participate or to accept change as taught in most peace education seminars believing that the activity will not alleviate the poverty they are in. Also, if Peace Education is being taught by non-Mindanaoans, who have not experienced the things they did, they feel that they will not be able to empathize with their struggles. For them, this kind of education is not applicable to their real situations.

Another issue seen is in terms of the challenges posed to the graduate

students of Peace Education on how they can be agents of transformation. Cultural beliefs, traditions and great fear of, and respect for elders and leaders strongly prevail. They at times oppose peace mechanisms. These can be a setback for the positive change that we hope for.

Despite these challenges, the university never ceases to be the center of peace advocacies in the community. With the help of the stakeholders — administrators, faculty, staff, students — who have a burning desire to live in a peaceful community, the work for peace will continue to be a priority. ●

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**\*Bai Soraya Quesada Sinsuat** is the Chancellor of the Mindanao State University in Maguindanao, a higher education institution catering to the educational needs in Maguindanao and neighboring areas of ARMM and Region XII. She is one of the Outstanding Lady Public Servants in the region as recognized by the Civil Service Commission. Her passion to serve the peoples in the area drives her to pilot peace and development initiatives through the extension and research functions of the University.

# *My Journey as a Peace Educator*

Lorenzo “Enzo” I. Balili, Jr.\*

“Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it.”

– Dorothy Thomas

I started my engagement in Peace Education during the pilot phase of the Integration of Peace Education in the Teacher Education Curriculum among Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in Davao Region — a collaboration between the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Region XI and *forum*ZFD. It has become a CHED regional mandate to integrate Peace Education in a Special Topics course in Teacher Education. I underwent training in both peace formation and peace pedagogy mainly under Ma’am Bing Durante — my first peace education mentor. That was towards the end of the first semester of School Year 2012–2013.

When I went back to my school, I learned from the Dean of the College of Education that the Special Topics course was already offered in the first semester handled by other teachers. There was no more offering in the second semester. I didn’t want to waste my training. I had to find ways to implement what I have just learned and prepared myself for. Being the principal of the Basic Education Department, I looked into the curriculum of the High School to look for a possible entry point. I found it — Values Education!

So I met the Values Education teachers of the graduating high school students. They met students for one hour sessions three times a week. We agreed to format these meetings allotting one day for Values Ed, one day for Peace Ed and another day for the synthesis. That was it.

To check whether we were successful with the integration, after our final examination in March 2012, we conducted a research on best practices as preparation for re-accreditation the following year. Noteworthy to mention was that a ***world of peace*** came out as one of the top ten values and ***spiritual retreat*** as a favorite activity that high school graduating students found ***very important***.

Moreover, students' reflections were quite personalized and very much grounded to their inner selves during activities such as poetry writing, art works, photo-language, song writing and others. After a tree-planting activity, a student expressed: ***"Before, we planted trees because it's a requirement for graduation. Now, we plant trees because besides being a requirement for graduation, we really need to bring back the glory of Mother Earth."***

A year after such experience, I trained one of our guidance coordinators to assist me in Peace Education matters of the school. I even brought her to Miriam College for a thorough training from experts of the field, namely, Ma'am Loreta Castro, Ma'am Jasmin Nario-Galace and Ma'am Mirma Tica. Back in school, we divided the work. I facilitated the college program and she took charge of the high school with my assistance until I let her do it herself in the third year of our implementation.

Among the beautiful things that cropped up during our journey with Peace Education was the crafting of our version of Child Protection Policy as mandated by DepEd Order #40 s. 2012. With our experience, the school was tapped by the Barangay Council for Protection of Children as regards policy making that entails protection of children at the barangay level. We became an active partner of local NGOs such as the Child Alert Mindanao because of our commitment.

Another significant initiative that was borne out of our integration efforts was the establishment of a Peace Table in our process for conflict management and resolution. This concept is simply providing a table and asking all concerned parties to sit around the table. In the presence of a

moderator, each party concerned has an equal time and opportunity to talk and be heard. The bottom line of the Peace Table is to facilitate Restorative Justice (something that we learned from Miriam College) — that is, while we save the victim, we also rehabilitate the perpetrator. And so far we have had two sensitive cases being processed through the Peace Table. Our reflection then, “Truly it takes a whole village to educate a child.”

Moreover, the best practices of integrating Peace Education in Values Education in Basic Education reached the attention of the Davao Association of Catholic Schools (DACS). So during the Summer In-service Training (INSET) workshops for Edukasyon sa Pagpakatao (EsP) for Grade 10 private school teachers in Region XI on May 12–13, 2015, the school (through me) was invited to share experiences and reflections in integrating Peace Education in Values Education. We even went to the extent of matching the EsP curriculum and Peace Ed curriculum to harmonize entry points.

Then a lot more opportunities came to me. I was tapped again by CHED XI and *forumZFD* to be trained and later become a mouthpiece of Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ), which in turn gave birth to the Media Educators of Davao (MED). This is very much related to Peace Education because the nature of activities is focused on the theme of conflict management and resolution.

Institutionally, I was tasked to revise our Social Philosophy with Values Formation subject in SY 2013–2014. I was able to integrate the Six Themes of Peace Education, namely, Spirituality, Social Justice, Supporting Non-violence, Sustainable Development, Strengthening Human Rights and Sensitivity, each with one lesson taken from the Peace Education Manual produced by CHED Region XI and *forumZFD*.

My other involvement with peace work was facilitating the creation of part of the Teaching Materials Development Workshop for The Long Reach of Short Films—Telling Stories of Peace in Mindanao, which was funded by the *forumZFD*. Eight short films were scrutinized in terms of inspiration, questions and entries for teaching potential. It was another opportunity to be trained by another peace guru—Mike Alar.

After this, I proposed to our school president the offering of Mindanao History to our BS Education students who major in Social Studies. The presi-

dent said it was timely because we are revising the curriculum that school year.

On May 15–20, 2016, I had the chance to join the convention of the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) in Baguio and La Union. There, in the break-out sessions with the Mindanao Zone schools, I shared to the body what role ASCU Mindanao should have in terms of teaching Mindanao history. The body acknowledged and documented this issue and I hope for a positive response.

After that convention, I proceeded to Cebu for a workshop in short play writing. I wrote my script entitled *TUGKARAN SA FIRING LINE* (Within the Firing Line). At the end of the workshop, I had written a stageable play. The script was used for an actors' workshop on the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of May. My play, together with other plays written in that workshop will be staged by the Cornelio Faigao Workshop for Drama and Performance in Cebu City in the Summer of 2017.

*Tugkaran sa Firing Line is a story of two teenagers who met in a hiding place. Salima, a Muslim who was looking for her lost father recalled how she lost her mother and young sister because of the operation of the Christian soldiers who were running after the MILF. Biboy, a Christian, who was searching for his two lost siblings, recounted how he lost his parents in the shoot out perpetrated by the MILF as they were being chased by the soldiers. Salima expressed her hatred for soldiers and all Christians, including Biboy. On the other hand, Biboy also expressed the same painful experience. He thought that Salima, like the rebels, was blood-thirsty. Their war started in their midst: battle of harsh words, throwing of stones, fencing with sticks until Salima fainted. Biboy asked what was wrong with her when he hadn't even hit her. Salima said she hasn't eaten in two days. Biboy got his "baon" and offered it to Salima. At first she hesitated, but after a while she took a bite and Biboy did the same. The play emphasizes that both Biboy and Salima have nothing to do with the war. They are just victims of such conflict and violence.*

My journey has not been a long one yet. I want more. But I don't want to start something knowing that the road ahead can bring uncertainties. I have to see to it that when I'm no longer around, the flame of commitment would continue to blaze. While I believe that teachers have a natural multiplier effect, I'm also aware that I have to keep finding like-minded individuals so

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges that the fire keeps burning and our efforts are sustained. I have to find them to continue this journey in our little and collaborative way.

Thank you *forum*ZFD—Manuel, Katja, Ma’am V for bringing me in. Thank you my mentors—Ma’am Bing, Ma’am Loreta, Ma’am Jasmin, Ma’am Mirma and Mike for letting me see how else I can be. ●

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***\*Lorenzo I. Balili, Jr. is the Quality Assurance Director at Davao Central College, where he also worked with forum ZFD and the Commission on Higher Education Region XI in integrating Peace Education in the Teacher Education Curriculum and Conflict Sensitive Journalism in Basic Education and the College of Education and Liberal Arts. He is also part of a pool of trainers on Peace Education in Region 11.***





# *Teaching Peace Education at the Ateneo De Manila Grade School*

*by Helen U. Amante\**

**I**t was in the year 1993 when, as a new faculty member in Araling Panlipunan (AP-Social Studies) in the Ateneo de Manila Grade School, I was tasked to craft a syllabus on Peace Education that will be taught to Grade 7 students. The shift to Peace Education was a result of benchmarking with the Grade 7 AP curriculum at Miriam College.

Dr. Loreta Castro guided the team of Grade 7 AP teachers in formulating the curriculum. The Peace Education curriculum was divided into four main topics spread across four quarters throughout the academic year—the definitions of peace and violence and peace heroes for the first quarter; conflict and conflict resolution for the second quarter; issues of peace for the third quarter; and peace advocacy for the fourth quarter.

Dr. Castro and Dr. Galace were generous in sharing their expertise and experience in Peace Education and opened the mini library of the Center for Peace of Miriam College to those of us who needed more materials. They were instrumental in the Ateneo de Manila Grade School's membership to the Peace Education Network, which in turn provided us with resources, information and updates regarding peace education in the country. Soon after, we found ourselves advocating for the teaching of peace especially

to children.

The Peace Education program of the Ateneo de Manila Grade School was cited as one of the best features of the Araling Panlipunan subject area by the Philippine Association of Accredited Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) accrediting team in 1993 and the PAASCU resurvey in 1998.

In 2003, a program aimed at deepening students' commitment towards peace making and peace sharing was developed. This was borne out of the need to provide students opportunities to apply the concepts they learned in the classroom and put their peace advocacy to practice. A partnership with a public elementary school in the city of Marikina, the Barangka Elementary School (BES), was forged. Each of our Grade 7 classes in the Ateneo are partnered with a Grade 5 or 6 class from BES. The interaction includes a preparatory phase where students of both schools are oriented on the goals of the program, and asked students to share their expectations.

The actual interaction is held at the BES, beginning with a 'getting to know you' activity. The students then are given the space to articulate their peace thoughts and share their talents, which enliven the interaction among the students. The program ends with participants giving peace tokens to their partner student. After the activity, they are asked to reflect and are encouraged to articulate their thoughts, feelings and aspirations. This interaction activity, an integral part of the Peace Education curriculum of the school, is considered as the practicum component of the program. It fosters camaraderie and friendship among children from different schools. The differences in contexts do not hinder the meaningful interaction that happens every time this *bahagin* activity takes place. Diversity in background, economic status and perspectives enrich the interaction and conversations that ensue after each activity. Active participation of students is palpable and consistent among the different groups that have engaged in this *bahagin*.

A telecollaboration activity with first year high school students of Ateneo de Zamboanga University (ADZU) and six sections of our grade 7 students commenced in school year 2004–2005. This is done through an exchange of information on peace conditions in their respective regions namely, Zamboanga City and Metro Manila through e-mail correspondence between students.

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Students were asked to answer questions based on the context to which they belong. Sample survey questions were: What are the peace issues in your locality (answers may be physical, moral, economic or political)? Why do you think these issues prevent peace from happening in your locality? How do you deal with these peace issues? What do you think can be effective ways to deal with these issues?

After a month, the students exchanged data by email. The data were collated and interpreted by students through simple thematic analysis. The students were asked to make conclusions based on the data gathered. They shared their interpretation and conclusion with their partner students by email as well. The activity was aimed at developing an awareness of the north-south peace conditions in the country. Common themes culled from the data were reflections on the possibilities of a more peaceful environment, desire to bridge the cultural and perspective differences among the youth brought about by the differences in setting, geography and history.

Annual peace symposia were also held as part of the peace education program. Respected speakers have been invited to shed light and share personal reflections on varied peace issues to our students. These speakers included Dr. Loreta Castro who talked about Peace and Violence; Dr. Ed Garcia, Dr. Cristina Montiel, and Dr. Stephen Henry Totanes who discussed possibilities of peace in war-torn Mindanao; Mr. Rodelio Manacsa who spoke on Peace in a Globalized World; Ms Kara David who made a critique on the film documentary—*Gamo-Gamo sa Dilim* and Mr. Bernard Canaberral on Media Education.

The annual peace symposium heightened awareness among students on the various peace issues that beset the country like the peace condition in Mindanao; implications to peace on the movement towards a more globalized world; violence and peace in mass media; and the continuing military presence of the U.S., which impinges on the country's sovereignty. Further discussion of these issues in the classroom strengthened students' resolve to pursue peace even if it's a more difficult path than pursuing violence.

In 2003, I headed a project on the production of a series of textbooks on Araling Panlipunan, one of which was on peace education—*Edukasyong Pangkapayapaan*. This was followed by the production of computer assisted

modules, which I designed using the script written by our AP teachers, and programmed by the Computer Science students in our college. The project was headed by Dr. Didith Rodrigo of the Loyola Schools of Ateneo de Manila University. Examples were: *Imbestigasyon Tungkol sa Digmaan Bilang Hadlang sa Kapayapaan — Isang Editoryal and Manindigan Tayo*, which tackled daily environmental issues.

We faced a challenge when the country began the K-12 education reform wherein the re-alignment of topics for *Araling Panlipunan*, Peace Education was initially sidelined but eventually resolved to be integrated in the teaching of *Araling Panlipunan* in the different grade levels. This is not easy to do.

On hindsight, I recall that my masteral paper was on the integration of peace values in *Araling Panlipunan* using Filipino children's stories. The framework I used in this paper is something I can offer to contribute in responding to the present challenge we have in the teaching of peace education.

My proposal is to find an existing academic discipline where peace concepts and values may be effectively integrated. In my paper, I proposed the subject area *Araling Panlipunan* of grades 1–6. I used The Four Conceptual Strands of the Hague Agenda for Peace by Betty Reardon and Alicia Cabezudo. I selected the theme—Peace Education for the Abolition of War. My reflexivity as a researcher came to the fore when I selected this. For some reason, our students have a strong penchant for the discussions on war. To them, this is the most interesting and exciting topic. In the beginning of the semester, they would be asking when the discussion on World War II, bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, story of Hitler will be discussed. Thus, the framework on the platform on the abolition of war.

The four strands, namely root causes of war, international humanitarian and human rights law and institutions, prevention, resolution and transformation of violent conflicts, and disarmament and human security formed the content of the framework. I was glad that Dr. Reardon translated this framework to customize the content according to appropriate developmental ages of children. Appropriate core concepts were aligned with values. I reduced this into chewable items for the teachers to easily use and implement the lessons accordingly. Given the existing curriculum in AP, I identified concepts and values that are naturally aligned with Dr. Reardon's. My next

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challenge was to select appropriate Filipino children's stories that will be the platform in the discussion of the concepts and values.

Using stories in the teaching of peace education would entail another discourse. Stories can be powerful tools in teaching values. When selected and aligned properly with the lesson content, stories have the power to contextualize learning and allow young children to resonate with, and digest the lessons, as well as be empowered to show the intended values in action.

A bigger discourse in the teaching of peace education or any values education for that matter is contextualization.

Values are very positive entities. However, seeking and learning their applications in actual life experiences can be challenging. Preparing lessons about them for children can be likewise daunting. How can one teach the abstract value of respect to a yet ego-consumed child who developmentally, thinks that the world revolves around him/her?

I posit that we be mindful of the developmental appropriateness of our offerings, be it the main course or supplemental materials. Just as we assert mindfulness in the historicity of violence and prejudice when we teach peace education to adults, the same mindfulness must be exercised in the teaching of peace values to children. What they learn as a child, they bring to adulthood. Mentors of peace education for children need to be mindful of this delicate context in order for us to effectively come across to children. I quote Gandhi, "If we are to teach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we should have to begin with children." ●

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***\*Helen U. Amante is faculty member of the Ateneo de Manila Grade School with expertise in Peace Education, Educational Assessment, and Educational Leadership.***



# *Twinning For Peace: Two Faiths, One Vision; The Miriam College – Rajah Mudas High School Twinning Project*

*by Melinda Lamorena\**



I have always thought that twins are just so adorable, and since I don't have one I have been left wondering how it must be like to have a twin. Someone who looks like you, with whom you would share the same stories and experiences with; who mirrors your feelings

and frustrations, and more importantly a sparring partner in conquering life's challenges.

In the early part of 2004, I got a call from Dr. Loreta Castro, then the director of the Center for Peace Education (CPE) and former president of Miriam College, about a project she would like the CPE to embark on. She mentioned a school in Mindanao, which we can possibly partner with. She then asked if I can get Miriam College Grade School to participate in the project. If you were in my place, would you have said no? Of course not!

She is, after all, my former big boss. It was not the first time she asked me to participate in something related to peace. And as in the past, just like an obedient child, I said yes.

The partnership, she said, will be called a twinning project. A what? I asked. A twinning project, she repeated. We are going to have a twin school. I had a lot of things going in my mind about the project but at the top of my head I was thinking “A twin school?” The thought got me excited because I thought “at last I am going to have a twin or at least be in a twinning relationship.”

And so twelve years ago, Miriam College (MC), a private, Catholic institution for girls in Quezon City and Rajah Mudah High School (RMHS), a public school attended by Muslims in Pikit, Cotabato, agreed to form a partnership for peace. This is then, the story of two schools with different faiths yet united by one vision embarking on a beautiful journey towards peace.

“Why the unlikely combination,” one might ask. Well, both schools recognize what armed conflict has done to war-torn areas in Mindanao and how much suffering it has brought civilians and combatants for the past many, many years. Although the root cause of the conflict is political and economic, religious differences have been used to exacerbate it. What’s more, historical circumstances have created and deepened prejudices between Christians and Muslims. True, the government has long been engaged in talking to Moro resistance groups but intermittent wars have so far watered down whatever successes and leaps the peace process has achieved. The remarkable differences between the two schools have been woven together by their desire to create spaces of peace between and among the members of their respective communities.

Culturally different as they may be, geographically separated by land and seas, there exists common strands between and among students and faculty of Miriam College and Rajah Mudah. Foremost of which is the realization that together they can contribute something to the attainment of peace in the country particularly in war-torn Mindanao. A common aspiration binds the twin schools — that of promoting peace in their own sphere of influence hoping that it will create a ripple effect across the archipelago.

Putting premium on dialogues, the two schools chose to be committed



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to a people-to-people process as a way of supplementing the formal peace process being championed by the government. This process engages peoples of diverse cultures to come face to face and interact with each other, do things together, weave dreams together and hopefully break down preconceived prejudices and biases they have of each other. They firmly believe that changing perceptions one has of another group will have a more lasting effect on peace in the long run.

It is this context that propelled the Miriam College-Rajah Mudah High School Twinning Project to take flight. The partnership was facilitated by Balay Rehabilitation Center, an NGO which provides help for internally displaced people and survivors of torture and organized violence. On the 30th day of August 2004, the project was launched simultaneously at Miriam College in Quezon City and RMHS in Pikit, Cotabato. I thought that the theme “Building Bridges of Understanding and Peace” was a really good one. The use of bridges was a perfect metaphor for the project, says Dr. Castro. After all a bridge connects and provides access for those who live on either side of it.

The project’s long-term goal is to enable both schools to be “schools for peace.” Its more immediate goal is to enable both MC and RMHS students to gain a better understanding of each other’s culture and to break down the barriers of prejudice that exist between Christians and Muslims.

### **The Project’s Activities**

Through the leadership of CPE, the twin schools have engaged themselves in a flurry of engagement activities since 2004:

1. A red letter day in MC is the annual celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace to show solidarity with our Muslim brethren and express appreciation for their rich culture. Held in November/December, the celebration features classroom-based activities, exhibits and symposia but the highlight of this event remains to be the *Lugawan para sa Mindanao*, a fundraiser for RMHS. The collaboration between and among students, faculty, office staff and administrators in support of the activity is truly heart-warming. Today, the *Lugawan* has evolved into the following age-appropriate unit fundraisers:

| MINDANAO WEEK OF PEACE FUNDRAISERS                  |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Child Study Center (CSC)                            | Muffins for Peace        |
| Lower School (LS)                                   | I Scream for Peace       |
| Middle School (MS)                                  | Lugawan Para sa Mindanao |
| High School (HS)                                    | Lugawan Para sa Mindanao |
| MC Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf (MC-SAID) | Peace Café               |
| Higher Education Unit (HEU)                         | Lugawan Para sa Mindanao |

The MS, HS and HEU have continued to sell *lugaw* (porridge) because of the symbolism the act of eating *lugaw* gives. To engage the students to buy a bowl of *lugaw* as an act of solidarity with victims of war in Mindanao stirs feelings and emotions that enhances reflective skills among them. Faculty members are challenged to come up with strategies to entice them to support the cause. Administrators and supervisors volunteering to wash bowls and serve *lugaw* instead of sitting behind their desks and their computers is certainly a sight to behold. The community spirit becomes so much alive during this week.

Proceeds from these events were used for the following: construction of two classrooms and a restroom; purchase of a generator and a mimeographing machine; installation of a water pump; college scholarships for deserving students; and assistance to those displaced by armed conflicts.

2. A very cute but effective strategy is the exchange of letters that transpired between the students of both schools. This has developed friendships and forged stronger bonds between the pen-pals and have changed the preconceived notions one group had of the other. The anticipation students feel while waiting for a response and the happiness written on their faces upon receipt of the letter is priceless.
3. A joint newsletter named *Pag-asa* first saw print on April 5, 2005. This annual publication featured writings and illustrations of students from both schools. Getting the students to contribute has never been difficult. Their insights, as gleaned from their written outputs reflect a maturity beyond their years, and a heart that is emphatic of the other; a head that understands where the other is coming from and hands that are open

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to each other’s uniqueness.

4. Joint workshops for the movers and facilitators of the project provided a venue for discussion of issues and concerns and their responsibility as mentors of the students entrusted to them. These conversations yielded important agreements and provided guidance as to the direction of the project. Together, the adult participants of the twinning project learned from each other and went home doubly richer.
5. The annual joint workshops on youth peacebuilding that started in 2005 bring together select students from both schools. It became an excellent venue for dialogue and an opportunity to deepen interfaith understanding among the participants. The workshops were designed to develop the capacities of students to be agents of peace in their own spheres of influence and to encourage their schools toward becoming schools for peace. Students were challenged to come up with doable action plans.

The following outputs were realized:

| Miriam College                       | Rajah Muda High School                         |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Grade 7 Chalk Art Peace Installation | Formation of Suara no Kalilintad, a Peace Club |
| Grade 7 Breeze for Peace             | Forum on “Youth in Peacebuilding: A Challenge” |

Conclusion

The twinning project, a celebration of a people-to-people peace building process amidst a multicultural environment paved the way for the following outcomes:

1. Reduction of stereotypes and prejudices from both groups as indicated in their reflections, essays, poetry and illustrations;
2. Development of the necessary knowledge, values and skills in building peace among the participants;
3. Affirmation of students’ shared values and aspirations that strengthened the bridge of understanding and friendship between and among the students;



4. Collaboration between and among faculty and staff honed their peace-building and mentoring competencies;
5. Formation of the RMHS peace advocacy club called Suara no Kalilintad;
6. Implementation of the MC Solidarity Action Plan for RMHS.

After everything has been said and done, it may seem to the public that the equation is a little lopsided. That all the help seems to be coming from Miriam College with Rajah Mudah as the beneficiary of the abovementioned activities. I will admit that materially, this might be the case, but what Miriam College gained from this partnership is definitely more valuable than all the tangible things that money can buy. It was easier to develop and enhance genuine empathy among our faculty and students and propel them to get into action. We were able to concretize social action concepts embedded in our curricula for members of the community to easily grasp. We developed grateful hearts, hearts that make the head understand what needs to be done; hearts that empower the body to do what is necessary in the name of peace. On hindsight, I would like to think that our Rajah Muda partners were not only recipients of donations. I firmly believe that the project was able to break down stereotypes and biases they had of us and vice-versa. And that



basic concepts of peace have been planted in their hearts as well as in ours.

This wonderful story of collaboration and cooperation has been shared in some parts of the country and the world. And we will not tire of retelling it in the hope that it gets replicated as it has been found effective in breaking down intercultural prejudices. To have been part of this meaningful journey is both an honor and a privilege for me. Not everyone is given the chance to be a part of the transformation of persons, systems and institutions with a very doable project such as this Twinning Project. Taking the first step in this meaningful journey with our friends from Rajah Moudah was all worth it. This twinning relationship kept the peace advocacy burning in our hearts. The project made us better persons.

So, did I regret ever saying yes to Dr. Loreta Castro? Certainly not! ●

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**\*Melinda Medina Lamorena** is the Administrative Officer of Miriam College Middle School but is serving as a Miriam College Center for Peace Education Associate that she cherishes the most as it provides her with opportunities to do her part in building a culture of peace in the country. She facilitates teacher training workshops, is a textbook writer and evaluator, cultural exchange program developer, and an active PAASCU accreditor.



# *Weaving Threads Of Unity: The Journey Of A Peace Educator*

*by Genevieve Balance Kupang, Ph.D.\**

**S**t. Paul College Pasig, where I served for twenty-eight years, has the apostle Saint Paul as its patron. Thus, let me greet everyone the Paulinian way: *Grace, Mercy, and Peace!* Paul's letters are replete with similar salutations. He has reverberated Christ's own words "*Peace be with you,*" as expressed in the resurrection accounts. Our Patron has been teaching me to persevere in the pursuit of peace. His unceasing emphasis on unity among his early communities makes this forum today a relevant gathering. His letter to the community of Ephesus was expressed this way: "There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call "(Eph. 4:4). Since there are Buddhists, Christians, Humanists, Indigenous People, Muslims, and Shintoists in this room, I pray that we include the supplication so that the passage is more fully made manifest among us. And that all may be one in the pursuit of peace.

My ministry in the academe, immersion among grassroots communities, and collaboration with faith-based organizations and peace movements opened my eyes to the numerous facets of the culture of peace.

"The culture of peace begins with each one of us—unless we are ready to integrate peace and non-violence as part of our daily existence, we cannot expect our communities, our nations, and our

planet to be peaceful. Peace is integral to human existence — in everything we do, in everything we say and in every thought we have, there is a place for peace. The absence of peace makes our challenges, our struggles, much more difficult. I believe that is why it is very important that we need to keep our focus on creating the culture of peace in our lives.”

These are the words of Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General. I agree with what he said. Progress is hampered when peace is not manifested in our daily struggles to live meaningfully and peacefully.

Highlights of my journey as a peace volunteer include my immersion in conflicted communities (like Pikit, Cotabato, Mindanao); participation in fora here and abroad, as well as facilitating workshops on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. These have deepened my awareness to the interconnected personal sufferings and large-scale crises that beset our society. It has been an eye-opener to listen to the history of the Moro struggle from Father Bert Layson, OMI, during one of the peace camps in Cotabato. Fr. Bert is a Catholic missionary peace worker, a Mindanaoan himself who presented an objective and extensively researched account of Mindanao history. He explained the root causes of the conflict in that part of our country—a Mindanao history not fully explained in textbooks. This allowed us to better understand why the peace process and dialogue are necessary for lasting peace. That camp was meaningful considering the appalling headlines that were difficult to ignore like the tragic killings at Tukanalipao, Mamasapano on January 25, 2015, and the heinous massacre in Ampatuan, Maguindanao on November 23, 2009.

I also owe much from the Ang Komunidad para sa Ikauunlad ng Tao, Inc. (Humanist Movement), where I learned the principles of active non-violence, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation of small arms, etc. Ang Komunidad is a non-profit, socio-cultural NGO composed of volunteers who are concerned with the growing violence in our society. Its main task is to promote a culture of active non-violence for personal and social change. As a volunteer, I represented the organization in peace events locally, and in two international peace fora: the Asia-Pacific Humanist Forum in March 2007 in Mumbai; and the European Humanist Forum held on October



With that short background, I will categorize my sharing into sub-themes:  
1) “Peace is first of all the **ART OF BEING**, not primarily about doing;” 2) “**Building Bridges** instead of Walls;” 3) The Power of the **Sacred Circles** in Peace-making; and 4) A Paradigm of **Transformative Praxis**.

1. “Peace is first of all the **ART OF BEING**, not primarily about doing”

The sub-title is from Henri Nouwen, an author, peace advocate, professor, spiritual leader, and one of my models, my inspiration in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation movement. His wisdom continues to strike a chord in the way we must live.

Nouwen once said that “**Peace is** not primarily about doing. It is **first of all THE ART OF BEING.**” John Dear, in the article, “*Henri Nouwen, the Peacemaker*” discussed Nouwen’s philosophy this way: “*the art of being is rooted in simply being present to each other and working together in harmony, a peace that speaks about the first love of God by which we are all held safe, and a peace that keeps calling us to community in a fellowship of the weak...*” Nouwen also said that “*Nobody can be a Christian today without being a peace-maker,*” (Nouwen 2005, p. 16). With regards our advocacy on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of small arms, he argued that “*The bombing of Hiroshima and the nuclear arms race that followed have made peace-making the central task for Christians. There are many other urgent tasks to accomplish: the work of worship, evangelization, healing of church divisions, alleviating worldwide poverty and hunger, and defending human rights. But all of these tasks are closely connected with the task that stands above them all: making peace. Making peace today, means giving a future to humanity, making it possible to continue our life together on this planet*” (Nouwen 2005, pp. 15–16).

I acknowledge that the terra firma on which I was born is just one version of reality. Yes, we are shaped according to our context, and the culture one grew up in. I am in solidarity with those who advocate for the survival of cultural heritage and transculturalism. From the very beginning, the Greatest Artist of Creation, *Kabunyan* in my *kankanaey* dialect, has created us differently, allowing us to relish the interdependence among people and appreciate the wholeness of human life because

of our diversity.

I grew up in the indigenous community of Bila, Bauko, Mountain Province, Cordillera Administrative Region with a Catholic education. Growing up, I experienced “*damayan*” (Tagalog), “*saranay*” (Ilokano) or community-based reciprocal love among community members. As a child, I witnessed how it is to live in harmony with believers of other denominations as shown by my elders. I remember the times when an Anglican presbyter, a Catholic priest or lay leader, and an indigenous elder led invocations to open various celebrations. Being engaged in interfaith dialogue now, I came to know that as “*interfaith prayers*.”

I take pride in our ancestors’ remarkable environmental and cosmic principles. I appreciate the Indigenous Knowledge, Systems and Practices (Wandag, 2012) and their profound wisdom on ecological resource management systems. These systems are anchored on maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity, while engaged in economic, socio-cultural, and political aspects of our community life. I am indebted to my ancestors from the hinterlands whom I learned the principle of *peace with nature*. Correspondingly, I am thankful for the formation I got from the Belgian/ Filipino CICM missionary Fathers and ICM Sisters. Later in high school, I got to mingle also with the Italian SVD and Filipino missionaries. I always say, I am blessed to have both the East and the West in me.

In June–July 2014, it was an honor to represent our tribe in the United Religions Initiative (URI) Global Indigenous Initiative in San Francisco, a remarkable moment for URI and the world. I engaged with representatives from six continents rapt in ceremonies, dialogue in circle, dream the future and embody the global movement for healing for the Earth, justice and peace. Thanks to the graciousness of URI facilitated by URI’s SEA-Pacific Regional Coordinator Dr. Potre Diampuan.

The Art of Being is to be conscious of my indigenous Filipino-Asian ancestry. I have kept my devotion to my indigenous heritage wherever I go. In one of my conversations with Dr. Estela Matriano of Alliant International University, California and WCCI Executive Director, she said “*Genevieve, your ever active and loyal commitment to your indigenous heritage is most admired and treasured. Keep it always alive and worthy of our admiration.*”

I likewise treasure the rich Christian belief which my family, with the *Bila gimong* (congregation) have passed on to me. I recognize the same Spirit hovering in all of these as vital to my life. I learned from the Asian great religions that in meditation, the breath is our connection to life, and the universe. In Catholic parlance, the **art of being** recognizes the Spirit behind our existence; that we are children of the Divine no matter the varied names we call our Supreme Being. It ascertains that to be an advocate, one has to nurture the interiority, the spiritual aspect of being, recognizing the '*kapwa*' (others) as me (Enriquez, 1978), and the interconnectedness with all life forms.

That same Spirit awakened in me the life-force to transcend boundaries of religion, ethnicity, gender, economic, educational attainment. This led to dialogue with fellow seekers who want to co-learn from each other towards a harmonious, sustainable co-existence.

I believe if teachers teach well in the classroom, that, in essence, is peace education. In order to contribute to peace education, I continued participating in trainings that were meant to help us learn best practices from mentors like Dr. Loretta Castro of Miriam College, and those who have successful peace centers in their institutions. My continuing education was acquired through the support of St. Paul College Pasig, Mary Hill School of Theology (MST), De La Salle University (DLSU), Asian Social Institute, and the Fund for Assistance to Private Education. Much of what has shaped me to follow the path of being a peace educator were learned from the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, whose priority advocacies are direct service to the poor, promotion of peace, environmental stewardship, lay empowerment, among others. To say the least, it has been rewarding to be one of their lay collaborators for almost three decades.

## 2. **Building Bridges with Personalities Who Work for a Culture of Peace**

When I was a young teacher, I was challenged by my former Director Sr. Mary Magdalen Torres, SPC to integrate meaningfully the Gospel values, Paulinian Spirituality, and universal moral principles in my lessons. Though I was educated in Catholic schools, I felt that I was not yet con-

fidant to carry out the challenge. Having little knowledge on Paulinian spirituality, I enrolled in the adult theological education program at the MST and Masters of Arts in Education major in Religious and Values Education at De La Salle University (DLSU). I joined the programs of Ang Komunidad, World without Wars (WWW), the Peacemakers' Circle Foundation Inc., the United Religions Initiative, World Peace Prayer Society, Byakko Shinko Kai, the Mandala Peace Arts Initiatives Inc., Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) Subcommittee on Peace and Justice, Binhi ng Kapayapaan, the Philippine Council for Peace and Global Education, WCCI, Gawad Kalinga, and the Uni-harmony Partners Manila. The personalities behind these organizations are spiritual leaders, educators, peacemakers, healers, advocates for the fullness of life, and nature lovers who radiate the positive effects of peace to those around them.

These organizations commit to advancing active nonviolence, and the achievement of just and peaceful communities through simultaneous personal and social transformation. Here I met dedicated, ethical, passionate personalities with the vision to make a difference in community lives. I learned how to engage with communities advocating for the culture of peace. The URI for example has cooperation circles, which underscore that "our belief systems and spiritual lives can guide us to build community and reverence for one another" (Seasons of Peace: URI Preamble Charter, para. 4).

The journey of peace-making allowed me to meet tireless leaders who embody the advocacy and continue to inspire me to this day. Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace); Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, Archbishop Antonio Ledesma SJ, Bishop Broderick Pabillo (CBCP); Bishop William E. Swing (URI); U.N. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury; UNESCO Peace Laureate Toh Swee-Hin; Rafael de la Rubia, Osberto Santillan (WwW); Dharma Master Cheng Yen (Tzu Chi Foundation); Estela C. Matriano, Jessica Kimmel, Ismael Hakki Mirici, Teresita Pedrajas; and Emerita Garon (WCCI); Mina Ramirez (ASI); Sr. Mary Magdalen Torres, SPC; Sr. Teresita Agana, SPC; Sr. Dedicacion Rosario, SPC, Irene Villanueva, Ronald Santos (SPCP); Willa Tecson,

Carmen Cabling, Karina Santillan, Jojo Hubo (Ang Komunidad); Mario Toots Fungo (MPAI), Antonio Meloto (GK), Shakuntala Vaswani and Marites Africa (TPCFI).

Elena Giuffrida, our Italian orientor introduced me to Rafael De La Rubia, the WwW President, during the European Humanist Forum in Milan in 2008. One of the highlights of that gathering was the launching of World March (WM) for Peace and Nonviolence. The WM was a massive nonviolent feat that circled the globe proposing the end of wars and nuclear disarmament.

The WM international base started in Wellington, New Zealand on October 2 (Gandhi's birthday), 2009 and passed the Philippines on Oct. 5–7 that same year. After the Philippine leg, the WM proceeded to India and passed through other countries in seven continents, and closed in Punta de Vacas, Argentina in one of the parks of the humanist movement. De La Rubia challenged us to prepare for the arrival of the WM contingents in the Philippines. It was interesting to note that the March began in New Zealand, the only country in the world that has a ministry for nuclear disarmament, followed by Australia and the third leg was the Philippines. Indeed, the WM passed through “all climates and seasons, from the hot summer of the tropics and the deserts, to the winter of Siberia” ([worldmarch.org](http://worldmarch.org), para. 1).

WwW Philippines, Ang Komunidad, and the Kapisanan ng Tao Bilang Sentro were the lead organizations in Metro Manila that endorsed this international campaign. Inspired by De La Rubia, we conducted educational campaigns, presentations and conferences in schools, universities, religious institutions, government offices, non-government organizations, and advocacy bodies. I found myself doing WM presentations in several locations in Pasig, Taguig, Mountain Province, Benguet, Palawan, Cagayan de Oro while some peace friends took care of other places.

In cooperation with various organizations, synchronized or consecutive street marches in several venues, presentations in conferences, and signature campaigns on nuclear disarmament in parishes were organized. The Hiroshima Memorial Dinner with foreign ambassadors, consuls, interfaith practitioners, media transpired at the Bonifacio Global Center;

and press conference at Batasan Pambansa was also held in preparation for the WM. However, a few days before the World March contingent reached the Philippines, tropical Storm Ketsana greatly devastated Luzon, flooding Metro Manila and other neighboring provinces. Some plans during the two-year's preparation pushed through, but not in areas that were badly hit. Our attention was then diverted to helping in the relief operations. Determined to contribute meaningfully in the WM, I significantly involved myself in the numerous activities organized. It was during that time that the core group officers made me Ang Komunidad Chair for Interfaith Groups, in-charge of collaborating with religious leaders and faith-based organizations.

Another area crucial in peace-making is in the area of poverty alleviation. Poverty, according to Omoniyi, (2013, p. 177), is the world's current greatest threat to peace and stability more than terrorism and other highly publicized struggles. According to Sachs (2009), more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. In the year 2010, the UN Development Project estimated that roughly 1.4 billion people were living in extreme poverty. Of this number, about 93% live in three regions; East Asia, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In small ways, along with my late husband, and friends, we continue to be in solidarity with those who struggle and marginalized due to development aggression.

Being an implementer of SPCP's Community Extension Services program, the administrators selected me to chair the *School and Community Self-Survey Team* of Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities of the High School Department in 2009 and 2013 respectively.

In 2012, I proposed a research project to study the impact of SPCP's immersion program with the Aeta Community in Zambales. Volunteer employees and NGO partners joined in the study titled "*Prospects of Using Photovoice for Sustainable Development in the Indigenous Community: The Case of Aetas in the Philippines.*" The data showed that stakeholders need to help more in education, infrastructure, health care, agriculture, heritage and cultural preservation. Using the data, we proposed a three-year development plan. An income generating project was initiated to help in

the infrastructure project. Most gratifying was the generous help of the Parent Homeroom Collaboration Team, which enabled us to generate 1.7 million pesos as seed money to jumpstart the research recommendations.

Another area of interest in poverty alleviation and environmental advocacy was my personal involvement in the Father Louis Chauvet Foundation School, Palatiw, Pasig City. There were summers when I was involved in providing free computer classes, catechesis, and English tutorials. In summer 2016, I headed the 12th Symphony of Peace Prayers with the FLCFS stakeholders. We joined other peace advocates across the world, praying for peace and unity. This was a global event bringing together people from different spiritual traditions, praying with one voice to elevate humanity's consciousness, tap our divine attributes, and bring the best in each one towards the realization of the culture of peace.

In regular gatherings at the Mandala Peace Arts Initiative, Uniharmony Partners Manila, and Catholic rites, we offered supplications for those affected by wars and ecological disasters. Defying indifference, it is important to show solidarity with peace friends who work in these violence-ridden places.

A beautiful experience my daughter Ina Lucy and I had with regards to building bridges was when we joined a Peace Camp in Kidapawan and Pikit, Cotabato, initiated by the Binhi ng Kapayapaan, Inc. right after the Mamasapano tragedy, where we experienced genuine *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (shared identity). Until now, we have remained friends with participants from Bontoc, Bicol, Bukidnon, Nueva Ecija, Palawan, NCR, and Mindanao.

Like other advocates I experienced many challenges in my attempt to build bridges with others. But, Nouwen (2003) continues to inspire me to keep working for peace. He said: *"the peace we work for is not of this world. One should not be distracted by the great noise of war, the dramatic descriptions of misery, and the sensational expressions of human cruelty. The bad news we see in media can make us numb; they tend to create in us a feeling of shame, guilt, and powerlessness, and these feelings are the worst motives for peace work."*

Earlier, Nouwen (2001) queried, *"but where is this peace found? The answer*

*is surprising but it is clear. In weakness. Few people are telling us this truth, but there is peace to be found in our own weakness, in those places in our hearts where we feel most broken, most insecure, most in agony, most afraid. Why there? Because in our weaknesses, our familiar ways of controlling and manipulating our world are being stripped away and we are forced to let go of doing much, thinking much, and relying on our own self-sufficiency. Right there where we are most vulnerable, the peace that is not of this world is mysteriously hidden."*

That is why in creating my mandalas, I have written expressions that befriend my weaknesses and fragility which I will expound on the next sub-theme.

### **3. The Power of the Sacred Circle in Peace-making**

The path to peace allowed me to meet the "Cultural creatives." They *"are those who believe that there is more to life than money and materialism, loves nature, abhors advertising; they challenge the culture to dare, to be open to change, and to accept a spirit of creativity that could alter its very structure; they are quite clear that they do not want to live in an alienated, disconnected world. Their guiding images refer again and again to a sense of wholeness; they have the hope, the imagination, and the willingness to act for the sake of a better civilization"* (Ray & Anderson, 2000).

The sacred circle has a lot of meaning in all religions and spiritual expressions. I will just tackle one creative endeavor to explain the significance of circle in peace-making.

It is from Byakko Shinko Kai that I learned the art of written mandalas. I used them to advocate for inner peace. The mandala is a harbinger of peace. It is a circle with a center around which bright, positive, and meaningful words are placed. As one writes words of love, gratitude, harmony, and beauty, the power of those words is poured into the mandala. As peaceful thoughts and prayers are written in a circular way on a piece of paper, cloth, or other materials, one becomes attuned to the truth being imprinted while the power of the intention is poured into it. It is believed that the process of creating mandalas heals and revitalizes the writer and the universe. Completed mandalas continuously send forth wonderful energy to humanity and the universe.



In doing workshops, my gratitude to God and the universe was further heightened; focusing on healing the groaning of Mother Earth was paramount and so I encouraged others to write mandalas as well. I created mandalas that not only tell my own evolving story, but to tell the story of creation. This is evident in the mandalas we see, made in gratitude to the awesome universe in general, the solar systems, Mother Earth and to the millions of species that are dependent on her sustenance.

I integrated mandala writing in my teaching and advocacy. I encourage my students and other participants of the mandala workshops to focus on the following: human life-giving endeavors, dreams of a better future, the evolutionary self, culture of peace, and transformative actions.

Later, I learned that mandala art is used throughout the world for self-expression, spiritual transformation, and personal growth. Mandala is the ancient Sanskrit word for circle and is seen by Tibetans as a diagram of the cosmos. In Tibetan, the word for mandala is *kyilkhor*, meaning 'center.' *Kalachakra* means 'wheel of time.' It represents the totality of past, present and future in an ever-flowing dynamics leading humanity to illumination or full individuation of the Self.

It is used by Native Americans in healing rituals. Christians too have mandalas in their cathedrals. I was amazed to discover that the labyrinth and rose windows of Chartres, France, is a mandalic pattern used as a tool for meditation. I also observed that whenever elders discuss issues in the "ato," "dap-ay" (council house among Northern Kankanaeys) they are always in circles; our dance rituals in our indigenous tradition and the carefully arranged harvested rice plant "palay," (Tagalog) or "*kinnapiin ay pagey*" (Kankanaey), have also the shape of the mandala.

The creation of mandalas is just one of the many approaches to reflection that leads to action. Learning from Lederach (2005) "the artistic process has its own sense of time and is not chronological. The artistic process rises to its highest level when it finds expression that is simple and honest."

#### 4. A Paradigm of Transformative Praxis

As a graduate student, I learned from the Asian Social Institute

President Dr. Mina Ramirez about the paradigm of transformative praxis. She challenged my class to see, reflect, and act on how we could be of help in bridging the gaps in society: economic, digital, educational, environmental, gender, religious, and rural-urban divide. She said: “in your own context/cultural milieu, explore how you and your networks could act and contribute to the sustainable development of family and community well-being (*kaginhawahan*) without discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization.”

Development must be inclusive, as expressed in “economy of communion” of Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement. Biener, H. (2001) quoting Lubich in 1991, said “unlike the consumer economy, based on a culture of having, the Economy of Communion is based on the culture of giving. This might seem difficult, ambitious, or heroic, but it is not so, because human beings made in the image of God, who is love, find their fulfilment in loving, in giving. This need is in the deepest recesses of their being whether they have faith or not. On this basis, supported by our experience, lies the hope of a universal spreading of the Economy of Communion.”

Inspired by Ramirez and Lubich, I had collaborated with the SPCP stakeholders to conduct a research among Aeta communities in Sitio Gala, Sicutihan in Subic, Zambales. The project, supported by our directress Sr. Dedicacion Rosario, SPC, was aimed at bridging the rural-urban, economic and digital divides to enable the communities to participate in nation-building. We believed in the necessity of innovative ideas to be able to help improve the human conditions of those living in these communities. Through the use of photovoice, we enabled our partners in the Aeta Community to make their voices heard; record and reflect their community indigenous knowledge, skills and practices, and concerns. Together, we were able to promote critical dialogue about important issues that threaten their sustainability and reach SPCP and community stakeholders for help towards their empowerment.

In honor of our efforts in promoting peace education and environmental stewardship, the World Peace Prayer Society (WPPS) headed by Fumi Johns Stewart donated a peace pole, which was planted at the SPC Peace Garden. A product of contemplation by our Director Sr.

Dedicacion Rosario, SPC, a peace garden was dedicated to remind us to be the peacemakers, an imperative espoused in the Beatitudes. Our interfaith friends, WPPS and UN representatives were present to take part in the blessing of the peace garden held during the UN International Day of Tolerance.

Another transformative collaboration was with the Uni-harmony Partners Manila (UPM). We have had meaningful projects together in countering the prevailing discrimination and disrespect among different faiths. The main goal of UPM is to advocate and work for dialogue, cooperation and harmony among religions. The multi-faith members believe that coming together is as an essential component towards nation building. It was created in 2011 in response to the call of the United Nations for mutual understanding, cooperation and interreligious dialogue. We continue to nurture the friendships we have forged, building on the strong alliances that people from different backgrounds and religious traditions have formed.

I express my infinite gratitude to our loving God for calling us to share in the great task of humanizing the world in “Charity in Truth,” as Pope Francis said in his encyclical *Caritas en Veritate*. The realization that there is so much more to learn about life makes me grounded and humble in the process, yet courageous to face future challenges. First, as a woman, a wife to Francis (to whom I dedicate this piece of work), and as a parent to our loving children: twin daughters Ina Lucy, Ina Rensa, and two boys Lodovic Ednyohardi and Matthew Henri. It is in the home where we first learn the meaning of love, joy and peace. It is in the home where we learn how to forgive and be forgiven. It is where we lay the groundwork of peace-making.

I am also grateful for the vocation of teaching, researching, and advocating. I am not perfect, and I acknowledge that one cannot please everybody. Yet in one way or another, the people around me appreciate the person that I am. Every now and then, I receive notes that say: “Dear Doc Gen, for all that you do and especially for all that you ARE, please know you are appreciated and loved.” “Thank you for the gift of you;” “I thank God you were born;” “Stay amazing as you did this sem. Miss!” “Dear Mrs. Kupang, I hope one day, I can be like you and continue to

see the beauty in diversity, and feel fulfilled in always choosing peace. You always serve as an inspiration in my everyday life because you do so much not just to the Paulinian community, but to the society as a whole. I hope one day I can contribute to society as much as you do. Thank you for being an excellent teacher. All the best, B. T.”

When I receive and give affirmations, they keep the embers of peace aglow, and encourage me to move on in spite of life’s challenges. As a peace advocate and a trustee of an institution and five organizations, I got to share the value of volunteerism and true service to the larger community.

Since it is also an exciting epoch for learning, I stand in humility before the Supreme Being for sharing bountiful gifts that enable us to spread the culture of peace. My dissertation entitled “Mandala as a Symbol of the Self, Spirituality and Wholeness” explored the mandala phenomenon as experienced by psychologists, followers of religions, peacemakers, nature lovers, and healers. The stories of my co-researchers from Australia, Nepal, Philippines, Slovakia, Japan, and USA illustrate the transformative benefits of this tool for inner healing, spirituality, and wholeness.

The wishes, dreams and aspirations I have written in my mandala have slowly unfolded before my eyes. I see these fulfilled dreams as manifestations of God’s graciousness allowing me to keep working with grace and strength. Indeed, even if there were challenges along the journey, I have been able to perform the multi-faceted roles I play as a woman with dignity, guided by the Giver of life.

This paradigm of transformative praxis is relevant in enhancing the well-being of people to co-create with the Divine. The process enables them to transcend the negative situations and experiences through positive thoughts, words, symbols, images, natural elements. It allows for the expansion of the consciousness to include the healing and well-being of all life forms in the cosmos.

I would like to end by thanking God, my family, friends, colleagues at work and organizations, for making my continuing journey meaningful and

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my struggle for integral spirituality, transformation, and individuation bliss-  
ful! To make you smile, here is a cultural gift, a chant from the Cordilleras:

*Bagbagto, bagbagto-lambik,  
Tulambik, tulambawikan,  
Bawikan, bawikalanay,  
Kalanay, kalanapunay,  
Napunay, napunayagta,  
Nayagta, nayagtagumba,  
Tagumba, tagumbaya-an,  
Baya-an, baya-atinbao,  
Atinbao, Atin-bayanggan,  
Bayanggan, bayang-gawistan,  
Gawistan, gawistanabog,  
Tanabog, tanabuga-ay,  
Buga-ay, bugayesikan,  
Yesikan, yesikamad-eng,  
Kamad-eng, kamad-eyeng-as,  
Eyeng-as, Eyeng-usaas...*

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**\*Genevieve Balance Kupang, Ph.D.** is St. Paul College Pasig's Institutional Researcher. She networks with faith-based and civil society organizations to pursue intercultural understanding and peacebuilding. She is a Board Member of Asian Social Institute, the Philippine Council for Peace and Global Education, Ang Komunidad para sa Ika-uunlad ng Tao, Inc., and the Mandala Peace Arts, Initiative, Inc. She serves the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction as the Peace Education Coordinator.

*Peace Education in Don Bosco School –  
Sta. Mesa (SY 2002–2004) and Mary  
Help of Christians School (Cebu), Inc.  
(SY 2007–2015)*

*by Sr. Marita R. Cedeño, FMA\**

**My First Brush with Peace Education**

**D**on Bosco founded the Salesian Congregations of Priests, Brothers and Sisters to guide our young people to become ‘Good Christians and Honest Citizens.’ Though parents commend us for the strong moral values and good behavior of our graduates, I observed them to have quite a weak sense of social responsibility. This was confirmed in the survey I conducted in connection with my graduate school project paper. As a school administrator, my personal desire is for them not only to become good and honest but to develop active concern for the common good thus becoming active agents of social transformation, builders of a Christian society. Great dream, right?

Hence, when I came across Peace Education in our Development Education class in De la Salle University, I became so interested with its ideals that I actively searched for ways and means to learn more about it.

It was in the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) conference, sometime in 2002, where I heard Dr. Toh Swee-Hin talk about Peace Education and what he said strongly resonated deep within my heart. Those were the same principles/ideals which I wanted our students to

form, and our whole school community to live. I asked myself where was I all along that I haven't heard of before Peace Education. Fortunately, I got a copy of his talk and in it I saw the name of a local resource, Dr. Loreta Castro. I lost no time running after her. When I learned that Dr. Swee Hin would be giving a one-week training in the Mindanao Peace-Building Institute in the summer of 2002, I also ran after him and asked permission to go to Davao to attend his sessions.

I told myself that if I wanted Peace Education to take root in our schools, the other decision-makers should at least hear what I have learned. Luckily, Dr. Loreta Castro accepted our invitation to keynote our Don Bosco Educational Association of the Philippines (DBEAP) General Assembly and that set the motion for the inclusion of peace education in our school curricula. In February and April 2003, Dr. Castro and Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace conducted teacher-training seminar workshops on Peace Education in Manila and Cebu for all the schools of the Salesian Priests (Society of St. John Bosco or SDB) and Salesian Sisters (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or FMA). In the following school year, I started attending the Peace Education Network (PEN).

## **Our Peace Education Efforts**

At the end of those Peace Education seminars, the teacher participants were tasked to identify peace values, concepts and skills that are appropriate for each grade level and identify the Christian Living Education (CLE) and Araling Panlipunan (AP) lessons where these peace concepts, skills and values can be integrated. Since it would be difficult to organize a separate program of studies for another subject like Peace Education, we decided on the integration approach. We wanted our students and teachers and hopefully parents to make that passage from "I" to "We" to "Us" and be concerned and responsible builders of our society and we found Peace Education to be the key.

With the peace concepts, values, skills, and the identified lessons in AP and CLE where these could be integrated, the teachers drafted lesson/unit plans. In the succeeding years, we drafted a service program from Grades 1–10 for citizenship training where the students are asked to render service at home (for Grade 1–3), in school (for Gr. 4–5), in the parish (for Gr. 6–7),



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in the oratory youth center (for Gr. 8–9), in neighboring communities and public schools (for Gr. 10).

What perhaps cemented the concepts and skills were the co-curricular activities and the peace actions that were organized in consonance with some of the concepts taught.

Some examples were:

- To show our support for the plight of our ‘bakwit’ brothers and sisters and to heighten our students’ awareness of the peace situation in Mindanao and the plight of our dear Moro and Lumad (indigenous) brothers and sisters who were directly affected by the all-out war in Mindanao in 2002, our student leaders launched the ‘Lugawan para sa Mindanao,’ a PEN fundraising initiative. The big sum of money that we were able to generate was an indication of the depth of concern our awareness campaign raised among our students.
- Through Balay Mindanao Rehabilitation Center, we invited some Muslim students from Rajah Muda public high school of Pikit, North Cotabato after their activity in Miriam College and they shared their experiences with our students. This activity gave a face and a name to the stories of war and suffering which our students heard in the AP classes and in our good morning talks. This set the motion for correspondence between some students and their Muslim friends even just for a short period of time.
- During the school year that we highlighted Respect and Tolerance, we asked each class from Grades 3–10 to deepen their understanding of the culture of one Mindanao ethnic group, and exhibit this understanding through performances of traditional dances, with the students themselves making their own traditional accessories and crafts in the HELE/TLE classes. Our campaign that year also resulted in students’ commitment against bullying.
- When our Youth Formation Program focused on inter-religious dialogue in order to teach our young people respect for, and appreciation of those with other religious affiliations, our sister-in-charge

coordinated with the Peacemakers' Circle, and our young people visited the Mosque in Quiapo and a Buddhist temple, and interacted with their leaders. This activity taught them acceptance and respect for people of other religions.

- In Mary Help of Christians School - Cebu, we trained a group of young leaders to form a speakers' bureau on some themes of Peace Education like Challenging Prejudice and building bridges of Respect and Tolerance, Upholding Human Dignity, Challenging the War System, Conflict Resolution, Caring for the Earth, among others. Since our school is just across a public elementary and high school, our student leaders organized a one-day sharing and workshop with our friends from the public school as part of our International Day of Peace celebrations. During our first year, we invited students from only one public school; the number of school attendees increased in the succeeding years. Our students shared their masterpieces and facilitated the sharing and workshop. Aside from being able to speak out their convictions, our students learned to interact with and appreciate their public school counterparts.

All these are but a drop in the bucket of the 30 years of Peace Education in the Philippines. We made efforts to educate our school community to peace through lessons, teacher formations, and different initiatives, but I don't think we have really accomplished much. As documents, we only had lessons infused with peace concepts, values and skills but with the shift to the K-12 curriculum and the frequent turn-over of teachers, I'm not sure now if the efforts have been sustained. If I can say this of the school where I had been for 8 years, I can say the same of our other schools whose teachers were trained in 2003 and again in 2009. I know we all started enthusiastically but I don't think that the candle lit during the Peace Education seminar is still burning and fanned through the years. Our association of schools — the Don Bosco Educational Association of the Philippines (DBEAP), where it all started, died a natural death. We, on our part, had another teacher formation in 2009 but each school was left on its own to continue the efforts. Re-telling our story challenges us to revisit our peace education efforts and perhaps evaluate so we'll know where to pick up.

Is it working?

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Speaking of evaluation in Peace Education is quite difficult. How do you really evaluate something that is aimed toward a change of heart and mentality that must manifest in one's actions and behavior? We have never really evaluated our lessons and initiatives except through the usual classroom quizzes/exams and activity evaluation which do not really measure the original intention for which we adopted Peace Education. We presumed that our efforts were making a dent in the hearts of our students because we saw and were encouraged by little positive manifestations, small signs of hope, of the seeds of peace that have been sown in the hearts of our students like:

- their commitment against bullying and the understanding, patience and concern that some of our children and students extend towards classmates with special needs and difficulties are perhaps fruits of our campaign and constant reminders on respect and tolerance.
- heart-warming stories from some parents as to how committed their children were with their given duties/responsibilities at home and the willingness of some students to serve in the community and parish even after they have left the school
- the considerable proceeds of our 'lugawan' and the donations that we receive every time there is a calamity fund drive might be an indication that indeed, we have touched their hearts and that they have grown in concern and compassion towards our suffering brothers and sisters

These and other heart-warming examples we witnessed and heard gave us enough joy to say that something good is happening in our efforts to educate our young people to peace. But to quantify our success, we simply do not know how.

### Lessons Learned Along the Way

I see that we still have a long way to go for the institutionalization of Peace Education in our schools. Nevertheless, our experience taught us that:

***Peace values/concepts/principles are learned best through peace actions/experiences.***

Young people these days are hooked to electronic gadgets and

bombarded by the information highway and are consequently desensitized by these. We need to awaken them from their stupor by touching their hearts (exposure to reality) and challenging them to action (provide meaningful experiences).

***Continuous formation of the teachers on peace education is a MUST.***

Since young people are susceptible to good and are easily motivated, they need educators who are passionate and creative. This is a problem because of the fast turn-over of teachers and school administrators. Hence, peace education should form part of the formation program of the whole school community (faculty and administrators). In our school, we attempted to formulate a 3-year formation program for the faculty and peace education forms part of it.

***Efforts must be concerted.***

As they say, it takes a whole village to educate a child. The same is true in educating young people for peace. All the 'formators' of the young, in fact, all the members of the school community, must speak the same language, not only the Araling Panlipunan and Christian Living Education teachers. Concerted efforts also mean that everyone in the school community must strive to practice the peace values taught to the students. These peace values should become part of the school culture such that the students 'breathe' the very peace values we propose to them. Then and only then, will these values become life. Again, as they say, values are caught; not taught.

***Efforts must be sustainable.***

Together with some trained teachers, we introduced Peace Education in one school and for 2 years, we sensitized the school community and worked with the student leaders until we were able to draft our own declaration of the school being a zone of peace. In one big school affair, we culminated the celebration by presenting our declaration to the superior. But when I got transferred to another school the following year, our peace education efforts got entangled along the way. When the chair of the AP department got re-assigned

to another department and the other teachers left the school, it has been difficult even to invite the school to send representatives for the PEN meeting. So how do we solve the problem of sustainability? I really don't know.

This problem of sustainability continues to be our greatest challenge in institutionalizing Peace Education in our schools, as well as in all the other efforts to improve our school system for that matter. I am not saying that I am the 'messiah' but our experiences showed that when the 'point' person is gone, so are the efforts initiated. Perhaps, there were missteps in the implementation of the program such that it did not catch fire with the whole community? Or simply, we can attribute it to the real difficulty intertwined with any change.

### **A Great Challenge!**

Now, more than ever, we are challenged to sustain our efforts on Peace Education. We live in a troubled and precarious period in our Philippine history. This culture of violence ushered in by this new administration and the recent turn of events are quite frightening and a great, great challenge to us in Peace Education! What is also disturbing is the seeming acceptance of a culture of extra-judicial killing by the 16 million voters who elected this new President into office.

How do you educate our children and young people about the inherent value and dignity of human life when they see on prime-time television and read on dailies the killings of alleged drug-users, pushers, and other human beings? How can you educate them to a correct sense of justice and rule of law when these alleged criminals are killed based only on the 'warrant of suspicion?' How do you educate them towards a sense of decency and forgiveness when they hear a leader cussing other world leaders and vindictively pursuing critics of his 'bloody' policies? The answer: thru PEACE EDUCATION!

These and many other present-day situations we so unfortunately find ourselves in necessitates stronger efforts on Peace Education in our schools. We need to create a counter culture of peace in the minds and hearts of our young people and in our own home and school environment. This we can do only thru rigorous efforts on PEACE EDUCATION. Executive Order

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570 really has to be implemented for real!

God save our beloved country!!! ●

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**\*Sr. Marita R. Cedeño, FMA** is a Salesian Sister of Don Bosco and was a school principal for 20 years and coordinator of all the congregation ministries for six years. She is a member of the Peace Education Network (PEN) and the Council for Peace and Global Education PCPGE).

*Part III*

*NURTURING PEACE  
EDUCATION: CIVIL SOCIETY  
CULTIVATORS*





# *No Matter Where the River Bends, Be in the Mainstream: Hosting Conversations That Matter*

*by Josephine P. Perez\**

I believe that the need for peace education is never-ending. Therefore, we need to flow continuously like water, hence the title of this essay: No matter where the river bends, be in the mainstream: Hosting Conversations that Matter.

My sharing is divided into 3 streams: Stream 1 will talk about how I found myself in peace education—my personal and institutional story; Stream 2 will cover the lessons and challenges that we encounter along the way. I describe this section as “discovering bends, connecting with other streams;” and Stream 3 will be some of my hopes for peace education in the country and I call this part “watching out for the water lilies.”

## **Stream 1: My Personal & Institutional Stream (How I found Myself in Peace Education)**

My story began in a small village at the foot of Mt. Karlaon in Negros Occidental, Philippines. I was in high school in Barangay Ma-ao, Bago City when I joined a theatre group in our parish church that raised awareness about the atrocities of the Marcos dictatorship through street plays. Through these plays, many of the people would become aware of the abduction, killing and rape happening to those who question the Marcos Government. It

dawned on me then that art is a powerful tool of education and I realized the importance of information so people may know what is going on and they would be able to make informed and judicious choices and actions. This was my first glimpse of peace education.

I grew up in a family where my father worked as a cane analyst in a sugar mill company and my mother, while considered a housewife, was actually seldom at home because she was also finding ways to help ends meet for the family—a brood of eight—by engaging in buying and selling of fruits in season. When asked about her occupation, she would always say she doesn't work and that she is only a housewife. I would remember scenes of my father arriving home, tired from work and expecting food to have already been prepared by my mother, who would also come home exhausted from her buy-and-sell business. Occasionally, this would be a source of bickering and argument in the household. This was my first lesson in gender equity. I realized that peace is affected when there is no equity in relationships based on gender.

I believe that issues of women are intertwined with issues of peace thus, my master's thesis was on gender and peace. I join the chorus of voices that say that there can never be genuine and sustainable peace if women are not part of the equation. Peace education plays a vital role in making the connection deliberate, unequivocally explicit and unmistakably visible. I am happy to have met women who seriously advocated the same thing. Fortunately, I found an institution that believes this. GZO Peace Institute became my platform in making this aspiration achievable a little bit each day.

The Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute is a non-government organization that envisions a just and sustainable peace in the Philippines. To achieve this, its role is “to build and nurture transformative and collaborative partnerships toward conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Integral to accomplishing this desired future is special attention to the issues of women and indigenous peoples.

We are engaged in non-formal peace education. We work with partners around the country and purposively design programs and activities to be responsive to the needs of the partners on the ground in particular, and to the demands of the peace processes that are happening in the country in

general. Our main thrust is to accompany the peace processes and in so doing, we become mindful of the different peace tables that include the main peace tables (CPP-NDF and the GPH; MILF and the GPH) as well as the sub-peace tables (CPLA and the RPMP-RPA-ABB).

Our key approaches to educating for peace are training and hosting conversations. We do training when we target competency-building. We host dialogues and conversations when we aspire for exchanges, collaboration, consensus, better understanding and relationship-building amongst peoples and across divides.

## **Stream 2: Discovering Bends, Connecting with Other Streams (Lessons and Challenges in Peace Education)**

Along the way we discover, and stumble upon various ways of educating for peace. Let me mention seven (7) key lessons and challenges that we harvest. I will be citing some anecdotes to support the lesson.

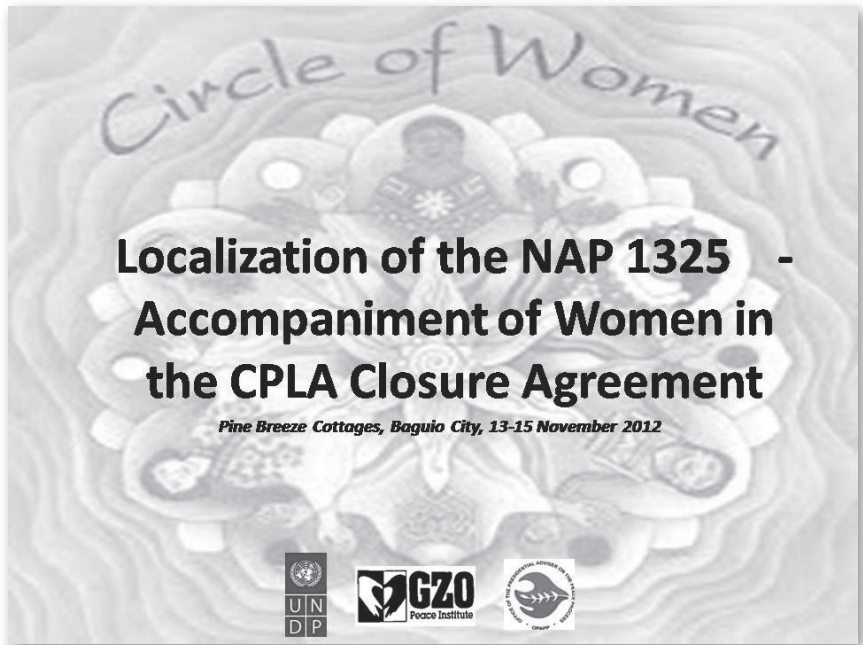
### **1. Inclusion & visibility of women make peace more sustainable**

In one of our engagements with women in armed conflict areas, a wife shared that she would wonder why her husband, a former combatant, would still be away for days even when he is not fighting the government anymore. And to her dismay, he carries not even a kilo of rice when he comes home. She could not appreciate the difference between those times when the husband stayed in the mountains as a combatant and when he is back home. She is still left to find ways to support the family because her husband is busy with meetings and so-called negotiations. Another woman narrated that she was curious of her husband's extended absence from home but he does not tell her a thing. One time, she took her husband's notebook and read it while he was asleep. That was when she found out about the peace negotiations.

How can the women actively support and champion the peace process when they are left out?

Like in many other post-conflict transitions and DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) processes in the world, little attention has been given to women who have been part of the armed

struggle, either as members or part of their communities. In the case of the Philippines, we have the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) and the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas-Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPMP-RPA-ABB). The women are not present in the negotiating tables. To assert the women's voices, an accompaniment project was designed and implemented with support from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) to recognize the meaningful roles of women in post-conflict reconstruction as mandated in the Magna Carta of Women and the Philippine National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 & 1820.



To bridge this gap, we invited former women combatants and supporters to come to a conversation among themselves. We invited them to level off with each other by sharing narratives of their peace journey, roles in the struggle, their sources of strengths and their challenges; their sentiments regarding the Closure Agreement between the CPLA and the Government of the Philippines. Because they were not involved in the peace negotiations, it was only in these conversations that the rationale

of their husbands' absence from home had been clarified. It was also their first time to know and understand the provisions contained in the so-called Closure Agreement with the government. They reflected on its implications on their life, on their role as women in the transition from "armed to unarmed" civilian life, and on how to sustain the peace gains. One of them verbalized her realization: "*ngayon na alam ko na kung ano itong Closure Agreement, makikialam na ako.*" (Now that I know about the Closure Agreement, I will actively get involved).

## **2. A safety container allows ripples of trust**

Sharing requires trust. The Art of Hosting (AoH) Conversations that Matter provided space and structure for the women who, interestingly, met for the first time to talk to each other as women. In another conversation with a group of former combatants, one of the women leaders who was among the top echelon of the party even commented that she did not realize there were gender issues until they were actually listening to each other's stories in the circle. Gender issues were so subtle that they actually missed them. Many of them had an "aha" moment when they started sharing their experiences. One woman narrated this scenario when the troop transfers to another site: the woman carries documents on one hand and cookware on the other, she would also have a rifle on the shoulder, and at times carries water on the head. The man walks ahead carrying an armalite. Another woman shared that when a female combatant gets pregnant, she could decide to stay in the camp and, in order to remain in the struggle, leave her baby with "families" when she gives birth. These "families" were considered sympathizers and were expected to take care of the child as if s/he is their own. The act of leaving the baby, the women in the group agreed, could actually cause a woman unspeakable pain. The feelings were there but no one would talk about it openly. While reminiscing, some of the women smiled, others shook their heads with unshed tears in their eyes. Towards the end, they held hands and embraced each other — a silent affirmation of a shared life.

In small groups, the women shared information that they were not willing to divulge before. They felt safe in the circle of other women. These spaces of conversations have facilitated better understanding of



(Photo by the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, 2013)

each other as women and gave them greater clarity why they enter into a peace agreement despite threats to their lives by other comrades. They came up with concrete proposals that would guide them in strengthening their roles in the post-conflict phase. They started to visualize how peace would look like in their communities, and crafted their collective peace vision with the full trust that they can rely on each other.

### **3. Understanding is key to championing**

We have probably heard this before but I would like to reiterate that, “peace is so important to be left at the hands of the warring parties” who sit at peace negotiations. It has to be co-owned by a critical mass. Unlike the women in the CPLA who tried to figure out their roles after the closure agreement was forged, the Bangsamoro women were in a better position in some ways as they have the opportunity to engage and influence the crafting of the peace agreement while the peace negotiations were going on between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPH-MILF) in 2010–2015. However,

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one reality that needed to be addressed was that many people on the ground do not understand the document.

So we asked a critical question: How can the women actively engage the Bangsamoro peace processes? We all know that it is only when the women understand the peace agreements and the required processes that they can make a conscious and active engagement in championing it in their communities.

To address this, a series of conversations were convened in 2014–2015 to build awareness and understanding of the agreements that came out of the peace talks between the two parties. These conversations were by women in the Bangsamoro areas as well as indigenous women leaders whose communities were identified to be part of the proposed core territory. The peace agreement between the GPH-MILF started as a Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) then it became a Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). When it was submitted to Congress for legislation, it was called the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

In these circles of conversations, they discussed the roadmap, specific mechanisms and policies and instruments supporting women's



(Photo by the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, 2013)

rights, and their implications to women and their communities. Consequently, trainings were done to hone their skills in claim-making and advocacy to champion the peace agreement.

The whole process revealed the need for deeper conversations among the women themselves and across divides as the voices were varied and perspectives were not necessarily aligned.

#### **4. Honoring context-specific and culture-sensitive approaches.**

Peace education is about co-learning. While we provide the space and structure where people can come together and learn from each other, we actually learn about ourselves too as peace educators. In one of the engagements with the women from the Cordilleras, I was puzzled that only a few of them tried to draw when they were given crayons. However, when clay was provided, it was like a match made in heaven. It seemed that the clay has found its natural potter. Their hands worked mindlessly on the clay while they shared stories. They were relaxed. There was laughter. Their creative outputs even surprised them. I was amazed at how gifted they are with their hands. I eventually realized that I am with women who are basket and mat weavers. I felt humbled. The lesson that I gleaned from this is that despite the available materials and technology at our disposal, it still requires sensitivity in finding out what are most appropriate, culturally sensitive and context-specific approaches that would be best for them, not for us.

In addition to the materials, we found that it was always helpful to



(Photo by the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, 2013)



have rituals. Interfaith and/or indigenous rituals integrate sessions with the psychological as well as spiritual planes—offering it and connecting it with what they believe in. This is to recognize that we are a nation of varied cultures and therefore it is important that they have a say as co-owners of the process and as co-learners.

We also try to work with a team who are familiar with the local language of the participants when needed. As much as possible, documents are to be translated into their language and context to make them meaningful.

Every day, women are faced with “multiple burdens”—this is their context! Choosing to attend workshops or conversations is a sign of self-investment and commitment to peace work as they will leave their family and community and travel miles. Because of this, we become mindful of family time and momentous events, i.e. graduation season, Ramadan, Christmas season, weekends or weekdays. Therefore, initiatives are carefully scheduled.

In various circles and engagements to promote and build peace, inductive and dialogic approaches were found to be appropriate and useful as these promote dynamic engagement, encourage active involvement, and enhance inclusive participation. Phrasing of questions and statements are carefully considered and ensured to be gender-sensitive and peace promoting.

## **5. Value of Documentation and Model-building**

If we are to assist our partners on the ground and expand the peace constituency, we need to learn from the field. The key question that we asked ourselves when we were trying to find out how to assist our peace partners was “how do our Filipino peacebuilders resolve and transform conflicts?” At the time, most of the literature in the Philippines was focused on labor mediation. There was a dearth of literature on community-based approaches to conflict resolution. From the life-stories of key peace partners around the country, a model on peaceful approaches to conflict transformation in the Philippines was developed in 1997 and became the anchor of GZOPI’s training program. The

model and the training design was pre-tested and later on implemented and validated with several sectors of society, such as the urban poor, fisherfolk, women, indigenous groups, Muslim women, religious groups and local government officials.

To further enhance the model, documentation of actual conflict resolution cases was done in 1997–1998 through the assistance of the United Nations Volunteer Program. This was done to recognize that nonviolent approaches were used in resolving conflicts that happen in communities. Two communities in Mindanao (southern Philippines) that experienced peaceful resolution of conflicts were documented and their stories were presented through a community theater performance by youth members at the end of the project.

#### **6. In Peace Education, Everyone is a Learner: Re-visit Assumptions and Principles Often**

Continuous learning happens when we are open to it. Years of working with peace partners will not ensure that all bases are actually covered. Sometimes we falter, at times we become less mindful, at other times we just fail to consider or think about it. Without meaning to, we offend someone. It is important to re-visit assumptions and validate them each time, including reflecting about the principles we adhere to vis-a-vis our behaviours as partners.

A case in point was when we had participants from different parts of the Cordillera. To get to the workshop venue, many of them travelled by foot for about 7 to 8 hours, and by bus for another 4 to 8 hours, depending on the specific area they come from. It was in the month of November so the air was cool and would become chilly at night. A colleague came to me before the start of the opening activities the following day and told me that she received very angry text messages from the husband of one of our participants who arrived at the venue at 2:00 in the morning. The husband was incensed because the wife was not provided with a blanket. After inquiry, it was found out that there was actually a blanket tucked in the bed, which was mistaken as a bed cover. The husband calmed down when this was explained to him.

The curses that were hurled by the husband (a former combatant),

though only through SMS, bothered me. He was furious because he thought that we did not accord the necessary hospitality and respect due his wife who, for the first time, travelled many miles to Baguio City by our invitation. It would have cost us the trust and relationship which matter greatly at a crucial time during the accompaniment process just because we assume that everyone has the same mental model. I therefore learned the value of re-visiting assumptions and validating it often so I can better flow with the realities of others. This is important in building peace.

## **7. Sustaining the Person of the Peacebuilders: Advocacy for Self-Care**

I was going around the country doing conflict transformation workshops in the late 1990s when I witnessed two incidents that made me re-think about our peace approaches. A case in point was when an unsuspecting and naive query from a young peace advocate triggered an explosive response from a senior peace advocate. I was caught off guard by the intensity of anger that came out. Another incident was when soft drinks were served for snacks in a workshop. This got me and my colleague a long sermon from a senior peace partner who thought that his years of advocacy against multi-national corporations (MNCs) that promote soft drinks were not respected.

In psychology, we were taught that if the behaviour response is exaggerated compared to the stimulus, then there must be a deeper reason. I took it as a sign that some of our peace partners are burning-out. Indeed, peace practitioners would find themselves confronted with all kinds of situations ranging from conflicts between groups, to evacuations, to dealing with survivors not only of armed conflicts but also of all kinds of disasters. Peacebuilders are battered, knowingly or unknowingly, by the very circumstances they intend to help alleviate. To assist them, we conceived of a program to equip the peace workers the necessary skills and tools to be able to effectively manage and address not only stress but also crisis. Part of this is to educate and convince them that taking care of the self is not being selfish but an ethical consideration in nourishing our work.

I would like to say that the GZO Peace Institute in 2001–2006 with the

support of the Olof Palme International Centre in Sweden was among the first to push for self-care within and among peace groups. And the effort has borne fruits. There is now a heightened awareness of the importance of self-care as necessary element in sustaining peace work among peace partners. Let us continue to take care of ourselves, so we remain faithful to our mission in this lifetime.

### **Stream 3: Hopes for Peace Education in the Philippines**



(Photo: Water Lilies in Lake Sebu, Philippines)

#### **(Watching-Out for the Water Lilies)**

Peace education continues to be relevant and necessary as we deal with the myriad changes that happen in our society and in our lives. Some of the ways by which we can concretely push peace education forward in the country are:

One, a mapping of the different peace education initiatives especially the non-formal ones done by the civil society organizations;

Two, dissemination of these initiatives so we can explore ways of collaboration and/or convergence;

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Three, the Peace Education Network (PEN) to take the lead in pushing Office of the Presidential Adviser in the Peace Process (OPAPP) to assess the implementation of the Executive Order 570 on institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education; and,

Four, continue in bolder fashion the formation of the next generation of peace educators.

After all, peace education is the heart of peacebuilding. It holds the key to upholding the hope that we all need despite the flip and flop of our country's democracy.

I would like to end with a quote from a Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani and Nobel Peace Laureate for her advocacy on girl's rights for education: *"... the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and souls."* ●

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**\*Josephine P. Perez** is Program Director on Peace Education and Capability-Building of the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute. She is also an adjunct faculty of the Department of Psychology, Ateneo de Manila University Graduate School. Currently, she is doing course work for her Ph.D. in Leadership Studies-Organizational Development.



# *Breaking the Cycle of Hate... Out of the Box Options*

*by Chito Generoso\**

**L**ike most of my colleagues in this forum, my journey began from my student days as an activist, evolving as a nonviolent social change advocate, then immersing into interfaith work in Mindanao. Over the years, I learned and appreciated the framework and process of conflict transformation. I believe in transforming conflict non-violently and in the primacy of dialogue and mediation. Thus my story is a small contribution to the many narratives of peace educators in their 30-year peace-building journey in the Philippines. I owe much to Jean Cawagas for prodding and encouraging me to write and share my own narrative.

## **Healing the Memory...**

### **Accompanying the Elders and the Cordillera SAF Relatives (1st Year Anniversary of the Mamasapano Tragedy)**

Though preparations were really very challenging, our journey was a smooth one, like a finely knitted cloth, supported by so many friends, and institutions. We gathered a day early for internal preparations. We began with led meditation practices, followed by short inputs, life story telling and holy mass. The relatives of the slain members of the Special Action Force (SAF) were deeply appreciative of the solemnity of activities.

A tense morning greeted us also early the following day, as news came of our flight cancellation because the C130 plane that was supposed to charter us had technical issues. This failed to dampen our spirits and we were resolved to continue even if it meant going by bus. But as luck would have it, the flight pushed through as the plane was fixed in time. We motored straight from the airport in a long convoy. The extent of security preparation was evident as we coursed through the route for more than an hour. The MILF also agreed to pull back their forces from the area while the Cordillerans gathered for their ceremony.

Upon reaching the site at Tucanalipao, the Aray-ab ritual started, with the participants oblivious to the presence of so many soldiers, police and the media. So moving was the ritual, I felt the Spirit touch everyone at the site. The relatives stood silent as the names of each of their fallen were called out by the Mumbaki to arise and join them back to their ancestral lands.

After the ritual, the elders proceeded to meet with the MILF leaders. They brought with them a letter of goodwill as a symbol of reaching out, bearing no ill will, despite the perception of many that they were their aggressors. The elders had also intended a Sipat offering, a symbolic token equivalent to a peace covenant. However, some elders protested on its appropriateness and timing, and they decided to suspend the planned exchange of tokens. I believe though that their goodwill letter was more than enough to become a seed of hope for a closure to the tragedy.

May the letter, a gesture of goodwill and hope, find its way to fertile grounds to be planted and nurtured. That beyond official agreements that are still pending, it becomes a small seed of hope to end hatred and war, one that would grow and become a pillar for lasting peace, built on cultural understanding and mutual respect. That perhaps, the Cordillera people, as they travelled to Mindanao not just as soldiers and armed peacekeepers, be welcomed as brothers and sisters living and sharing in the dialogue of life, much in the same way as the Maranao traders would be welcomed as their brothers and sisters as they travel to their homelands.

While they waited for a formal response from the MILF leaders who met with them at a hotel en route back to the airport, none arrived.



At this point, I wish to thank the people and institutions who helped make this deeply meaningful journey for Cordillerans a reality. It does not end here. It is a continuing process, we hope that all of us continue weaving this tapestry for healing, closure, and eventual reconciliation.

The volunteers of the Vicariate of Tabuk Pastoral Center/Kaili-an Peacebuilding Institute-Grail Lawagan, Mary Joy Garmin, Lucille Umingli, & Fr. Bitoy, CICM, together with Joyce Niwane of Ifugao & Emily Gumasing, have remained patient even as they were at the receiving end of my frustrations. They kept supporting me even in the most trying times and humoured me as I let out exasperation—even in the middle of the night, when plans seem to be going nowhere.

Bishop Jun Andaya, CICM who urged us all to believe, never to lose hope, and who was constantly praying for our safety and well-being. Ben Abadiano and the staff of Assisi Foundation, whose partnership support in this endeavor provided the impetus to initiate action and cue other institutions to weave through in the endeavor.

Butch Rufino of the Commission on Higher Education-Indigenous Peoples Education Program (CHED-IPED), my classmate at the Do-No-Harm peacebuilding workshop in Mindanao many, many years ago. His invaluable help enabled us to breeze through the kinks of red tape at the Department of Education (DepEd) and deal with so many other impediments in the preparation. He helped us find a place for the Cordillerans to rest and prepare themselves internally, as well as address the uncertainty of the flight from some members of the party. He knew how to pull the right strings and was doing so, up to the final minutes before our flight. The Cordillera Elders for IPED are truly grateful for his presence. Of course, he also annoyed me at times when he cautioned us on some of our activities, which he felt tended to attract undue media attention or threatened the non-partisan character of the whole endeavor.

Engr. Andy Ngao-i, the chief elder of the Cordillerans, the fierce and iron-willed leader of their community who pushed me to endeavor this challenging task, which really tested my skills, patience, and perseverance as a peacebuilder!

JM Rebueno, who taught me stillness and meditation to calm my nerves when I would find myself on the edge. The lady who also encouraged the group to meditate while sleeping, walking, sitting and eating.

Raissa Jujurie, someone I have never had a chance to meet up-close and personal, but whom I follow as a Facebook friend, and whose work as a peacebuilder for her people has earned her so much respect. She patiently enabled the Cordillerans, to reach out to the leaders of her people who, like them, also yearn for a just and peaceful resolution to this bitter war and their common right to self determination.

### ***A brief background to the story***

*On January 25, 2015, an official police mission took place to serve arrest warrants for a high-ranking terrorist known as Marwan at Mamasapano, Maguindanao. Unfortunately, this botched operation, which the government calls a “mis-encounter with Moro rebels” led to the death of 44 members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Special Action Force (SAF).*

*The SAF casualties were later dubbed as the Fallen 44. Fallen 44 became a worldwide trend on social media in an effort to honor the 44 slain SAF members. They were among the best of the Philippine National Police (PNP), an elite force trained for hostage-rescue and disaster response. Many of them were decorated young policemen, according to the records of the PNP SAF.*

*“But before that, they were sons, brothers, fiancés, husbands, fathers.”*

*Most of the 44 elite police officers who died in Mamasapano came from the Cordillera region. Some of the relatives went to Mamasapano all the way from the Cordillera region to perform a ritual a year after their loved ones died. The ritual is called “aray-ab,” which is conducted following tragic accidents supposedly to bring home the spirit of the dead and which can also help the families of the slain officers with their healing process.*

My friends, Dr. Susan Anayatin, PhD, a Christian (now a member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission), and Baibon "Kong" Sangid, a Muslim,

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges both from Maguindanao, whose life stories of personal tragedies and survival have empowered them to become passionate peaceworkers and healers today.

Miriam “Iye” Coronel, and Karen Tañada, for coming to the rescue, assuring those on the field that our intentions were noble.

### **Out of the Box ... CAFGUs as Peacemakers and ADR advocates**

Often blamed for human rights abuses and the preponderance for moonlighting as bodyguards to politicians in violence-prone areas, it was amazing to discover the humanity of these simple community folks turned members of Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) and Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVOs). They may have only reached minimal formal education, but once they have discovered their capacity to mediate, they also discovered within themselves an untapped capacity to become real partners for uplifting the lives of communities they belong. By helping resolve community conflicts, with lesser dependence on guns, they can encourage cooperation and understanding, thereby positively transforming conflict as an opportunity for growth.

The CAFGUs of Abra were the first to undergo training in Alternative Dispute Resolution focused on Mediation (ADR). The Interfaith Center for Conciliation & Nonviolence (ICCN) presented the idea to the Abra Multi-sectoral Group (AMSG) headed by Bishop Jaucian of the Prelature of Bangued, together with its secretariat, the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCADG). It was in July 2010 that trainings were done for the first batch of preselected Abra CAFGU/CVO's, hosted by the AFP Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) in their camp at Narvacan. We insisted on keeping the number of participants to 30 in order to help ensure the success of this novel retraining effort. The much maligned CAFGU/CVOs may hopefully evolve and transform into more effective peacebuilders in their communities beginning with this first step. After their seven-day training, the participants were paired for practicum, requiring actual mediation conferences at the Barangay Hall closest to their detachment. They presented their referral letters to the Lupon Tagapamayapa (Barangay Justice), to allow them (as on the job trainees) to mediate a community conflict and be given an assessment on how well they performed as mediators. They were made

to report the results of their mediation effort.

The training certificates were given to the Abra participants on September 25, 2010, after more than a month of practicum in their communities. The seven-day Introduction to Conflict Transformation/Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICT/ADR) and Mediation trainings were given on July 15–21, 2010. While I believe that our partnership with Abra Multi-Sectoral Taskforce Group (AMSG), and the CCAGG produced positive results in the context of a small group of CAFGUs from Abra, it was best to explore further ADR and Mediation work in other conflict areas as well. In doing so, we can see how this kind of effort to help bring peace in small and remote communities, by building capacities of CAFGUs in unarmed peacekeeping, and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

On November 4 to 7, 2010, another group of participants, this time from the Ifugao and Kalinga side of the Cordilleras, underwent a similar training, hosted by Bodong Mediators, the Ka-ilian Peacebuilding Institute (KPI) of St. Louis College of Bulanao, and the Vicariate of Tabuk. In the next two years, up to 2013, without additional funding from OPAPP, the AFP extended the pilot trainings to all CAFGU camps: Binmaley, Pangasinan; Tanay, Rizal; Pagadian City; Tagum, Davao del Norte; Cagayan de Oro; Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao; Pili, Camarines Sur; Tinaogan, Western Samar; Murcia, Negros Occidental.

### ***Background to the Story***

*In July 1987, President Corazon Aquino signed Executive Order (EO) 264 providing for the "Citizen Armed Force" and creating in the process the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGU). EO 264 provided that all able-bodied citizens shall become reservists with appropriate ranks. All reservists in a particular locality shall be organized into reserve geographical units subject to call and mobilization as the need arises, individually or as a unit. It also provided that Active Auxiliary Units which shall be part of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGU), may be utilized, to be constituted out of volunteers to be screened in consultation with the local executives and civic/business leaders. These Active Auxiliary Units shall mean a degree of*

*activation of military reservists short of full active duty status.*

*In 1990, a report released by the Lanyers Committee for Human Rights, a New York-based group, alleged "numerous instances of serious human rights violations by Philippine militia forces called CAFGUs against civilians, members of the clergy and Communist rebels. Organized in 1987 to expand the government's military presence in rural areas, the 52,000 barely trained and poorly paid CAFGUs often work closely with vigilante groups and "private armies" supported by rich landowners and businessmen".*

*In 1992, Rep. Antonio Diaz Magsaysay filed House Bill 2542, which sought to repeal EO 264. The bill never made it through the legislative gridlock. In 1995, another bill seeking to demobilize the CAFGU was filed by Senator Orlando Mercado. The bill noted the transfer of internal security functions to the Philippine National Police (PNP). Again, the bill did not pass.*

*The CAFGU strength grew from 32,748 in 1990s to 61,148 in 2007. The military asked for more funds to recruit more CAFGU. A presidential veto / hold was put on the recruitment of new CAFGU members in compliance with the provisions of the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2015. As of August 2015, there were 53,004 CAFGU members deployed to the 14 battalions of the Philippine Army which administers the CAFGU units. The average monthly loss of CAFGU members nationwide in the Army roster is 400. This is due to deaths, voluntary termination of service, and administrative cases. The budget for recruitment was restored in the 2017 budget.*

Over 250 CAFGUs and their immediate officers were trained under this initiative. While there was an attempt to follow up on the graduates, the difficulty of gathering them again has been a major impediment in measuring its success.

An attempt to institutionalize the Introduction to Conflict Transformation/Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICT/ADR) and Mediation training program via the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution (OADR), DOJ, was met with cold shoulders by the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. By law, the implementing department for the institutionaliza-

tion of ADR is the DOJ, but the AFP hierarchy at that time did not seem convinced. There was uncertainty over the future of the initiative as a new administration assumed office as of this writing.

Let me conclude my brief narrative by reflecting on the “Dialogue of Life.” Where “people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.” The practice of “pangangapit-bahay” serves to stimulate an active interest in the other, to acquire knowledge about the other to overcome prejudices and biases. Criticism of CAFGUs has pervaded for decades even as they were called by other names, like CVO, CHDF, BSDU and the like. In the series of FGDs conducted in 2016, many of its members joined because they wanted to avenge the death of a father, brother or a relative, while others, joined purely for employment motivations, second only to any patriotic duty. I am sure the rank and file of their rebel counterparts would have similar motivations. While not trivializing justice issues, many small community conflicts can be resolved without prejudices, biases and without the intervention, either by warlord politicians or by partisan ideologues who may agitate the situation to escalate the conflict for political ends. Recognizing their presence and increasing their capacities for conflict resolution without violence will endear them to their communities. Building their capacity to resolve conflicts nonviolently, without the need for arms is something future leaders can learn from this humble initiative. ●

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**\*Chito Generoso** is Co-director, Interfaith Center for Conciliation & Non-violence (ICCN). Currently in the midst of efforts to uphold the dignity of life, healing and recovery ... even for poor and rejected drug addicts ... for restorative justice.

## *Interfaith Dialogue Beyond Tolerance*

*by Maria Teresa “Marites” Guingona-Africa, Ph.D.\**

I first awakened to the urgency of the need for peace to prevail over the chaos and violence of the world when, one day in 1998, I met two representatives of an international peacebuilding organization who were in Manila for a visit. As I listened to them speak of their experiences in the field, I was struck not only by what I heard, but by what I saw.

One of them was a friend who was wearing a white t-shirt and on it was printed the image of the globe surrounded by symbols of the different religions of the world. The image struck me so much for it conjured in my mind a god “big and powerful enough” to hold the diversity of thoughts, beliefs and ways of being in the world without breaking. This provoked me into reflecting on the uniqueness of my own Catholic faith in the midst of the diversity of faiths in the world, and on the role of religion in people’s lives. I was awed by the realization that religion has been, and still is, a powerful force that continues to influence the way people see the world, the choices that they make, and the actions that they take. This realization gave rise to compelling questions that I began to ask myself: Why do people of faith fight each other in the name of God? How can I, as a Catholic Christian, live up to the teachings and ideals of my faith and contribute to peace and harmony in the world?

I was born to Catholic parents and was raised Catholic. In this predominantly Catholic country—the Philippines—I have always taken for granted that everyone I met was Catholic. But, after that fateful meeting in 1998, my interest in getting to know people of other faiths grew. I realize that this interest stemmed from my crisis experience in the early 90's when I went through what renowned psychologist Carl Jung would call an individuation process. It was a time when, in quiet desperation I boldly traversed the Eastern spiritual paths—away from what I thought were the prescribed parameters of my Catholic Christian faith—in search for a “big enough god” who could give meaning and direction to my life even in the darkness of my frailties and fears. But, to my surprise, I later realized that this path only led me full circle back to Christ. In the practice of stillness in meditation, I experienced Christ coming alive in me and present in my every breath. I soon found myself awakening to, and appreciating my Catholic Christian faith anew as universal in the true sense of the word.

As I began to experience freedom, wholeness and integration in my newfound experience of my Catholic faith, I became passionate about searching for and reaching out to people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions, and indigenous traditions around Metro Manila. In the process, my commitment to the endeavor of bridging peoples' differences and promoting a sense of wholeness, unity and harmony among them even in the midst of their diversity deepened.

The year 1998 was a fearless and exciting year for me. It was the year I began to invest my time, energies and resources in reaching out beyond my comfort zone to meet people of diverse cultures and beliefs, establish bonds of friendship with them, and with them venture boldly into the field of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding.

Three years later, in 2001 my newfound interfaith friends and I established The Peacemakers' Circle Foundation, Incorporated (TPCFI). This was registered with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on the 14th of March 2001 as a non-stock and non-profit interfaith organization. We articulated its vision to be: World peace and the healing of the Earth through Individual and Social Transformation. Although we were a local organization, we were internationally connected through the United Religions Initiative (URI), a global interfaith community to which we



volunteered to be a Cooperation Circle. And our endeavors were focused on reaching out to people who were different from ourselves. We made time to visit them, get to know them and learn about their practices and beliefs. We made friends with them, appreciated what we had in common, and were enriched by our differences. This developed in us capacities for reflection and insight that helped us know ourselves more deeply from our deepening knowledge of each other.

In the process, we began to build relationships of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation; relationships that were built on common grounds with safe spaces that allowed us to appreciate our differences beyond mere tolerance. This was made possible because of attitudes of heart we chose to inculcate within ourselves that allowed us to embrace the richness of the gifts of diversity that we had to offer to each other. These attitudes compelled us to choose to “humanize, not demonize” fellow human beings, and strive to see goodness in the “other” although goodness may not be readily apparent.

As our interfaith dialogue activities became regular and frequent, our bonds of friendships strengthened and our commitment to participate in our ongoing interfaith endeavors were assured all around. Soon, leaders from the different religions, faith groups, and spiritual traditions began to actively work with us on a regular basis.

I did not have the privilege of being formally educated in peacebuilding. I learned peacebuilding by “playing it by ear” and responding to the need for relationship-building in heart listening and creative ways. When I first awakened to its importance and the urgency of the need for peace in 1998, interfaith dialogue was not yet well known as a peacebuilding endeavor. It was the 9/11 terror attacks on the United States that catapulted religion and religious differences to the forefront of international attention. That was how the work of TPCFI was recognized and support for our work began to come in.

As I invested more of myself in the interfaith peacebuilding endeavor through the years, I learned soon enough that enthusiasm and idealism could not see me through the difficult times unless they were coupled with a listening and discerning heart, an open mind, and a way of being and becoming truly human that was deeply listening and attuned to one’s deepest silence.

I met many people in the course of my endeavors whose motivations for engaging in interfaith dialogue made me awaken to what interfaith dialogue is and is not. Through the years I learned how to tell apart those who engaged in it with intentions and attitudes of heart that were or were not in the right place. From what I have seen to be their motivation/s for engaging in the endeavor, and how their efforts impact on the field or contribute in any way to its success, I saw that there seemed to be at least five types of interfaith dialogue practitioners. There are the:

- Proselytizers who engage in it with the barely hidden agenda to convert people to their religion and who do not hesitate to do so whenever and wherever the opportunity arises.
- Analyzers who tend to see and compare the merits of their endeavors with those of others, and are usually more inclined toward forms of dialogue that stimulate critical thinking.
- Synthesizers who, having finally made sense of the lessons learned from their endeavors of seeking for answers to burning questions about life and their existence, are eager to share the wisdom gained from the truth of what they have experienced to be liberating of the human spirit.
- Seekers who sense that there is something within them that is causing them to be restless inside, something that they need to break away from in order to find their “true self.” They are eager to grasp whatever they find of themselves in the experience of the “other,” and also possibly gain a sense of healing and wholeness in the process.
- Philosophers who have extraordinary sense for interfaith dialogue but are, by and large, mostly relating on the realm of beautiful ideas on how the world is and “should be.”

In my experience, it is the Synthesizers who seem to succeed in the endeavor of bringing about the desired social change for they appear to possess the most balanced capacities that enable them to BE organs of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding, and BECOME instruments of it.

In the course of my interfaith endeavors through the years, I was also struck by what seemed to me to be a prevailing lack of understanding

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among people of what interfaith dialogue is about. In interfaith conferences I would often hear people ask: *When will our dialogue end and our actions begin?* That would make me restless inside. The compelling urge to respond would be like fire in my belly moving me to find ways to help educate people on the meaning of true interfaith dialogue. Dialogue is not limited to the exchange of words but embracing also action, I would like to say, and action is a form of dialogue! And I would be restless, too, because of the seeming prevalence of the notion that differences among people lead to conflict, and that conflict is “bad.” This erroneous notion makes people want to avoid conflict by focusing not on differences but on similarities among people in order to succeed in the endeavor. I find this avoidance of conflict among peacebuilders rather unfortunate because this disables them from using conflict for something good, something that brings about a turning point where growth in relationships is possible.

All these, and the various motivations I saw among people who engage in it moved me to respond to the urgent and compelling need to educate people everywhere on the ways of being and becoming instruments of peace through interfaith dialogue and relationship-building.

Through The Peacemakers’ Circle, I began to design and facilitate various intra- and interfaith dialogue training workshops and activities that would help people appreciate conflict as an opportunity for building interpersonal relationships. With the right attitude toward conflict, the peacebuilder is able to respond to it as a true instrument of peace, and catalyst of the desired social change. I conducted these training workshops in various grassroots communities around Metro Manila, and in some areas of armed conflict in North Cotabato, Mindanao where conflict among Muslims, Christians, and Lumads (indigenous peoples) have been raging. At the Peacemakers’ Circle, we responded to the need for peacebuilding by giving premium to the practice of Inner Work for Self-Awareness and Transformation. Muslims call this *jihad al-nafts*, or the “greater jihad which is the struggle with the enemy within oneself.” This is a practice of constant self-awareness and of purifying oneself from the fears and insecurities of our human frailties that get in the way of peace.

Inner Work is at the core of our peace education programs, and we have promoted weekly Inner Work Circles in the grassroots communities where

conflicting Muslims and Christians live alongside each other as neighbors. Inner Work is a means of helping people develop capacities for “humanizing, not demonizing” the “enemy,” or those whom they perceive as different from themselves and whom they fear.

I am also promoting this practice of Inner Work for Self-Awareness and Transformation among my college students at the Ateneo de Manila (where I am currently teaching an elective course on Muslim-Christian Dialogue for Nation-Building, and another on Conflict Transformation and Peace Among Religions). I integrate phenomenological approaches (using heart listening exercises) with student-centered learning by encouraging students to expose themselves to an awareness of the presence of Muslims and people of diverse cultures and beliefs in our predominantly Christian society, and engage critical thinking through reflective writing. Giving students a background on the history of the Moro struggle in the Philippines has also been a powerful consciousness awakening experience for them, as were their visits to the grassroots Muslim-Christian communities of Quiapo in Manila, and Tala in Caloocan City.

I realize that for peace education to be meaningful and attractive to people everywhere, we must begin to educate ourselves from where we are, rooted in the realities of our lives. We must begin from our selves—the organs of dialogue and instruments of peace—and engage ourselves in the practice of *jihad al-nafs* or inner work for self-awareness and transformation. Only in so doing can we learn to see the realities of the world with clarity of vision, and respond to its challenges with integrity of co-creative actions out of love and not of fear. ●

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**\*Marites Guingona-Africa, Ph.D.** has been engaged in the field of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding since 1998. She is the founder of The Peacemakers' Circle Foundation, Inc. (TPCFI), a non-profit interfaith organization in Manila. She is also a member of the Executive Board of Sacred Springs: Dialogue Institute of Spirituality and Sustainability at the Loyola School of Theology in the Ateneo de Manila University.

# *Silsilah Towards “Radical Love For Radical Change”*

*by Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PIME\**

## **Vision and Founding**

**T**he fear of “radicalism” with violence often creates panic in society. Consequently, today the word “radical” is more often identified with violence and is not welcome by many.

I believe that we are called to regain a deeper and better understanding of “radicalism.” This is what I shall try to present through this story, by talking about the inspiration for initiating and sharing my experiences in Silsilah Dialogue Movement since 1984 when I started it in Zamboanga City, in the eastern part of Mindanao.

I arrived in the Philippines in 1977 and soon I was sent to Siocon (Zamboanga del Norte) to start my mission as a Catholic priest. The place, populated by Christians, Muslims and indigenous people was in the stage of conflict between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the government. The MNLF fighting is part of the historical claim of the land of Mindanao. Many young Muslims at the time were convinced to join the revolution because of the call to “Jihad,” a struggle that Islam presents in its teaching and most of the time is not properly applied, but often used as a struggle with violence to justify their revolution.

Soon, I became familiar with this reality and especially with the people who were victims of this conflict. I decided to live in a Muslim community in the hope of bridging other communities, as a bridge of peace among communities, especially because the perception of many Muslims at that time was that the government and the military, identified as Christians, were against them. Thus, in some way the conflict was perceived by many as a fighting among Muslims and the Christians. At that time the word "encounters" among MNLF rebels and military were commonly used. For me, coming from another country, the word "encounter" was a very positive one, but I learned that in the context of Mindanao it was negative.

That initial decision and inspiration to be close to the Muslim community was the starting point of a mission towards dialogue and which grew to become the beginnings of a mission of dialogue that is now the Silsilah Dialogue Movement.

Living in a poor Muslim community near the sea, I had gotten close to the people and I was respected and loved by all. After few months living there, I also had gotten close with some members of the MNLF living in the area. One day the MNLF commander of the area told me: "Padel (Father) we need your help as a negotiator to reach an agreement of peace between us and the Government of the Philippines."

Personally, I believe in a peaceful approach in solving the conflict in Mindanao, but the MNLF at that time believed in an revolution in claiming their lands. This difference did not pose an obstacle for me, as a negotiator, to help them to find solutions of peace. Meeting them often in isolated places, like forests and living with them on many occasions, I learned a lot about their ideology, strategies and dreams. I was with them, listening to their stories and adventures, especially during the long nights in the forest. This was a kind of experience that lasted for almost two years which were filled with adventures and promises in the search for solutions of peace.

I think my reflection on "radical love for radical change" is also part of that initial experience. At that time, I observed how the rebels, most of them very young, were so committed to the revolution, ready to fight and even to die. In that situation I started to reflect about what motivated them to make a lot of sacrifices and risk their lives. I started to reflect that "radicalism,"

motivated by an ideology and promoted with violence, can be converted into “radicalism with love.” I started to think that this experience can be an entry point to present love as a form of “struggle.” We can also remember the many “radical” experiences of martyrs and saints who have given their lives guided by their faith and love. In this line of reflection I was inspired to propose a new movement—an experience of “radical life,” proposing a spiritual journey of “struggle” for a mission of love.

Guided by this understanding and inspiration, I started *Silsilah* on May 9th, 1984 in Zamboanga City, by proposing a “spirituality of life-in dialogue” encouraging the Christians to focus their attention on the Beatitudes of Jesus as a form of “struggle” that brings happiness to the Christian understanding of faith. To the Muslims I urged them to reflect on the “Great Jihad” a “struggle” towards a spiritual journey and purification. At that time when we started the movement, the concept of radicalism with violence was not as widespread like it is now, but it was present and I was challenged to propose a Movement that is clearly based on a “spirituality” and not on “strategies” of peace. It was an unconventional way to promote dialogue and peace at that time. To my great surprise and joy, through the years, the concept of spirituality gained ground in different fields and areas of society, even in medicine and psychology. This is also true especially in the area of dialogue and peace around the world.

Many know that *Silsilah* promotes the CULTURE OF DIALOGUE, PATH TO PEACE. This is our way of introducing PEACE EDUCATION which we often present as “Dialogue and Peace Education,” to emphasize that dialogue is not only a means of peace, but also a goal in itself. I believe that a deeper dialogue must be motivated and inspired by love, that this process helps to overcome all the obstacles and brings harmony, solidarity and peace. This process is possible if sustained by a spirituality that can have different forms. For us it is a spirituality of life-in-dialogue that one can apply in the religion or belief that he/she professed, and if some claim not to belong to any religion, they can still be guided by the internal voice of goodness planted in each person by the creator as a form of spirituality.

Personally I learned a lot from the “peace education” studies that was introduced in Mindanao by Dr. Toh Swee-Hin. In the process I was also able to develop some ideas and methods which I, in turn, introduced in the

Silsilah presentation of the “Culture of Dialogue, Path to Peace.”

## **Silsilah Programs**

Silsilah conducted its work initially in the Silsilah Center located in Zamboanga City and later in the Harmony Village. The Village is a 14-hectare farm and woodland nestled on a hill overlooking the sea, about 8 kilometers from the city proper in Pitogo, Barangay Sinunuc. In the Village one can find the administrative offices, training center, facilities for live-in seminars, prayer and solitude areas, and demonstration areas for organic and biodynamic farming. The covered walk constructed along the road has an open exhibit, the first part featuring the Silsilah Vision-Mission and the second part focuses on the different government and nongovernment organizations who have contributed to the promotion of dialogue and peace. The village has become a laboratory for Muslims, Christians and people of other living faiths to experience life-in-dialogue with God, with oneself, with others and with the whole creation. A core group of Silsilah members called the Oasis Community live and work in Harmony Village with a commitment to live the spirituality of life-in-dialogue.

Over the past three decades, Silsilah has designed and implemented various programs, including the following:

### **(i) Silsilah Forum**

Many in the Philippines know Silsilah as a dialogue movement and many come to Zamboanga City from different parts of the Philippines and also other countries to avail of the programs. The Forum is the formation of the heart and person of the man or woman of dialogue. It is the desire of the Movement that Silsilah would not be just identified as a non-government organization doing advocacy or work for dialogue and peace, but presenting dialogue not as a strategy but a style of life, a spirituality of life-in-dialogue springing from God and bringing people back to God. Today the program includes all members and friends including alumni who are encouraged to come together regularly in fellowship, share experiences and prayer, and mutually strengthen and sustain each other's spiritual commitment to dialogue and peace. Today many groups have been formed in different areas and other cities in Central and Northern islands Silsilah Family



Members of the Movement are Muslims, Christians, and people of other traditions and faiths who live and promote the Silsilah vision-mission. Individuals, families, groups, communities and those involved in the different programs, activities, and initiatives of the movement can be regular, associate, honorary members, volunteers or friends. Throughout the years, other forms of membership, friendship and linkages have evolved and are encouraged by the movement. Personalized membership and friendship are now being implemented to strengthen and sustain members, friends and linkages in the movement. All are considered part of the Silsilah Family and Friends of the Movement.

**(ii) Emmaus Dialogue Community (EDC)**

This community brought together a group of Christian lay women who desired to make more permanent their experience of life-in-dialogue as a community. Living in a house situated in the heart of a poor community surrounded by Muslim and Christian neighbors, the same time its approval as a lay private association as governed by Canons 321 and 326 of the Revised Code of Canon Law and recognized as such was given by Archbishop of Zamboanga Carmelo D.F. Morelos.

**(iii) Padayon Center**

Founded in February 2003, it provides basic services to poor areas in the city where Muslims and Christians live together. It also serves as a link to government and non-government resources in favor of children, youth, women, the sick and other disadvantaged groups. Padayon is a Visayan word of encouragement meaning to “move on.”

**(iv) Emmaus House of Spirituality**

This was opened on May 20, 2007 as a service to Christians who wish to have a deeper spiritual journey, seeking to harmonize, contemplate and actualize the living out of the spirituality of life-in-dialogue. The House takes care of the Christian formation of the Christian staff and members of the Movement

**(v) Muslim Women for Dialogue and Peace (MUSLIMAH)**

This is a counterpart group among the Muslim women of the

Emmaus Dialogue Community. It encourages Muslim women who are inspired to live the spirit of dialogue in the context of their Islamic faith and tradition. They go through a formation program and are challenged to contribute as Muslim women to the promotion of dialogue and peace in the movement, within their families, communities and society as a whole.

#### **(vi) Formation and Education Programs**

**Silsilah Dialogue Institute** provides enrichment programs in dialogue by conducting long and short term courses, seminars, training and immersion for individuals and groups. The Institute serves as the education arm of the Movement.

**Annual Silsilah Summer Course** is focused on Muslim-Christian relations. The summer course is divided into three modules, all live-in and usually conducted in Harmony Village.

**The Basic Course** offers basic study of Arabic alphabet, Culture of Dialogue, the Qur'an and the Bible, basic teachings of Islam and Christianity, and history of Islam and Christianity with special attention on Philippine context. It is a one-month live-in course and three weekends are spent for immersion experience of participants of different faiths.

The one-week Special Course or second module of the summer course is based on relevant issues affecting dialogue and peace.

The Intensive Course is an abbreviated one-week course of the Basic Course without live-in immersion experiences but participants are given the opportunity to observe Muslim or Christian worship rituals.

#### **(vii) Youth in Media for Dialogue and Peace**

This is also part of the movement's youth program with special focus on the Muslim or Christian youth formation to become the new agents of media for dialogue and peace

#### **(viii) Silsilah Peace and Development Services (SPDS)**

This program links a community or group in need of government or private agency that can respond with the particular services for them.

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One specific activity is Kapihan (Filipino word meaning over a cup of coffee), an informal gathering organized from time to time in publicly accessible venues to discuss topics that are relevant to issues on dialogue and peace and bring them to the attention of the public. Another activity is “Filipinos overseas for Dialogue and Peace (FODP). In collaboration with the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) Regional Office IX in Zamboanga City, the program assists in the values formation of applying overseas Filipino workers (OFW) through the pre-employment orientation seminar (PEOS) where sessions on the Culture of Dialogue, Path to Peace are integrated. The program has also started offering counseling services in its center for legal and psychological assistance, especially for Filipino workers deported from Malaysia. A third activity is the Inmates Welfare and Development Program.

### Facing Challenges Ahead

The great challenge today is how to motivate the new generation to be “radical” for something good that can inspire them. How do we tell the youth of today, and all in general, that we are part of the same human family? Thus, we have to welcome and love people of all cultures and religions and our love has to be for all, giving attention to the less privileged of society. The word “Silsilah,” an Arabic word that means “chain or link” is used by the movement to remind everyone that we are all “interlinked” parts of the same human family.

To my great surprise and joy many today appreciate the Silsilah spirit that reminds us that we have to promote dialogue and peace starting from a spiritual approach, and guided by the four pillars of dialogue: dialogue with God, dialogue with the self, dialogue with others and dialogue with creation. This is the foundation of a deeper effort of peace as an expression of love, in a process of personal and social transformation. This guides us to the concept of dialogue as an expression of love.

On October 20, 2010, the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution:

- *“Recognizing the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions to enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people;*
- *Recognizing that the moral imperatives of all religions, conventions and beliefs*

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*call for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding;*

- *Reaffirming that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute an important dimension of a culture of peace;*
- *Proclaiming the first week of February every year as the World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) between all religions, faiths and beliefs;*
- *Encouraging all States to support, on voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on the love of God and love of one's neighbor or on the love of the good and the love of one's neighbor, each according to their own religious tradition or convictions;”.*

We consider this declaration an affirmation of our mission as the focus on “the love of God, the love of neighbor and love of the common good” becomes close to the spirituality and mission of Silsilah. I believe that the UN, in the midst of so much violence that are often part of radical ideologies, wants to reaffirm the “radicalism of love,” a concept so often misunderstood by many as simply a form of enjoyment among those who are inclined to search for love in sex, money and power.

The United Nations, in proposing the love of God, neighbor and common good” invites us to take part in a form of “revolution” to follow and to give voice to Silsilah. For this reason, we welcome the initiative of the United Nations. From 1948, the time when the UN was created, to the present, the United Nations has proposed so many programs for peace. At this point, maybe they realized that we cannot ignore the spiritual aspect of life and they are inviting us to celebrate the World Interfaith Harmony Week every year.

Since 2012, Silsilah has promoted in Zamboanga the initiative of the UN, and then we started also to spread this initiative at the national level starting from the Silsilah Forum areas that we have in many parts of Mindanao and in the Manila areas.

Among our efforts was to involve one of our friends and a member of Silsilah who happened to be the representative of the 1st district of Zamboanga. She brought the idea to congress. Afterwards, we approached other friends in the Philippine Senate who paved the way to what is known today as the Republic Act No. 10525 signed by President Aquino: “*An act declaring*

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*the First week of February of every year as World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW)  
in the entire country and mandating its observance by the different Government Agencies."*

This initiative also challenges the ongoing peace education program because it invites people of all religions to be guided by the spirit of harmony. This hopefully can create a better atmosphere to address issues and encourage participation in the peace process with a better spirit, the spirit of those willing to find a solution of peace for the common good and not for the interest of one group or a few leaders who move guided by vested interests.

We cannot ignore that Islam, as well as other religions such as Hinduism, have shown the "radical" face of violence, presenting these religions in a negative way and distorting the real spirit of Islam and Hinduism that promote peace and harmony. In this situation the great challenge is to educate people toward respect. This cannot be fully achieved if we are not able to liberate "love" from a narrow understanding of religion that often contain "love" within the circle of their group, towards full understanding of love, not only as a concept, but also as a "lifestyle." Many think that this is impossible now in this society. But my point is: if unfortunately, radicalism with violence became possible, why can it not be possible to join our hands to gain the deeper meaning of radical love for radical changes?

This is the story of Silsilah which continues and, along the way, invites many to experience the importance of dialogue as an expression of love convinced that "Dialogue starts from God and brings people to God."●

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**\*Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra**, PIME is an Italian missionary who has lived in the Philippines since 1977, where he was a negotiator for the MNLF. He founded the Silsilah Dialogue Movement in 1984. He has a Ph.D. in Peace and Development, and has served as secretary of the Episcopal Commission of Inter-religious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.



## *The Museo Pambata Peace Initiatives*

*by Nina Lim-Yuson, Ph.D.\**

**W**e have a peace helicopter in the museum grounds. It first arrived in 1994 as a donation from the Philippine Army. It symbolizes our yearning for peace in our heart and the country. Let me tell you the story of how Museo Pambata came to be.

Museo Pambata, the Philippines' first interactive children's museum situated in the historical Elks Club Building and grounds in Manila was opened to the public in December 1994. Several years before that, the children's museum was just a dream, a wish of a mom of four kids who ran an exceptional Open Education preschool. That mom was and is yours truly.

It was in the early 80's that I first took my children, then ages 2 to 12 to the Boston Children's Museum. It was probably one of the most exciting visits, better than Disneyland. The kids, together with many other child visitors, ran from one interactive exhibit to another. There were masks from Southeast Asia to try on, costumes to wear, color discs which you could pair to get a new color, simple science modules you could manipulate, big doll houses, a play supermarket, and a grandmother's chest full of clothes you could try on. It was a 'free for all' way of learning about things, people, history and places. Most of all, kids in this museum were excited, happy and involved.

Unlike other museums we visited, where items were kept in glass cases amidst a hushed atmosphere, the Boston Children's Museum was entirely different! How I wished then that we could have such a museum in the Philippines.

As an early childhood educator, I saw the value of learning in such an environment. The philosophy of using your total senses plus the act of "play" made learning for the very young a memorable experience. What a contrast to classroom learning where you have the teacher as the giver and students as receivers. Here, kids learned from interactive exhibits housed in theme rooms (for example, a room about environment).

One of the exhibits that I later visited was in the Brooklyn Children's Museum, way off New York's center, close to the Harlem district. I wrote about this children's museum as I saw them as pioneers in community conflict resolution. Just a few weeks before this particular interactive exhibit was shown, there was a gang war between Jewish youngsters and African American youth. To enable young children to understand why this happened, an exhibit of thoughts and feelings from both sides were shown using videos of kids giving their ideas and thoughts on violence and peace. There are also questions posed such as "How would you feel if you were this kid?" There were papers for you to write your own feelings which you could choose to post on a board.

These two museums, Boston and Brooklyn Children's Museums, are more than a hundred years old, have evolved in terms of exhibits, but remain faithful in attracting its young visitors. Museums can adjust to changing times.

Back home, I also knew that a lot could be done to help shape the values and outlook of children ages 2–6 years old. Early Learning Center (ELC), which was the preschool I founded, made children aware of their country and situations in the country. At that time, there weren't as many poor communities as we have now, but you could already see disparities in neighborhoods. It was a deeply felt responsibility to share our knowledge of early learning with the nearby low income families. We established four free preschools in Makati, using the same curriculum, including the teachers in our teacher training programs. Our children from upper income families would help raise funds to support the free schools through a food sale or art auction. Every Christmas, the students from ELC would go over to Don



Bosco or San Ildelfonso and give a big box of gifts to the kids. I knew that many of our parents understood the difficulties of growing up disadvantaged. To me, this was a plus factor of having to share our resources and talents with the less privileged. I believe these early-learned values lasted with the kids as they became professionals. I still hear stories on how our former preschoolers have helped others in many ways. I actually learned a song in my early years about sharing and equality. Part of it goes:

If each little child would have fresh milk each day,  
If each working man had enough time to play,  
It would be a wonderful, wonderful world...  
If we could consider each other, a neighbor, a friend or a brother,  
It would be a wonderful world.  
If there were no poor and the icy were content,  
If strangers were welcomed wherever they went  
It would be a wonderful world...

This is peace building and it can start with us and our youngest generation.

Starting a children's museum was a bigger project than I realized. Back then, all I did was dream about it. Until one day, my mother who had retired from both government service and the United Nations, joined me for a meeting at a foundation. She sat in the living room while our board was meeting close by. She heard me present a draft concept paper of a children's museum. Unfortunately, my proposal was vetoed as the board's President preferred to put up health centers. After the meeting, as I rode home with my mom, she surprised me with a "Let's do it!" And so, that's how it started. From a dream, to writing it down, until someone pushed me further...my mom.

Dr. Estefania Aldaba-Lim and I had zero funds and exhibits, but we both believed that children have rights to learning and playing. She was once a Minister of Social Welfare and then appointed to the United Nations to head the UN Year of the Child. There was God's hands in all this as events just unfolded to our favor.

The building we found on the premier Roxas Boulevard was not fully used. We also found out that the City of Manila owned the premises. Serendipity had it that my mom was named one of the Outstanding Manilans during the first term of Mayor Alfredo S. Lim, who was open to the idea of

re-using the building for a Children's museum. He had just arrived from a UNICEF meeting of mayors in Mexico City. What a better way to continue his work for uplifting lives of Manila's children.

My mom organized the first board of trustees, while I drew up the concept and had meetings with educators, artists, designers and architects. It was a full year of organizing the ideas, welcoming donations in cash and kind. We received from ambassadors' wives children's instruments and games such as their versions of the "*sungkaan*." We had to order some items from the United States for the Health and Science rooms, but most of the interactive exhibits, we developed ourselves. There were many challenges but also blessings as people wanted to help 'pro bono' like the architect's designs and execution of each of the themed room. We even had a moon rock straight from NASA and brought by US President Clinton when he came to visit the country.

We opened in December 21, 1994. It was everybody's children's museum, from the First Lady Amelita Ramos to the trustees, the many carpenters and painters, the new staff and the children who came to the museum.

The museum initially had 5 themed rooms and has expanded to 8. These are Old Manila, Environment/Under the Sea, Children in the Global Village, My Body Works, Science, which has been changed to I Love my Planet Earth (on Climate Change), Career Option, The Marketplace and the Changing Exhibits area, which now holds the Explore Singapore exhibit. Eventually it will feature Filipino children's songs, games, dances and storytelling.

Aside from these rooms with interactive exhibits, the Museo Pambata has interesting educational programs that reach many kids, specially marginalized children. These include literacy, dance and music performances, children's rights, arts and crafts, food and health programs, and peace advocacy.

### **Why Peace Advocacy in a Children's Museum?**

One of the most pressing issues in Philippine society is poverty and its accompanying problems, such as uncared for children. Many of the children in the poorest families are neglected. The drop-out rate from schools widens as they reach grade 3. They are the children who do not have basic needs — a home to go to, food to eat, and clothing to wear. Moreover, their parents can hardly cope with daily needs. The local governments have

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges neglected this sector.

### **Child Advocacy Program, a way of peace, bridging the gap**

For 15 years, Museo Pambata had a Child Advocacy Program with a group of 15 children, ages 6–15 years old. Most were from the poorest families, some were street kids and children who attended public school. They were introduced to creative programs like dramatics and arts and crafts to awaken creativity and get away from their squalid environment. They also went on field trips and learned about children's rights. Some of them eventually were able to finish grade school. Exceptional students were given scholarships and some are doing fairly well in their professions today. Bridging the gap, enabling children to have opportunities for expression and appreciation were tremendous forces in shaping what they can be. Imagine how many young children's lives could be transformed if this was replicated in every community. It was important to get the parents' support and as expected, partners who assisted in the program greatly helped their children overcome their initial shyness and insecurities.

This program, although beneficial to a small number of kids, had to expand its reach to more children.

### **Peace Workshops and Conferences on Peace**

In 2000, Museo Pambata conceptualized a workshop on “Breaking Barriers: Building Peace and Love for Country.” Our group of facilitators brought this interactive workshop to 9 major cities in the country. These included Manila, Lucena, Tacloban, Cebu, Bicol, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Davao and Zamboanga. The workshops were done during the height of the conflict in Mindanao. The purpose was to help high school students and teachers understand and appreciate cultural differences, especially the Muslim and Christian ways. It helped to lessen prejudice and stereotyping among the students and to be proactive in building peace instead of taking sides. One of the high school students eventually became a leader in his school and later in a bigger leadership assembly of youth. He said that he owed it to the workshops which gave him skills to express his thoughts and actions.

### **International Conferences initiated by Museo Pambata (MP)**

A result of this peace workshops was an international conference Museo Pambata organized in 2008. Themed as “Children's Museums as

Bridges of Peace,” this was attended by around 150 participants, with both local and international speakers who worked with children’s groups either in museums or related centers dealing with culture and peace building. The 2nd Asian Children’s Museum Conference was held in 2012, also in Manila with the theme “Children and Climate Change.” As we know, climate change has created imbalance in our normal lives. What were once warm summer months, have become days of extreme heat, causing dried up rice fields and accompanying sicknesses. Climate change gave the museum a chance to create a whole room to help kids understand concepts such as “La Niña and El Niño,” earthquakes, using home utilities wisely, tree planting etc. We also created a real green garden in the museum, and labeled all the trees that can be found in the vicinity. The 3rd international conference was held in Gyeonggi, South Korea and the theme was on “Unity in Cultural Diversity,” again touching on differences and the need for unity and cooperation. We have now reached the fourth conference as we spread our wings to the Pacific in the Asia Pacific Children’s Museum Conference with the theme “Peace with the Heart of Aloha.” This conference was held in Honolulu, Hawaii last October 2016. Building peace is a serious concern in children’s museums as evidenced with the chosen themes of these four international conferences. We are proud to say that Museo Pambata has played a role in making this possible.

### **A Peace Helicopter**



During the height of the conflict in Mindanao, a group of artists and Museo staff thought of re-working the army helicopter in the Museo playground. This big bird was donated by the Philippine army and the

group wanted it to be transformed into a Peace helicopter. With the kids from the park, this helicopter took shape. Using bottle caps and other recycled items and with fresh new paint, adding a slide on the side, attaching peace letters inside the helicopter, this peace bearer was transformed. The project of artists and educators went to the south to strengthen the need for peace.

### **Bridging the gap**

Finally, we return to a more serious concern: children who are displaced, uncared for, and left to waste their growing years. Poverty is a problem. We see it everywhere, especially in big cities like Manila. Children sleep in the alleys and roam Rizal Park just next to us. In the North Cemetery, there is another NGO group called All Together in Dignity or ATD, who helps the children by tutoring them on Saturdays. The kids want to learn to read and write, as they are either having difficulty in school or have stopped going to school. This is a similar case with the street kids near Museo Pambata, who want to learn but do not have the resources.

We are aware of the Rights of Children: the right to a home, to education, culture and leisure. Each day that passes, these uncared for kids will be a greater liability to society.

The mission of Museo Pambata is primarily to be an interactive museum. Towards this mission, it has included marginalized children in all its in-house programs such dance and drama performances, arts and crafts, Filipino games, music and arts festival. But this is not enough. There is a need to keep them in school, give them proper nutrition and make sure they have a roof over their heads.

Sometimes we ask ourselves, what can be done? Who are responsible for all our unwanted children?

When we held the Children's Summit in 2009 at Museo Pambata, the children made several telling statements. These are what they said...

1. I wish that we could avoid empty promises and focus on action.
2. I wish that children would get the support that they deserve.
3. I wish we could focus on the educational needs of Filipino children.
4. I wish that those who have been affected by different calamities would receive help.

5. I wish that we could strengthen laws on children's rights.
6. I wish that government officials would realize the importance of children all over the world.
7. I wish we could have a nationwide survey that would help the government find out what they can do for the Filipino youth.
8. I wish there will be more institutions that would help children who have been abused and abandoned.
9. I wish that street children would be given homes, food, and clothing, and that they learn how to care for the environment.
10. I wish that the staff of DSWD would be nice so that street children would not be scared when they conduct rescue operations.

The poorest children are the most affected and probably the last to be prioritized in our country. This definitely does not bring peace. It is an everyday challenge and although there are many non-government organizations reaching out to children, this is not enough. Poverty issues are continually being addressed by the government and it is a huge task to address.

But there is hope as the many children who have had a Museo Pambata experience can live better lives.

To have more children's museums or child-focused activities in the country, we need to share our experience. Fortunately, we have grants to have workshops on establishing community museums, hold 3-month long children's arts festivals, and bring in hundreds of poor kids to Museo Pambata so that they can experience what every child should enjoy — to laugh, listen, climb, wonder, wander, and simply be. ●

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**\*Cristina (Nina) Lim-Yuson** is the Co-founder/President & CEO of Museo Pambata Foundation Inc. Museo Pambata is the first interactive children's museum in the Philippines. She is also the 1st National Vice- President of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines and chairs the National Program Committee. In both organizations, peace advocacy programs are created and conducted nationwide.

# *A Stitch in the Tapestry of Peacebuilding in Mindanao*

*by Amabella “Mabel” Carumba\**

I was a Martial Law baby. I was born during a period of political turmoil in the Philippines. My father was a descendant of Ilonggo parents who migrated to Mindanao and my mother, was a Boholana, whose father, for a time, decided to look for economic opportunities in Mindanao. She stayed when her family decided it was time to go back. I was born in Kumander Toothpick’s municipality in M’lang, North Cotabato, where my parents settled with my father’s family. Kumander Toothpick was the leader of *Ilaga*, a Christian paramilitary group known for fighting against the black-shirts (Moros) in the ‘70s and launching a number of massacres that left many people dead. The *Ilaga* was composed of Ilonggo migrants from the Visayas. *Ilaga* was also known as Ilonggo Land grabbers (Mariveles, 2015). Kumander Toothpick was very popular—or maybe the more appropriate term is notorious. Each time I visit my father’s grave, I would also visit him. His tomb had the Philippine flag draped over it. When I saw the flag for the first time, I thought he was one of those military personnel who died in combat or maybe one of the decorated officers of the Philippine constabulary. I was too young to understand then.

My education began when my mother put me in day care in Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur, in the Baganian area of the Zamboanga Peninsula

(Dinas, n.d.). My mother just got accepted as a teacher in the lone public high school. One night when we were preparing for bed, I heard a series of gunfire not far from our house. I remember seeing everyone crouching down and diving for cover. My small body shook uncontrollably. My mother had to wrap me in blankets to still my slight frame. I had fever for a week after that night's incident. After the initial shock, I no longer suffered badly. But, I am still afraid of gunfire until now.

The community where I grew up in had a mixed population: the Maguindanaons and Iranuns—two of the 13 Moro ethno-linguistic groups (Kamlan, 2012); the *Bisaya* (Christians); and the *Subanen*, the biggest Indigenous group in the Zamboanga Peninsula (Baya, 2015). The Moros claimed that they owned the lands in the municipality and wanted them back. This greatly incensed the Bisaya as most of them inherited their properties from their parents and grandparents. Meanwhile, the Subanens mostly kept to themselves as the Maguindanaons and Iranuns and the Bisaya looked down on them as ignorant and '*mamikpikay*,' meaning someone who can poison you by merely tapping your shoulder. The prejudices among the three groups were palpable especially in times when killings between the Moros and the Bisaya happened, which was, at that time, often. The Bisaya children are usually sternly warned by their parents not to go to the '*tabuk*' (the riverbank) or the '*Ka-Musliman*' (areas inhabited by Muslims). Even the Bisaya teachers gave this warning to the Bisaya students.

I, on the other hand, never heeded this warning, simply allowing them flow into one ear and out the the other. I so loved the ube cream of Babu Hamsia, my friend Hamima's inah (mother) that I could not stay away. Even if I have to cross the river in a small *banca* (boat) without the 'katig' (outrigger) and did not know how to swim, I often found myself at their house during afternoon breaks. Our teachers' scolding never deterred me from going. How could I when I am accepted and treated as one of the family's kids? Thus, I never understood why we were forbidden to go.

One day, one of my mother's students, Subod, an Iranun, asked my mother to send me to the madrasah. Back then I didn't know why he was called Iranun. I thought maybe his family is from Iran. I was really clueless then. His elder brother was the Ustadz and he said they are giving free Arabic lessons to Bisaya kids. I called him Kaka Subod, meaning older brother.



Subod is one of the budding student leaders in my mother's public high school—very kind and responsible. It didn't take much persuasion for my mother to agree to send me to the local madrasah. On the first two weeks, Kaka Subod would pick me up at our house and patiently put a perfumed '*kumbong*' (veil) he borrowed from one of his sisters over my head. Back then, I wore short pants copying my two older brothers. I must have looked ludicrous with a *kumbong* on my head and short pants but Kaka Subod didn't mind as he took my small hand in his and made our way to the madrasah. At first, the other children were very curious about me. I stood out like a sore thumb among the abaya-clad (black robes) children. When they discovered that I was just an ordinary kid, I soon became one of them. During afternoon prayers, the kids would go to the nearby mosque to pray. Being a Bisaya, I do not own a '*malong*' (sarong) so I would just keep to myself or watch them do their prayers. Most often than not, the other children would accompany me outside the mosque. Later on, I would walk to the madrasah by myself, a Bisaya kid from the Poblacion donning a kumbong finding her way to Benuatan, in the *ka-Musliman*.

I never feared being amongst the 'abaya'-clad children. No one made me feel different or treated me differently. It was only later on when I understood why Kaka Subod's brother invited me to attend the madrasah. It was his way of showing the other townspeople that not all Moros are bad, that they too wanted peace, and for their children to have education in a peaceful and secure environment.

After university, I worked with a non-government organization in Iligan City called 'Sumpay Mindanao,' which literally means to bridge the tri-people (a term used to refer to the Christian, Muslim and Indigenous people collectively) communities of Mindanao. From my inter-personal relations with the Moros while growing up and later on being tasked to handle the Peace Education and Advocacy Program of the organization, I was invited to a walk-through of the Culture of Peace module of the 'Panagtabo Mindanao' of the Catholic Relief Services with other Mindanao peace advocates in October 2002.

The module consists of three parts: Historical Journey in Mindanao; Approaches to Conflict Resolution; and Towards a Culture of Peace. During the walk through, especially on the historical journey where the participants

journey together back in time to trace the historical roots of Mindanao, we were forced to confront our deep seated biases against the other group of peoples. I felt like I went through my youth again, but the experience helped deepen my understanding of the situation in Mindanao. It somehow helped me find answers to the questions I had about the situation in my community when I was growing up. I was enlightened and became more discerning of things that happened around me.

In the summer of 2003, I became a scholar of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI), a three-week intensive training program, where I took two courses with other Asian peace advocates and practitioners. Because I had to do fieldwork, I was only able to complete two weeks of course work-- community-based peacebuilding design and planning. Back then I had classmates from Indonesia, a nun from Vietnam, a guy from East Timor, three Indian peace advocates, with one coming from Nagaland, one of India's indigenous regions; someone from Madagascar. I was the only Filipino in the group. Prior to taking the course, I was already facilitating the communities I worked with in designing their community-based peacebuilding plans.

### **Vision, Goals and Purposes of the Program**

Many of the children in Mindanao are exposed to violence at a very young age. I can never forget the image of a ten-year old boy, Abdul, whom I met in one of the evacuation centers in Pikit, North Cotabato. He was introduced to me by my fellow peace educator, Brother Mike, a young Maguindanaon who was then volunteering at the Pikit Parish, which hosted hundreds of bakwit (evacuees) from nearby municipalities after the bombing of the Buliok Complex during the Feast of Sacrifice or E'dl Adha of the Muslims, while the Muslim communities were doing their morning prayers on February 11, 2003.

Abdul and his family have been escaping from armed conflicts in their community since he was a baby. One night, while fleeing, the *banca* they were on capsized. Abdul fell into the water and nearly drowned. After that, he was never the same again. At the evacuation center, he would sit for the entire day, banging his hand on the floor and putting everything he can get his hands on in his mouth. Many children end up like Abdul, never recovering from the trauma of war. Many others end up waging arms and leading a life

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges of violence, either because of a cause, or because of hatred when members of their families died in the war that they are now waging.

It is this cycle of violence that we want to arrest and change. The main objective of our community peace education program is to invest in young people. So that they will unlearn the deep seated biases instilled in them, slowly heal themselves from the trauma, pain and loss from all these armed conflicts and learn to transform conflicts. Hopefully, they themselves will become peace advocates and choose the path to peace.

### **Organizing and Implementing the Program**

In 2003, I led a series of seminar workshops on the Culture of Peace in five barangays in the Provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. The five barangays were composed of mixed communities of Moros and migrant settlers. They were all armed-conflict affected communities. While the situation in the five communities are seemingly similar, each is actually unique.

Over the years, I have had the chance to conduct workshops and seminars on the culture of peace with the tri-people communities in Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani Province, and Cotabato City to fisherfolk, farmers, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), women, youth and students.

The scope of culture of peace encompasses discussions on historical injustices or root causes of war, international humanitarian law and human rights and institutions—all of which are covered in Learning to Abolish War Framework of Reardon and Cabezudo, and Toh's Flower Petal Model of Peace Education. According to the latter model, the culture of peace has six categories comprising culture of peace, which includes: 1) dismantling the culture of war; 2) environmental peace; 3) education for justice and compassion; 4) human rights education; 5) cultivating intercultural solidarity; and 6) harnessing inner peace (Kester, 2009).

These two models resonated with me as I became deeply involved in human rights and justice issues, substantiating my understanding of the culture of peace and helping me live it. Guided by these frameworks and driven by my experiences growing up, I got involved in peace and fact-finding missions in conflict-affected communities. One of the most notable missions I led was after the breakdown of the peace talks between the Philippine government

and the Moro Islamic Front, often referred to as the Memorandum of Agreement On Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) debacle. It was a Mindanao-wide fact-finding mission, where I was assigned to lead the team in Maguindanao.

Datu Piang, which used to be the center of trade in Maguindanao, now evoked images of a town marred with continuous fighting between the government and rebel troops and other lawless elements. During this period, Datu Piang became a tent municipality, with every inch of space, public or private, occupied by tents set up for IDPs. If I, like most peace advocates, was deeply frustrated with the way the peace negotiation ended then, I can only imagine how much more frustrating and painful it was for communities that are constantly displaced by the conflict.

Fr. Bert Layson's words come to my mind: sporadic peace and constant war. Fr. Bert was an OMI priest assigned in the Pikit Parish in 2003 which hosted one of the biggest *bakwit* population after President Arroyo's war on terrorism in Mindanao (The President's Day: February 20, 2003). I asked myself, while looking at all the sick and the hungry bakwit in Datu Piang: When can we have constant peace? I found myself fervently praying for the war to end when a baby who contracted measles at the evacuation center expired before my very eyes, while a frail old woman at a distance struggled with her own sickness. Allah/*Gino* must be stormed with similar pleas from the Muslim-Christian *bakwit* themselves who came from the neighboring towns of Midsayap, Aleosan, Pagalungan, Datu Salibo and Datu Saudi Ampatuan.

Our peace mission showed that both government and the MILF rebels committed violations while in combat. The report was used by the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), a national human rights organization with an ECOSOC status at the UN (TFCP, AMKP, MPPM, PAHRA, 2008).

## **Partners/Support Groups**

The seminar workshops were in partnership with Catholic Relief Services and local organizations from the five barangays concerned. Later on, as my organization has an institutionalized program, we gave Culture of Peace trainings to members of our network. Often, the local organizations and the communities that we organized these trainings with would contribute food for the duration of the trainings and accommodate us in their homes.

## **Accomplishments and Challenges**

Educating on the Culture of Peace is quite a challenge, especially in mixed communities where historic biases and prejudices are deep and manifest. However, this also makes the work more worthwhile especially when you witness understanding, empathy and reconciliation blossom. Challenging preconceived notions and prejudices that are deeply ingrained in every individual shaped by his/her experiences, culture, and community require openness and the commitment of mind and heart.

Evaluation of peace education activities is also a challenge as the results are not easily visible. For this, we make sure to have continuing activities and to nurture relations with local organizations through our other programs. We also invited them to become members of the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM), a network of multi-sectoral organizations coming from the tri-people communities of Mindanao, where they become in solidarity with other organizations from other communities. In this platform, they exchange experiences, discuss their situation, talk about the challenges they encounter, and explore ways of addressing them. This solidarity also makes them feel that they are not isolated in facing their issues and encourage them to learn from others. It takes years before the results become visible in the way the community relate to each other. It is also in the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement, where the grassroots tri-peoples, who are mainly victims of all these armed conflicts, find the platform to bring in their issues and aspirations for peace.

## **Lessons Learned in Implementing Peace Education**

My initial experience on educating for a culture of peace had been both a challenge and inspiration, not to mention a cause of heartache, of pain and loss.

All of the five communities I worked with were able to craft their community-based peacebuilding plans. In one of the communities, in Balo-I, one of the hotspots in Lanao del Norte, we partnered with the Franciscan Missionaries and the local organizations of the Diocese such as the Dialogue for Life of adult men and women, and the youth organization. These organizations have memberships coming from Muslims and Christians. It was nearing elections, and one of the plans they identified was to clean the

registration list from flying voters. They implemented their plans. This initiative cost the life of Nicanor, one of the young men who was very active in the seminar as well as one of the active leaders of the youth organization. I was devastated when I heard the news of his death. While many peace advocates take the path of peace, they are not spared from violence. Incidents like this is meant to discourage advocates in pursuing our work, yet despite the violence, many persisted and managed to overcome such challenges.

In the other community I worked with, the members of Nagkahiusang Mangingisda Alang sa Kalambuan sa Sultan Naga Dimaporo (NaMANGKA), a federation of humble fisherfolk in eight (8) barangays in Sultan Naga Dimaporo, were constantly faced with the threat of 'rido' (clan war) in Sultan Naga Dimaporo, Lanao del Norte. The community is poor, and with fishing as their main livelihood, they risk encounters with pirates if they go further at sea. This would mean the loss of their small bancas and fishing nets, their main fishing implements, and whatever catch they had during the day. This fear of pirates led to a strong competition for whatever meager resources they can access, and for many to resort to illegal fishing.

NAMANGKA is composed of men and women and some young adults. I enjoyed many of our workshops under the small cottage with some mothers bringing their babies, settling them down in makeshift 'malong' hammocks, their gentle swings lulling the babies to sleep. During small buzz groups, some of them would get into their *banca* and paddled to a near distance while having their discussions. The community looks serene but the threat of conflict was also real.

NAMANGKA, with the help of Lanao Aquatic and Fisheries Center for Community Development (LAFCCOD, a local NGO, implemented a program on community-based coastal resource management (Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM), 2015). As the coastal resources were depleted and destroyed, a rehabilitation of the coral reefs was undertaken and the seas around their community was declared as a marine sanctuary. This started the conflict between the community members, especially between those who were part of the organization and those who weren't. The organization members wanted to protect and preserve the coastal resources for the present and future generations. The other community members on the other hand wanted to exploit the natural resources, especially when fish

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have started to become abundant in the marine sanctuary. They argued that they shouldn't be deprived of the coastal resources and must have access to the products of the sea because the situation has improved since the marine sanctuary was developed.

The development of the marine sanctuary unified and strengthened the relationship among members of the organization, and has become the point of unity with other community members. Meanwhile, the education on the culture of peace also equipped the organization members with skills on conflict resolution, as well as gave them the confidence to lobby for the local government's support for their initiative in developing the marine sanctuary. As a result, a municipal ordinance was passed, establishing a buffer zone for fishing and the members of the organization were deputized as 'bantay dagat.' The men patrol the sanctuary during the night while the women do it during the day. It is with this role that they managed to apprehend violators. This experience greatly empowered the local community members. Later on, the members of the organization managed to win over the other community members in supporting the marine sanctuary project.

### **Rising Above and Addressing Challenges**

In April 2003, I was in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat. We were requested to help resolve a conflict between the Maguindanaon and Dulangan Manobo in a remote sitio (ZFD, 2011). While I was there, Christian communities in the municipality of Maigo were attacked by Commander Bravo of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Filipe, et al., 2008). I asked myself then, "What I am doing here? It seems, each time we put our foot forward, we take two steps back..." I felt demoralized. Then I realized that our situation in Mindanao is a complex one, one that began even before I was born. I am just one of the few community peacebuilders. If I feel demoralized and disheartened, that would mean one less peacebuilder. Then I think of the communities that I worked with, the peoples that I have met. They were facing more challenges than I do while living in their communities. They don't lose hope and never give up. From them, I draw strength and inspiration.

It also helped that I developed deep friendships with other peace advocates coming from the academe, other NGOs and with people from the communities themselves. We exchange notes, share our experiences and

continue learning from each other. Somehow, we became a small community of practitioners.

One of them is Kaka Usman, a Maguindanaon from Layug, Pagalungan. During the armed conflict in 2003, he disappeared from our circle. We could not reach him. One day, I saw him in one of the evacuation centers in Pikit. We hugged tightly. He brought me to his home in Layug where I spent the night with his family. It seems that the number of IDPs had swelled so much that he has to take care of a number of families. Even his goat shed was used by some IDPs for shelter. Taking care of the IDPs and their needs had kept him occupied. Kaka Usman's home is a humble one. But he, his wife and children did not hesitate to welcome the fleeing families into their homes. That night, we shared a grilled carp from the Liguasan Marsh. 'Pamugon', Pikit's native coffee, kept pouring into our cups as he shared their experience throughout the night.

Then there was Brother Mike, a young Maguindanaon who volunteered at the Pikit Parish to take care of the thousands of displaced civilians who fled their homes. He introduced me to the young boy Abdul, calling him his baby, looking out for him in the evacuation center. Brother Mike would later on become one of the volunteers of the Bantay Ceasefire, a civilian-led grassroots monitoring organization monitoring incidents of armed conflicts in the communities.

And how can I forget Yul, a Waray from Leyte, who became one of my best friends. He was then a community organizer with the Notre Dame University Peace Center in their partner community in Pagangan, Aleosan. There were instances that he would call me while he was on field and I could hear the sound of mortar as he and other community peace facilitators assisted civilians to safety while evacuation centers have not been set up. Later on, he became one of the team leaders of Bantay Ceasefire, who often accompanied civilians not only in securing them when they fled their communities, but as well as in the harvesting of their corn produce for their consumption.

It was from the likes of Kaka Usman, Nicanor, Brother Mike, Yul, the fisherfolk in Sultan Naga Dimaporo, and other people that I have met along the way, including the Indigenous Peoples that I have learned a lot over the



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years. They are my mentors, my kindred spirits. They spurred me in my journey. It made me realize that being a peace educator does not limit one to holding workshops, giving inputs in safe areas. Rather, it is actually working and living with the people who are in the communities affected with the conflict and are everyday trying to transform these conflicts.

Working for peace is also challenging injustice and impunity. I experienced this during the Maguindanao massacre in 2009, one of the most barbaric, gruesome and heinous crimes in the Philippine history, killing journalists, lawyers and civilians alike. I had a chance to work with CenterLaw Philippines which invited a Peruvian forensic expert to help in the investigation. Our team's investigation, in cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights, found the dentures of another victim, journalist, Roberto Momay (Carumba, 2009), bringing the number of victims to 58 and, leading to the filing of the 58th case in court against the perpetrators who are among Maguindanao's most notorious political warlords (CenterLaw Philippines, 2009).

After the massacre, Maguindano was declared under a State of Emergency, and was placed under military control. A provisional Governor from the military, a known peace general was assigned to take the post and administered the arrest of the notorious Ampatuan family, especially the Governor of Maguindanao, Andal Ampatuan, Sr, the family patriarch who was believed to have ordered the massacre of the convoy composed of representatives of the Ampatuans' political rival on their way to file the certificate of candidacy in Cotabato City. The convoy was stopped, and was led to a remote hill where all the passengers of the convoy were shot to death and buried in a pit in the vehicles they were riding in.

That incident placed the Philippines on the top of the list of the most dangerous countries for journalists, even more dangerous than Afghanistan (Lingao, 2010).

In 2012, another round of peace talks began under Pres. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino. A Framework Agreement was signed in that year, and not long after, in 2014, a Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the Final Peace Agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF was likewise signed by the parties, concluding more than 17 years of peace negotiations between the government and the MILF (Ragu, 2014).

There was euphoria as the long road to peace was almost in sight. However, Indigenous Peoples in the mainland ARMM felt that their rights were not included in the negotiations. They protested the non-implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in the region. They challenged the lack of political will in the region to allow the devolution and implementation of the law. It was for this reason that they actively engaged the peace process mechanisms as well as the legislators for their recognition and the inclusion of their rights in the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

With the non-recognition of the IPRA in the ARMM, their claim for their ancestral domain remained a legal battle between the ARMM and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). It was only in 2014 that the NCIP, through an en banc decision, acted on their petition.

My organization, the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM) was one of the few organizations that supported the assertion of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples. Because of our support, we were branded as "peace spoilers" and/or "evil whisperers." Many of the Indigenous People leaders were harassed. There were even deaths reported, especially that their ancestral territories were also under threat of development aggression such as mining and agri-business plantations, which the Indigenous Peoples believe are detrimental to their environment (Tupas, 2014).

As Johan Galtung mentioned, conflicts cannot be resolved through negative peace alone. Efforts should be exerted to attain positive peace and this could be attained if structural violence is addressed.

### **Hopes for Peace Education and the Pursuit of a More Peaceful, Just & Sustainable Future**

Being a community peace educator, learner and advocate, I have great belief that education will help change the perspectives of peoples. We should also consciously seek to know and understand each other. Genuine empathy and solidarity for the tri-peoples' struggles are also very important. To me, these are crucial ingredients in educating for a Culture of Peace.

The results may not be immediate and easily visible, but overtime it will manifest itself. This is true in the communities that I worked with. In our constant engagement with them, behaviors, attitudes and mindsets have

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My story is not mine alone. This is the story of many peace educators and advocates from the communities, whose stories never see print, nor are they shared in public fora. My story, is not a full story in itself without touching on the lives of others who have become part of our journey in building peace. This is of the communities of the Indigenous Peoples, the Bangsamoro and the Mindanao migrants and their descendants who continue to weave pathways to peace despite the odds that they face every day. My story is just one of the strands that make up the whole tapestry of stories and experiences from other peacebuilders, may they be from the communities, the academia, individuals in the governments and other state actors. My story does not end with me, but it is intricately linked with others. Thus, I cannot tell my story without talking about the others who came before me, those who became part of my journey and all those nameless and faceless peace educators and peacebuilders who unceasingly trudged on despite the challenges that we meet along the way. With all of you, I am sharing this story. ●

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**\*Amabella L. Carumba** is the Vice Chair for Migrants of the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement, a network of grassroots peace and human rights organization based in Cotabato City, Mindanao, Philippines. She is one of the alumna who finished a dual masters degree in International Peace Studies at the University for Peace in Costa Rica and Political Science major in Global Politics at the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines under the 9th Cohort of the Asian Peacebuilders Program of the Nippon Foundation.

# *Peace Starts From The Heart Of A Child*

*by Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-USman\**

## **Introduction**

**A** Peaceful Morning to all of you. *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu*, which means, May Peace and Mercy be upon you all. At this very moment, let me briefly bring you to my world and share with you a bit of my identity, culture and religion. Let me bring you to the journey of our organization, the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement (TPBPM) and the path that we have taken on how peace can start from the Heart of a Child. Here is the story of my Past, Present and Future.

## **My Journey to Peace**

I am a product of an interfaith marriage which gave me the best of these identities, the best of both worlds as some would describe it. My sister and I have lived our lives studying and learning about Islam and Christianity, and our families' culture, tradition and diverse backgrounds. My Father is a Maranao Muslim and my Mom is a Muslim-convert whose family is Christian with roots from Bulacan. I also belong to a family of freedom fighters for the Bangsamoro People, having uncles in both the MNLF and the MILF. I also come from a family of peace mediators who have always been trusted by the community to resolve issues and reach peaceful settlements. Having

been able to study in a Catholic School was a choice and an integral part of my journey, as it helped me realize one of the many important components in my life, which is being a bridge between different cultures, ethno-linguistic groups and religions towards a culture of peace.

Looking back in my life as a peace advocate, I have told myself that the Almighty has prepared me since I was a child. Challenges and several crossroads started when I was only 7 years old. I would say that it has been a tough but blessed journey for me --- having been able to witness and experience war as a child and treading a path that has shown me different forms of conflict and violence experienced by our brothers and sisters especially children every day. My formative years were spent far from here. I was only seven years old living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia when I first witnessed war. Living amidst the Gulf War was a turning point in my life that left an indelible impact on me. I will never forget the sound of explosions and the feeling one gets when missiles were dropped. I remember my Dad plastering all our doors and windows shut in preparation for a chemical explosion. I recall witnessing people dying and being displaced because of violence. Our school even became an evacuation center. I remember carrying our gas masks everywhere we went and staying in one room inside the house once we hear the siren warning us that there's a missile coming. This is a bit of my narrative, my "peacetale" as it prepared my path and hardened my commitment to peace.

As I went on with my journey as a young professional, things got even more challenging. I started being immersed and began serving in conflict areas at the age of 21. I have encountered different stories of children—stories that range from discrimination and neglect just like the children in the indigenous communities. Apollo, a young Aeta shared how Aeta children felt small and discriminated when they are called *baluga*. According to Apollo, *baluga* is a very derogatory term, as it means stupid or not educated. This has discouraged Aeta children from going to school because of the fear of unacceptance. Children as young as 12 years old are already a part of a criminal group, a rebel group or a terrorist-inspired group just like 13-year-old Sam (not his real name), who said that he learned his ideology from his father, noting that parents who have a negative ideology or practice are likely to pass on their dogma and narrative to their children.

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In areas affected by war in Mindanao, an estimate of about 30,000 to 50,000 children are displaced by armed conflict every year in the past 5 years. Rosa, fourteen (14) years old, is one of the children evacuees in Maguindanao. She is the valedictorian of one of the schools in the Municipality of Mamasapano. Their classes were suspended and they were not able to take their final exams because of armed conflict. She said, “Before war happened in our place, we were living peacefully. We make mats and we play volleyball during our free time. We evacuated from our homes to the house of my aunt for our safety. I hope it will be continuously peaceful because I still have to spend a lot of years in school. I want to finish my studies to help my family.”

As part of our SketchPad Project, a visual diary of children in conflict areas and indigenous communities, a 12-year old child from Maguindanao has been constantly drawing minions, a cartoon character holding guns and killing other minions, images with sharp edges and dark colored drawings. These are just few of several stories that we personally encountered in various schools and communities. These challenges continue to inspire us, strengthen our guiding principles and belief on the importance of a long-term and consistent strategy in building a Culture of Peace starting in the children’s formative years.

As time passed by, these sad stories gave me a chance to know more about my roots, my heritage, and most of all, the history of why my motherland has been experiencing decades of conflict. Since the beginning of the peace negotiations, about 120,000 lives have been lost in the past 18 years, including thousands of our young people. As I was consulting our elders, I came across a very remarkable woman. Here’s a story of a wife of a Freedom Fighter:

“In 1974, after praying, my husband talked to me and said, *“The time has come. From now on, you’ll be the Father and Mother of our children. Should I fail to come back, please tell them when they grow up that I had to fight a war that we did not want. Please tell our children that I did this for them. Teach them Peace because it is only in understanding Peace that they’ll realize that I had to go.”* The wife kept herself from breaking down because she knows that if she cries, he would not be able to leave them. She did not know what will happen tomorrow. All she knew was that her husband had to fight a war for the Bangsamoro people to achieve justice and genuine, lasting peace... *“My husband had to fight to defend our people. I had to be strong for him and for our people...”*

These are words from Bai Putri Norhata Alonto, a strong Bangsamoro woman who has been by her husband's side, Chair Datu Abulkhayr Alonto, one of the Top 90 leaders of the Moro National Liberation Front. This is the context in which I grew up, it is a big part of who I am. Yet, it also has been one of the many challenges I face as a young Moro, as a Muslim and as a Filipino—to be able to tell this story to enable solidarity and understanding rather than division and hatred. It is my hope that my fellow young Filipinos—Bangsamoro, Christians and Indigenous Peoples are able to weave all of our histories in a way that brings us together as one nation, because seeing ourselves as one humanity can deepen our understanding of one another and build bridges to lessen and slowly eradicate issues of prejudice, stereotyping and other forms of biases.

Many children, not just in the Philippines but all throughout the world, are most likely experiencing the same struggles. Without a counter-narrative or a long-term strategic program to guide them on how they should face their struggles, they will eventually become a problem of the society—they will either join gangs, or violent or terrorist groups because they feel that they have a group who will defend them. This ugly moment in their lives will make them find their sense of belonging in the society.

### **Helping Institutionalize and Strengthen Peace Education in Schools and Communities**

With all sorts of conflicts and negative ideology that our young generations are being exposed to, TPBPM found a great need to improve the subjective condition of every human being. This subjective condition is the part of us that breeds conflict in our minds. To help improve the subjective condition of our brothers and sisters, we came up with a lens which we call, Proactive Citizenship Peace Building, as another great component to help in Nation Building. In Proactive Citizenship Peace Building, programs should be institutionalized in a community, school and family, instead of being run on an ad-hoc basis. It should be a nation-wide effort and at a national policy level. There's a great need to institutionalize Conflict Prevention, Conflict Transformation, and Proactive Citizenship Peace Building Programs. These all require a Culture of Peace and the most strategic way, as we all know, is to help further institutionalize and strengthen Peace Education in schools and communities.



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Former UN Ambassador and President of the UN Security Council, Anwarul Chowdhury said that Peace Education needs to be accepted in all parts of the world, in all societies and countries as an essential element in creating a Culture of Peace. We need to create a Culture of Peace Environment in schools and communities. He also said that to effectively meet the challenges posed by the present complexities, the youth of today deserve a radically different education; one that does not glorify war but educates for Peace, Non-Violence and Cooperation.

### **The Teach Peace Build Peace Movement's Journey**

Based on this context, the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement was born. To have a just and sustainable peace in the country, TPBPM was formed to help strengthen Peace Education and institutionalize Peace Building Programs both in formal school settings and in communities through innovative and creative strategies using music, arts, games, sports; and the use of peace education materials we created ourselves including stories, comics, flashcards, gameboards and peace rhymes and songs. One of our storybooks entitled, Little Books by Little Peace Heroes, a series of stories written and illustrated by our Peace Hero Child Ambassadors and Artists for Peace. The common message of their stories was how each of us can become Peace Heroes in the society.

Programs of Teach Peace Build Peace Movement are conducted towards a goal of having a peaceful society where young generations of different faiths, cultures and ethnic groups are working together as prime movers in building a Culture of Peace and practicing Peace as a Way of Life. Our short-term and long-term programs capacitate schools, communities and different sectors to be I TEACH PEACE Champions. Our programs also include communicating and crafting our movement's campaigns and messages by empowering young people to write and speak about Peace. We also seek to provide a venue where we also teach about children's rights, respect for human dignity; intra-faith, interfaith, intracultural, intercultural, intergenerational understanding; spiritual strengthening; and healing.

We always celebrate every life, every perspective, every voice, every reflection, every peace *kwentuhan* session (peace story-telling session) and a lot more in Teach Peace Build Peace Movement's journey. We consider all of these as

part of needed steps in helping create a pathway towards the achievement of our mission and vision. These are all a part of our accomplishments that we measure in both qualitative and quantitative ways.

Our movement seeks to transform society into a culture that nurtures every young person towards the creation of new generations of peace builders. We aim to nurture individuals, through the Peace Heroes League, who will safeguard their communities from conflicts and influence younger generations to become peace heroes themselves. Our movement hopes to make everyone a Peace Hero, who helps create a peaceful society where young generations of different faiths, cultures and ethnolinguistic groups are working together as prime movers in building a Culture of Peace and practicing Peace as a Way of Life.

In the past two years that we have been doing this, we have already created Peace Heroes in their own schools and communities. We are currently preparing for one of our long-term programs which will be implemented in Hadji Salik Kalaing Elementary School and Tatak Elementary School, Mamasapano, Maguindanao; Maharlika Elementary School Bgy. Maharlika, Taguig, and Sapang Uwak Elementary School, Porac, Pampanga as pilot schools and communities. We call the program Schools and Communities of Peace Heroes Formation Program. It promotes a Culture of Peace Environment for children and youth in schools and communities and will involve teachers, children, parents, youth and community leaders. It will have several components like Formation Workshops, I TEACH PEACE Mobiles, I TEACH PEACE LEARNING RESOURCE KITS compiling all our new and existing peace education materials and PEACE HERO HUBS, a space where children can learn about peace with the use of storybooks, arts, games and music, Insha Allah (God Willing).

## **Nurturing the Hearts of Our Children**

For us, it is our fervent hope that we will be able to help build a peaceful nation by continuously investing in nurturing the heart of a child with so much love and peace through our I TEACH PEACE LEADERS AND CHAMPIONS across all generations. We strongly believe that when peace starts from the heart of a child, he or she will be the steward of peace in his/her own community. As one family, let us all work together in helping build

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a peaceful society, one child, one school and one community at a time. Let us Teach Peace to build a Culture of Peace. And it is in building a Culture of Peace that we can create different generations of Peace Builders.

*Patuloy tayong mag lakbay para sa kapayapaan at ito'y simulan sa puso ng bawat bata* (Let us continue our journey to Peace and let's start it in the heart of every child). ●

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**\*Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-Usman** is the Founder of Teach Peace Build Peace Movement, a non-profit organization that aims to make every Filipino child and youth a peace builder. Despite her own experience of war, her passion has always been mainstreaming peace education to transform and empower young people to be peace leaders and champions of organizations that aim to make every Filipino child and youth a peace builder.



# *Connect, Empower, And Transform: A Decade of Peacebuilding and Youth Peace Advocacy*

*by Beverly A. Orozco\**

## **Our Journey Of Peacebuilding**

**I**t was in a workshop recommendation, during the 2005 Waging Peace Conference in Ateneo de Manila University, when peace advocates realized that it was high time to organize the youth who can continue the work of building a society grounded on a culture of peace. Waging Peace Philippines has involved the youth in the conference by including the agenda and issues of the youth affected by conflict.

The following year, the secretariat of that conference, the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, brought together young leaders from different fields of expertise and political colors who would later compose the youth network. We started as a loose network working on different activities as young idealists towards three main goals: 1) to organize activities promoting the culture of peace; 2) to support the peace talks and non-violent ways of transforming conflict; and 3) to discuss the issue of the communist movement, and the Bangsamoro right to self-determination. With a group of 20 individuals from GZO Peace Institute, Center for Peace Education Miriam College, National Anti-Poverty Commission Youth and Students Sector, Sulong CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of

Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law), Pax Christi-Miriam College, Peoples Alternative Study Center for Research and Education in Social Development (PASCRES), United Network of Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) and Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP), Generation Peace Youth Network was born.

Today, we are a network of 40 organizations focusing on peacebuilding, human rights advocacy, and providing support to the peace processes in the Philippines. We work on advancing an active, non-violent, youth-led advocacy towards just and sustainable peace. We work on strengthening our advocacy through organized and structured programs — shaping the discourse of, and mainstreaming peace; promoting active youth participation grounded on our principles of opposing all forms of violence; and ensuring that peace is achieved through peaceful means. GenPeace helps to strengthen the peace movement by increasing the number of young peace advocates, nurturing and providing opportunities for the youth to discuss and build consensus on issues important to peacebuilding.

### **Connect: Reaching Out To Young People**

Peace and Human Rights Education is our main strategy in Youth Formation and Capacity Building. GenPeace launched its Peace and Human Rights Education Training Program in 2007 in the hope of building members' capacity in peace and human rights advocacy; promoting the culture of peace in their communities; and connecting different Bangsamoro, Christian and Indigenous youth organizations for a more consolidated youth peace advocacy in the Philippines. Since its launch, the training program has become our main strategy for expanding the network and promoting our advocacy in support of the peace processes. Our peace education program discusses both peace and human rights issues, emphasizing that people sit at the core of the peace process, and that respect for human rights begins with the recognition that every member of the society must be treated equally.

GenPeace education programs were designed by members who have been working in areas of peacebuilding, human rights, International Humanitarian Law, governance and youth leadership building. The program is focused on introducing, as well as, teaching tools, models and practices on conflict transformation, conflict resolution, conflict analysis and map-

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ping, monitoring and documentation of human rights violations, advocacy on disarmament, and promoting the participation of women and youth in peace and security.

In its first four years, the program, a three-day training, was composed of lectures and workshops aimed at increasing the capacity of Manila-based youth organizations, and to mentor more trainers to enable the network to expand and widen its reach to more young leaders in the country. With a pool of trainers, we launched a series of trainings in fourteen (14) cluster areas where our members were already present. We also introduced peace education in our study sessions with various youth organizations and student councils to address the need for dialogues and discussions on the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domains in 2008, and Bangsamoro Basic Law in 2016.

From December 2013–August 2015, in partnership with the US Embassy Cultural Affairs Office and GZO Peace Institute, GenPeace focused on building and strengthening the capacities of indigenous youth from Bukidnon, CARAGA and Cordillera. The advanced workshops were tailored to address arising peace and conflict issues in indigenous communities, and introduced practical skills of human rights monitoring, documentation, and reporting. This also included modules on understanding human rights principles as well as internalizing their responsibilities as human rights defenders. The highlight of these workshops was practicing and understanding the Art of Hosting, an effective method of conducting conversations.

### **Empower: Building Leaders**

The need for peace education became more apparent in 2008, with the increase of military operations in Luzon under the government's Oplan Bantay Laya 2, and escalation of conflict in Mindanao, resulting in the displacement of more than 600,000<sup>1</sup> persons. We focused the program on building and strengthening the youth's knowledge and awareness of the peace and conflict situation in the Philippines while emphasizing the youth's critical role in peace and nation building. With support from the UN Alliance of Civilizations, we introduced the "Building Bridges" program, aimed

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/philippines/2008/internal-displacement-in-the-philippines-2>

at promoting unity and understanding among cultures and faiths, as well as creating a common vision for peace in the country and their communities. An important component of the training included deepening sessions and discussions on cultural and political issues underlying conflict both at the local and national levels.

### **Transform: Translating Learnings To Actions**

Teaching peace education did not end with our workshop sessions. We also developed programs aimed at translating learnings into action by providing spaces for young people's peace initiatives in their own communities. In more than five (5) years of peace education work and planting the seeds for peace, we launched several initiatives such as: Local Peace Day Celebrations where our members have organized celebrations since 2010 in Nueva Vizcaya, Davao City, Iloilo City, Eastern Samar, Cebu City, Bacolod City, Butuan City and Quezon City; Give Peace a Shot: Photo Petition, an online campaign using social media to express their own aspirations for peace and support for the peace process; campaign on the localization of Peace Day Celebrations, initiating local city resolutions to institutionalize the celebration of the International Day of Peace which have been successfully passed in Cebu and Quezon City with the support of our local government partners. We have also initiated the Youth4BBL Study Sessions, where we provided orientation on the Bangsamoro Basic Law in universities; GenPeace School Tour where regional members organized public forums in schools and in their communities that discusses the updates on the peace process in collaboration with our partners from Waging Peace Philippines. In 2015, with the support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila through Karapatan sa Malikhaing Paraan (KaSaMa), GenPeace Human Rights Playschool and Game Kit were launched where we conducted playshops with high school and college students facilitated by our school-based members. These initiatives further promoted the culture of peace and supported the sustainability of the network's advocacy on peace building and human rights.

We continuously supported the peace process and brought forth several youth peace agenda to the government, NDFP and MILF peace panels, particularly on the urgent need to recognize the youth's role in peace building, as well as emphasizing the importance of youth participation in economic development, justice, peace and security.



## Lessons Learned

In peace education, the learning process is important in designing the program. As peace educators, it is important not to be “grim and determined” about changing the mindset of the youth, but instead set an example by living the values and passion of a peace educator and advocate.

Anwar Upahm of United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) was one of our facilitators in the Nueva Vizcaya State University (NVSU) training. For the students of NVSU, it was their first time to dialogue with a Bangsamoro. They had their own biases against Muslims and it was an enlightening experience for them to listen to a Bangsamoro share his experiences of war and living in Mindanao. It was touching to see the students approach Anwar and watch them sit together like friends, learning more about his life and the situation in Mindanao. We had more chances for these encounters between youth leaders from Mindanao, Luzon and Visayas, which became an opportunity to build bridges of friendship among our members through our peace education program.

Slowly, we began exploring even more creative ways to run our education programs. The design of our program uses the Adult Learning Cycle, Inductive Method, and Experiential Learning.<sup>2</sup> Since 2012, our workshops have included the Art of Hosting, providing spaces for young people to sit together and discover new ways of collaborating to advance their advocacy for peace and human rights. We designed the workshops such that they enhance participants’ knowledge and skills in peace and human rights advocacy, focusing on the learning process of the youth, making sure to provide a space where they can share and listen to each other’s stories and experiences from their communities.

GenPeace Human Rights Playschool and Game is an innovative education program where we integrated learnings, and reflections in conducting peace and human rights workshops through games. The design of the interactive and board games maximizes the use of these methodologies through structured and facilitated playshops where the learning process was

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<sup>2</sup> Ortigas, C. D. (2008). *Group Process and the Inductive Method: Theory and Practice in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

augmented by drawing from the experiences and expertise of the participants and facilitators. Teachers from Don Quintin Paredes High School were quite surprised with the enthusiasm of their students during the playshop when they have found it hard to teach human rights in class.

When we engage with the youth, we make sure that we continue to guide the members, and nurture partnerships as they expand their work in their own arenas. We continue to mentor them in developing programs, and share new tools and materials that would be helpful for them.

When we did the training with indigenous youth, it was interesting to note the change in their attitude from feeling powerless and marginalized in the society, to being empowered and being an inspiration to their fellow young indigenous peoples (IP) in their communities. The program provided a space for them to learn their rights and understand what they can contribute to their community as IP youth leaders. GenPeace has helped create a space for conversation between tribes to discuss their issues both as an IP and as a youth. The program gave them the chance to break barriers and build bridges of friendship between tribes. Learning that all of them have experienced armed conflicts in their communities strengthened their bond as friends and colleagues and solidified their commitment to support each other's work and advocacy.

Larson Molitas and Hector Kawig, young Igorots and anti-mining advocates, expressed how they were moved by the stories of IP youth from Mindanao, helping them understand their struggle for their ancestral lands and to value their tradition and culture. They reflected on the increasing number of young Igorots who have forgotten their traditions and history of struggle in Cordillera. These stories and exchanges have helped them remain good friends, and keep in touch with each other. They continue to maintain an online discussion group where they continue to discuss issues and incidents happening in their own communities, providing each other support.

Our country is now challenged with rising violent extremism and radicalism particularly among the youth. We should mainstream peace education strategically and support more programs to encourage more community peace educators in the farthest communities to remain steadfast in their commitment to peace as those who sow terror continue to reach out to

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young people and instill the culture of violence.

Peace education provides the essential foundation in our youth peace advocacy work and developing a GenPeace youth leader. Education and understanding peace is critical in creating a more conducive environment for the youth to engage in peacebuilding work. It is important for GenPeace that in nurturing future leaders, we focus on quality rather than quantity. We seek to nurture leaders who can translate the skills and knowledge they learn into specific actions that give back to their communities. As peace educators, we engage with the youth as partners in peace building and we value the richness of their experiences as well as understand the issues they bring to the table. At GenPeace, as we connect, empower and transform the youth into leaders, we seek to transform their weaknesses and fears by building on their strengths and their dreams of creating a peaceful society. ●

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***\*Beverly Orozco is the Program Director for Advocacy and Networking at the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI). She is currently the National Coordinator of Generation Peace Youth Network (GenPeace). She graduated from Miriam College and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Studies.***



# *Pax Christi-Miriam College: Making a Difference, Changing Lives*

by **Christine Lao\*** with Loreta N. Castro, Jasmin Nario-Galace, Mirma Tica-Ortiz, Johnna Acha, Ma. Rosario A. Galvez, Miku Lagarde, Shasta Mangulabnan, Ma. Kristina R. Merginio, Jamila Monjardin, Bianca Pabotoy, and Iverly Viar

When a group of former Peace Studies students approached Dr. Loreta N. Castro to ask if it would be possible to start a peace-focused student organization, she grew excited. Dr. Castro was then the executive director and sole employee of the Center for Peace Education (CPE), which had been established only a few months before, in November 1997. “I thought of all the good that can come from having student co-leadership.”

Dr. Castro, who was then a new member of Pax Christi Pilipinas (the Philippine affiliate of Pax Christi International) suggested that the student group name itself Pax Christi-Miriam College (PC-MC). “I felt that the connection and affiliation of the youth group with a national and an international peace movement would be helpful.”

PC-MC adapted the logo of Pax Christi USA, showing a rose springing from a barbed wire, with the words, “Violence ends where love begins.” Following the Statutes of Pax Christi International, PC-MC aimed to “work with all towards peace while bearing witness to the peace of Christ.” This means cooperating with other peace-oriented groups and people of goodwill towards building peace.

Other objectives adopted by the first PC-MC members were to:

- heighten the consciousness and awareness of PC-MC members and others about peace spirituality and peace issues such as nonviolent resolution of conflict, disarmament, and total human development;
- increase the commitment of PC-MC members and those they will reach, to work toward a culture of peace by articulating the ideals of love, justice, and nonviolence; and
- encourage reflection and action on the peace message of Jesus.

PC-MC was recognized as the Best Extra-curricular Organization after its first year of existence. Its president, Jaclyn Cotangco, was selected Best Student Leader for School Year 1998-1999. Its major activities that year consisted of:

- an exhibit commemorating the International Day of Peace in September 1998;
- a training session preparing PC-MC members to become youth facilitators of conflict resolution sessions in October 1998;
- a mobilization at the Quezon City Memorial Circle on gun control legislation, which it co-organized with the Gunless Society;
- a forum on “Alternatives to Violence,” and
- a fund raising activity contributing to the Office of Social Involvement’s “Pasko ng Paslit” project.

Since then, PC-MC has used these and similar strategies to raise awareness and inspire the youth to work toward a culture of peace. Some Pax Christi activities have, in fact, evolved into self-sustaining activities that the Miriam College community looks forward to, and participates in every year—thereby deepening the community’s commitment to building a culture of peace.

### **Mainstreaming Peace Perspectives in Miriam College**

Apart from mounting an annual exhibit to celebrate the International Day of Peace, PC-MC also holds a yearly exhibit commemorating the

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nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The exhibit aims to remind its viewers of the horrors unleashed by nuclear weapons. Members of the Miriam College community, as well as schools that are members of CPE's Peace Education Network, are invited to these, and similar exhibits. PC-MC exhibits are creative and inclusive. For example, PC-MC held a "Pinwheels for Peace" exhibit, an outdoor exhibit of student-made pinwheels with peace messages written on them.

Likewise, PC-MC's annual celebration of the International Week of Peace and the Mindanao Week of Peace invite participation from members of the Miriam College community. "Kites for Peace" is an activity where members of the Miriam College community gather in one of the school's fields to reflect about peacebuilding. Working for peace, the participants are told, is like flying a kite—tough to get a kite up in the air as community members need to help each other to see it done. However, once it is up, one only needs to hold on to it to keep the momentum going.

Recently, PC-MC organized a spoken-word open-mic poetry jam on the theme, "Life Matters," to allow students to articulate their desire for peace. PC-MC also continues to organize forums on causes that it supports—peace in Mindanao, the abolition of the death penalty, etc. It has released position statements on these and other peace issues.

One notable PC-MC activity relates to its support for Miriam College's Twinning Project—a partnership between Miriam College and Rajah Muda High School. Students of both high schools write each other and get a chance to interact once a year at the Miriam College campus in Quezon City. There has been an annual youth peacebuilding workshop involving the twin schools since 2005. The PC-MC has provided both programmatic and financial assistance to this workshop.

PC-MC supports the Twinning Project by co-organizing the "Lugawan para sa Mindanao," an annual activity held in all units of Miriam College, to raise funds for the Twinning Project and to raise awareness about the conflict in Mindanao, as well as the Mindanao peace process. Another annual fundraising effort for Mindanao partners is the PC-MC ukay-ukay that is much-awaited by members of the Miriam College community. In recent years, PC-MC has also organized a fishball sale at Miriam College's Higher

Education Unit called “Peaceballs for Peace,” which also raises funds for this purpose.

## **Position Statements and Lobby Activities**

Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace, who succeeded Dr. Castro and served as Pax Christi moderator for five years, recalls how PC-MC made history with the adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). From 2006 to 2013, PC-MC members all joined an international civil society campaign that lobbied government to adopt a treaty that will prevent the transfer of arms, if these transfers will facilitate violation of human rights and international humanitarian law; enable states to commit genocide and crimes against humanity; or facilitate gender-based violence.

PC-MC members asked legislators to sign petitions of support for an ATT; staffed petition-signing booths at various parishes, public parks, malls, and schools in Manila, Quezon City, and Baguio City. The signatures they gathered were submitted to the United Nations. They also staged performances in front of the embassies of the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China to raise awareness and get public support for the ATT.

Shasta Mangulabnan, whose commitment to peace work was inspired by Dr. Castro’s Peace Studies classes, remembers this campaign very well. “We pursued the Million Faces petition campaign relentlessly from Manila to Baguio, from schools to knocking door to door at the Congress. The exhausting but memorable part was not from the day-to-day pursuit of approaching and reaching out to people, but from the rejections received. To this day, this experience made me appreciate the people who are lobbying a cause at the streets, schools and other public places.”

Ma. Rosario A. Galvez, a former PC-MC member, also says that one of her most memorable experiences as a Miriam College student was her participation in the ATT campaign. She remembers how PC-MC pulled an “All Women Stunt” in support of the ATT—in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs. “This stunt made me think about our misconceptions about the proliferation of weapons,” she says. “Some think that weapons are the only tools we can use to secure and defend our country. We don’t often think that weapons can also be used to commit human rights violations and



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Today, PC-MC is participating in another international campaign to get the Philippines and other states to adopt a nuclear ban treaty. Members have joined public actions and have visited both the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Philippines to encourage lawmakers to support the treaty. They have organized forums and put up exhibits to raise awareness about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. If a nuclear ban treaty is adopted, PC-MC will once again help make history.

### **Training sessions and international conferences**

Becoming a member of PC-MC bestows on a student the opportunity to learn about contemporary peace issues, as well as skills related to peace building. They also get the chance to meet fellow peace advocates within the country and abroad.

Through PC-MC, Ma. Kristina R. Merginio, now the Officer-in-Charge of the Adhikain Para sa Karapatang Pambata at the Ateneo Human Rights Center, says that she became interested in development work because of the opportunity given to PC-MC members to attend Generation Peace conferences and youth camps for peace. “It was very inspiring to hear and talk to peace and human rights advocates... The things that I learned in class about non-violence and non-discrimination were given a more localized context.”

Likewise, Johnna Acha, who served as PC-MC president, says she gained much from the opportunity to interact with peace advocates in training sessions and peace conferences. She was inspired by the drive and dedication of the organizers of the National Training on Advocacy and Resource Mobilization organized by the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute. Participating in an Interfaith Youth Peace Camp in Zamboanga City convinced her of the importance of interfaith dialogue. When Johnna joined Peace One Day’s global youth coalition to celebrate the International Day of Peace, she gained lifelong friends.

The privilege of attending international and local conferences motivates students to replicate their experience learning about peace within the Philippine context. Together with Johnna, Jamila Monjardin echoed what she and Johnna learned at a week-long Peace Conference in Hong Kong organized

by Li Po Chun United World College at a Peace Day Camp they organized for grade school students in Marikina City.

Iverly Viar, a Chevening Scholar of the British Embassy Manila, looks back at the Peace Day Camp workshop PC-MC organized for high school student leaders outside Miriam College, as a highlight of her PC-MC experience. She says it was fulfilling to see how the camp transformed young student leaders' perception of what peace is. Peace, according to Viar, is not limited to the absence of war.

### **Changing lives**

Miku Lagarde, now a student taking up a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Resolution at Queensland University says that "Pax Christi changed my life. In my student years, I knew I wanted to make an impact in the world but I simply did not know how. PC-MC opened the doors to that." Inspired by Gandhi's admonition to "be the change you wish to see in the world," Miku accepted the challenge of heading PC-MC in her senior year. As PC-MC president, she attended the National Pax Christi Peacebuilding Workshop in Davao City, and was taken by a session on aikido. "We do not use our own force to harm someone else; rather, we harness the enemy's power to overwhelm them. We 'minimize conflict, and blend with what is occurring'." This was a life-changing moment for Miku, a "synthesis of everything I learned from PC-MC: The best way to help others is to master ourselves first, and then give love in the face of conflict."

Mirma M. Tica, now a peace advocate and faculty member of Miriam College's International Studies Department, recounts that her interest in peace work began when a faculty member asked her to sing a song on the theme of peace as an intermission number for a school event. Mirma, who spent her childhood in the United States, had then only recently transferred to Manila for college, but was already known for her powerful voice. Her aunt pointed her toward "For All the World," a song with such a powerful message that it deeply touched, not only Miriam College peace advocates in attendance, but also Mirma. Since then, Mirma has been asked to perform at peace gatherings as singer and host. Not long after, Mirma's participation in peace gatherings grew deeper. She has worked as organizer, facilitator, and presenter in many events, and has represented PC-MC, Miriam College, and

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the Center for Peace Education in numerous gatherings of peace advocates around the country. Now PC-MC's much beloved moderator, Mirma has helped PC-MC win back-to-back awards as the best extracurricular organization in Miriam College.

One of the officers Mirma worked with recently is Bianca Pabotoy, who says that PC-MC will always be memorable because of the experience of meeting and working with peace champions. "A meeting inside the Center for Peace Education office is something I will miss. Every meeting is like one big pep talk." The Center for Peace Education, where PC-MC meets its moderator today, is a place where PC-MC members can interact with Dr. Loreta Castro, its founder, and Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace, currently its Executive Director. Bianca says she is "inspired to see people, especially women, who are strong and brave enough to never stop the fight."

This, then is the story of Pax Christi-Miriam College: a story of strong and brave women inspiring others and each other to wage peace in every aspect of their lives, to widen their vision so as to see the need, and potential of working for peace that impacts, not only on one's personal life, but on their school, their country, and the world. ●

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***\*Atty. Christine Lao taught Peace Studies classes at Miriam College, and was an Associate of the Center for Peace Education. She is currently an Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman, and a consultant to the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines.***



# *APNIEVE: Developing a Culture of Peace in the Hearts of Learners and Educators*

*by Lourdes R. Quisumbing, Ph.D.\**

**R**esponding to the ‘UNESCO Declaration of Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy,’ representatives from eight Member States of the Asia Pacific region met in Seoul, Korea in 1995 and founded APNIEVE (Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education). We aim to promote international understanding and the values of peace, human rights, democracy, and sustainable development in the region.

I was elected founding President of the Steering Committee representing the Philippines and have served in this capacity for ten years (1995–2005). APNIEVE has produced four sourcebooks with modules based on the four pillars of education: learning to do, to be, to know and to live together, and learning to know — and trained more than 500 educators from about 30 countries in the valuing process and the holistic approach to teaching and learning.

The sourcebooks advocate an integrated and holistic approach to education, in line with UNESCO’s redefinition of quality education, focusing on the development of the whole person, including physical, intellectual and emotional well-being. The sourcebooks also introduce a values-education

process and teaching methodology as part of the teaching-learning cycle applicable to any area of learning content, for an integrated approach to quality education towards a culture of peace. Modules for each of the core values identified were contributed by values experts from the Asia-Pacific region.

The basic philosophy of APNIEVE is drawn from the original mandate of UNESCO expressed in contemporary terms:

## **PEACE FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**and**

## **DEVELOPMENT FOR PEACE**

Thus, APNIEVE is committed to the building of a Culture of Peace in the countries of the Asia Pacific Region and in the world community through education for international understanding and values education for Peace, Human Rights, Democracy and Sustainable Development.

Our principal goals and objectives are to promote and develop international education and values education for peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development; through cooperation among individuals, groups and institutions working on these fields in the Asia Pacific and the rest of the world.

Recognizing the crucial role of educators, APNIEVE focuses on the preparation of teaching-learning materials and the training of educators from all levels to use these materials and adapt them to their own classes.

APNIEVE has established linkages with The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), The Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID), The International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foundation, from whom it has secured some support and assistance for its projects and activities. APNIEVE's contribution to international understanding and values education has been acknowledged and recognized by UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, UNESCO-Bangkok, UNESCO-APEID and our other partners and linkages, but its impact is limited due to the lack of a regular budget. Despite this limitation, APNIEVE has enabled me and our

APNIEVE officers to participate in, and deliver keynote addresses at several APEID international educational conferences in Bangkok and Shanghai on topics such as Values Education Towards a Culture of Peace, Citizenship Education, and Quality Education for Total Human Development; as well as in Bonn and Bangkok on Education for Citizenship and the World of Work: Towards Sustainable Future Societies.

There is every reason to hope that with the commitment and dedication of its regional steering committee members and the sustained efforts of active chapters in Australia, China and the Philippines, APNIEVE continues to promote the values of peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific Region and in the world. In the Philippines, APNIEVE-Philippines, through a core of dedicated facilitators and officers, provides training in the integration of the values of peace, justice, human rights and sustainable development to both educators and learners. We have held annual national conventions for educators and student-educators from both basic education and higher education institutions to share best practices and research in international and values education, and to provide training in the APNIEVE teaching-learning process. We reach out to educators of the different regions through its regional coordinators. Through these humble efforts, APNIEVE hopes to fulfill our mission of building a culture of peace in the persons and schools we touch. ●

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**\*Dr. Lourdes R. Quisumbing** is the founding President of UNESCO-Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education and of APNIEVE-Philippines. She is also Chair Emerita, Board of Trustees, Miriam College. She served in the Philippine government as Secretary of Education, Culture and Sports (1986–1990) and as Secretary-General of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (1990–1998).





# *Peace Education Journey With The World Council For Curriculum And Instruction*

*by Teresita Paed-Pedrajas, Ed. D.\**

**T**his is a narration of my experience in peace education through the World Council for Curriculum (WCCI).

*The World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) is a trans-national educational organization committed to advancing the achievement of a just and peaceful world community. It was organized at a conference in Asilomar, California in 1970. WCCI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) of the United Nations in consultative roster status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).*

*The mission of the organization is defined in the Preamble of the WCCI Constitution which reads as follows: As individual educators from all over the world, we join together in this person-to-person, non-governmental, nonprofit global organization committed to active participation in efforts to achieve the purposes of the organization. As educators in a world community, we have the responsibility to ensure that education contributes to the promotion of equity, peace and the universal realization of human rights. To this end, all curricular and instructional programs should facilitate in every person the development of (1) a comprehensive sense of respect of self, others and the environment and (2) the capacity to participate at all levels of the world society from local to global. As individuals we commit ourselves to strive toward these ideals and full*

*purposes of the organizations within our professional responsibilities and in our organizational relationships* (WCCI Brochure 2017).

The WCCI has been hosting international and national conferences in various parts of the world since its organization in 1974. During these conferences, work groups are convened according to themes which the WCCI calls Special Interest Groups, composed of the following: Community Development; Culture, Arts & Language; Early Childhood; Environmental Concerns; Ethics and Values; Global Education; Lifelong Education; Media & Technology; Peace Education; Women in Education; Special Education; and Lifelong Learning.

The WCCI Philippines National Chapter has hosted two international conferences—in 1988 held in Development Academy of the Philippines, Tagaytay City, and in 2006 at the Manila Hotel. The WCCI has celebrated its 48th anniversary and the Philippines Chapter, its 30th anniversary.

Since its organization in 1983, the WCCI Philippines Chapter has organized a series of national conferences focused on values education, peace education, gender education, community development, civil democracy, local and global education, continuous progression, learner-centered approaches, lifelong learning, cultural arts, language explosion, book writing, research-based initiatives, spirituality and modern technology and ASEAN Integration Community Process, among others. These national conferences were attended by hundreds of teachers and school administrators from all over the country. Through these WCCI conferences, the seeds of peace education were slowly being planted in classrooms and campuses in the metropolis and in other schools in the Philippines. In recognition of its efforts in promoting peace education, WCCI was given the prestigious Aurora Aragon Quezon Peace Award in 1989.

I have participated in national, ASEAN, regional, and international WCCI Conferences in various capacities—as a member, paper presenter, group chair, and program committee head until I became the International Program Chairperson in Wollongong, Australia in 2004; International Executive Officer in 2006, 2008, Vice-President in 2010 and International President in 2014–2015. I am also actively involved in several Special Interest Groups in the WCCI community such as Peace Education, Values Education, Global

## Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges Education, Community Development, Lifelong Learning, and Cultural Arts Communication.

I cherish my learning experiences in WCCI, both personally and professionally that enabled me to write a Values Education Textbook with Dr. Virginia F. Cawagas as my coordinator, together with Dr. Minda Sutaria, as well as my WCCI colleagues and co-Values Education Series authors like Carmen Cabato and Marlene Fagela from La Salle Greenhills, and Dr. Consuelo Ledesma of the Philippine Normal College. We had intensive and challenging workshop seminars on writing modules, methods of learning and teaching approaches, evaluation assessments, and production of materials for experimentation and further evaluation along the principles of values education and peace education.

The production and publication of our Values Education Workbook Series with the Phoenix Publishing House brought forth a responsibility to facilitate and demonstrate the teaching of Values Education to our fellow teachers in various parts of the Philippines. The challenge of values education seminars allowed us to develop self-confidence. In my case, it allowed me to receive and accept feedback and positive sharing from our co-educators more graciously. I was therefore challenged to continue this focus in my career, joining professional organizations like the Philippine Association of Values Education Teachers (PAVET) and Association of Philippine Early Childhood Educators (ASPECE), and lately the Peace Education Network (PEN). I was invited to share my experiences and the challenges I faced as a Values Education and Peace Education writer and facilitator. These motivated me to concentrate on being a peace education advocate of human rights, gender education, community development and governance, rights of the children, pregnant women and the elderly. On top of this, I was invited to be a co-author of Dr. Toh Swee-Hin and Dr. Virginia Cawagas, Coordinators of the Social Studies Series textbook “One Nation, One World” for Elementary schools in the Philippines.

I found a great sense of fulfillment in my involvement in the WCCI International Conference of the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA in 1996. One of the American delegates, Judith Frankel was looking for partners from different countries to conduct a research on “Families of Employed Mothers, an International Perspective.” I became interested because this

topic would provide useful information and data for policy making for all nations. I come from a family of nine children with both parents working. I wondered about the impact of working mothers on the husband, children and the Filipino families as a whole.

There were twelve of us who accepted the challenge to conduct the research in our respective contexts. The research team included people from Britain, Germany, India, Israel, Mexico, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, United States and the Philippines. Each of us wrote our own concept paper which consisted of specific problems to be addressed, methods, related literature, and timetable. It took me around four months to go to the various offices and communities to interview working wives, and their husbands, and children of working mothers or relatives of working mothers, and took me nine months to finish the whole work. My study yielded a wealth of information and provided baseline data for policy recommendations.

For example, Filipino family members all cooperate to take over the working mother's responsibilities for the benefit of everyone. The main reason that most Filipino women work outside the home is to assist with the family's financial demands, often including the needs of in-laws and other kin. Paid work for women in the lower economic class means being a co-creator and co-provider for the family. Women from the middle and upper income levels reported additional reasons for working: to apply one's education or training, love for a particular work involved, social stimulation, and self-development. Husbands of working mothers recognized that their wives' employment fostered their wives' broader outlook in life in general, and in the family.

Working wives in this study perceived their employment as a significant factor in their development as total persons in various aspects of life: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, economic, spiritual and moral. These aspects are interrelated in their relationships with their children, husbands, colleagues, in-laws, and other relatives. These mothers perceived their employment as a concrete manifestation of genuine partnership with their husbands. Thus they perceived their husbands to be supportive as they assumed work-related responsibilities, and reported that their husbands have also been considerate, sharing in domestic tasks and child care. These mothers also feel that their employment had favorable effects on their children. Specifically, while

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recognizing that they had less time to spend with their children, the quality was of utmost importance to ensure better guidance and understanding of their children's psychological needs.

The working mothers felt that their children were proud of them and saw them as a source of inspiration. Working mothers who were professionals and career women experienced fulfillment in their jobs, as they felt compensated, challenged, enriched, and happy. Their husbands and children were reported to be supportive, contributing to the household tasks and roles of working mothers.

This particular study is one of the Philippines' contribution to the book entitled "Families of Employed Mothers, An International Perspective" edited by Judith Frankel, and published by Garland Publishing Inc. in New York and London in 1997 as a reference book on Family Issues.

It is noteworthy to mention too, that I have been involved in preparing and implementing the WCCI International Student Teaching Partnership Program in the formation of global educators beyond borders. As the Dean of College of Education in the Global City Innovative College in 2009–2012, I was concurrently a WCCI International Executive Board Member. I prepared a proposal for an initiative called International Student Learning Partnership Program, aimed at the formation of educators through international exchange. This commenced in 2011 between the Global City Innovative College and the National Kaohsiung Normal University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan for one month in Taiwan; Global City Innovative College, National Kaohsiung Normal and the Alliant International University in San Diego, California, USA in 2012; then, as the Dean of School of Arts, Sciences and Education of St. Dominic College of Asia (SDCA) in 2013, I also included Perpetual University of Los Baños, Laguna with SDCA to have an internship with Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand in 2014; then when I was a part time Graduate School professor in Miriam College, I also tapped Miriam College with Alliant International University in San Diego, California, USA in 2014.

At least I can conclude that exposing these Filipino student teachers abroad for one month enabled them to develop self-confidence; cultivate passion for the teaching profession; establish camaraderie and cooperation

among other teachers, students, parents and school administrators; as well as learn how to manage their personal and professional tasks in a foreign country. Their insights were indeed very inspiring. These student teachers have likewise shared their insights during the WCCI Student Chapter National Conventions. As of today, each of them has passed the Licensure of Examination for Teachers. Moreover, I could claim that these students will serve in the teaching profession with zest, leadership, and commitment.

From 2009 to 2015, I convened the WCCI Student Chapter National Convention to prepare them for professional life, to expose them to the WCCI Special Interest Groups and to motivate them to get actively involved in the current and future WCCI organization. As of now five national conferences were conducted involving three hundred to five hundred fifty student teachers with around thirty to forty institutions in attendance. The WCCI Student Chapter officers were involved in the caravan meetings and preparation for national conferences, too, with paper presentations, workshop seminars and sharing of their classroom initiatives. These student officers are also involved with the national conferences of the WCCI National Chapter. To date, our students have prepared thirty-five Human Rights Modules, and three Gender Education Modules to be used this year and thus will assist us in research data collection, analysis and formulating conclusions, and finally for publication.

Looking back to some years ago as the Assistant Guidance Head Counselor of San Beda College Arts and Sciences SBC (CAS) and as a facilitator of Guidance Classes to all first year students, one of my essential tasks was to help students identify what and who they are, their current stages of development, abilities, talents, academic skills; what they want to become, identify their concrete goals, strategies and approaches to reach their goals and concrete indicators of their success in one year, four years and ten years hence. Moreover, the Guidance Office provides Inventory, Testing, Counseling, Vocational, Leadership Formation and Professional services. I was able to write the Personality Enrichment Program Workbook for College Freshmen in 1989 with the last revision in 1995. I shared this workbook to San Beda College Alabang in 1997 up to 1999. Now this workbook is also being used in various colleges in the Philippines as adopted by At Iba Pa Publishing House.

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As the Prefect of Student Affairs in 2004–2006 in the San Beda College Arts and Sciences Student Council, I was involved in passing the final draft of the Student Magna Carta of the Philippines. This became a great beacon for the promotion and respect of student rights in the school community. The administrators, faculty members, student council members and students were made to study and to promote their student rights in the classroom, school community and the society, in general. This became an important document for the whole community. The College Rector, the late Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB led the approval and implementation of the Magna Carta in the whole school community.

I was a recipient of the Metrobank Award in 1999 for Outstanding Teacher in the Tertiary Level; and then the Metrobank Foundation Award for Continuing Excellence in Service in 2009. I served as the National President of the Network of Outstanding Teachers and Educators (NOTED) from 2006 to 2008. With the motto “Us for Others,” I was deeply involved in facilitating faculty development program in Values Education seminar series, teaching methods, language development, among others. These programs provided teachers opportunities to further enhance their skills and maximize their potential in their teaching profession. We also conducted a two-day national conference on Environmental Sustainability in Manila Hotel in 2008. From then on, biennial national conferences were conducted for elementary, secondary and tertiary levels with varied peace related themes featuring speakers who could provide credible exemplars.

The network also ventured into seminar workshops for the National Capital Region (NCR) Police Staff in Quezon City, to assist them in teaching children how to cooperate with the police through peaceful and nonviolent means. We have developed modules on Children’s Rights, Values Education and Good Manners and Right Conduct.

Also with Metrobank and NOTED, I was involved in a project initiated by Mr. Aniceto M. Sobrepeña, President of Metrobank Foundation Inc., and in partnership with Bro. Armin Luistro, then president of De La Salle University, to celebrate National Teachers’ Day in the Philippines. The DLSU Student Council convened a Sign-Up Greetings for the Teachers and paraded to the Manila Hotel as a conclusion of our National Tripartite Convention

on Environmental Sustainability. Thousands of tertiary students came to the Manila Hotel to present their signed posters to the teachers. We were very touched by their gestures of appreciation for the teachers. Since then, Metrobank Foundation Inc. has convened various corporate social functions, inviting governmental and non -governmental organizations to join us in celebrating national teachers' day in the Philippines. I represented NOTED and WCCI in this National Teachers' MONTH Coordinating Committee of the Philippines.

While I was the Dean of the College of Education in the Global City Innovative College in Taguig City, I took this opportunity to campaign for more secondary school students to join the teaching profession by conducting challenging programs and activities to honor our teachers appropriately. With the approval of Mr. Michael Tan, the President of the Global City Innovative College of my concept paper, I went to see Dr. Elena Ruiz, the NCR Regional Director, and concurrently the Division Superintendent of Makati. I informed her about my plan to involve secondary students in celebrating National Teachers' Day. With her endorsement, my proposal was taken up during a meeting of all School Student Affairs Directors. This first meeting was held in the Global City Innovative College, with representatives from thirty schools in the cities of Makati, Pasig, Muntinlupa, Las Piñas, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Quezon City and Manila. Succeeding meetings were held to plan and finalize the flow of the program, the varied activities of students like letter writing to the teachers, poetry writing, slogans and poster making, essay writing, song writing, duet singing, quartet singing, video films on teachers by the students and talent show among teachers. We chose a Mr. & Ms Ambassador of Goodwill from among the teachers, too. All schools did their best to express appreciation and honor for their teachers. Bro. Armin Luistro, of DepEd, Dr. Patricia Licuanan of CHED, and Mr. Aniceto Sobrepeña were around to take part in the celebration in 2010 and 2011 at the SM Mall of Asia. The whole program of activities was included in the National Teachers' Month Celebration, printed in the national newspapers, and aired in both radio and television.

When I was invited by Dr. Gregorio R. Andaman Jr., the President of St. Dominic College of Asia to be the Dean of the School of Arts, Sciences and Education in 2012, I continued this advocacy to honor teachers during



Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges the National Teachers Month Celebration Coordinating Council up to 2015. I also conducted several activities for the Calabarzon Schools. We were able to get around twenty-five secondary schools in Makati, Muntinlupa, Las Piñas, Cavite, Dasmariñas, Imus, Noveleta, etc. This was also held in the SM Mall of Asia in 2013.

In 2015, WCCI began to establish links with our ASEAN brothers and sisters. Some of the universities and agencies having links with WCCI are Hanoi University, Bangkok University, Rajamangala University of Technology, Catholic University of Jakarta, and Jakarta State University. General agreements were realized among the participating universities on the need to plan collaboratively for future projects regarding student/faculty and institutional exchange, development programs and research projects on curriculum development focused on the WCCI special interest groups such as Ethics and Values Education, Peace Education, Community Development, Culture, Arts & Language, Early Childhood and Environmental Concerns.

We started with a two-day conference where the participants were expected to demonstrate their understanding of their identity and roles as ASEAN educators; engage actively in collaborative efforts towards Special Interest Group (SIG) projects/initiatives; and try to live out the ideals of WCCI as an educator and a responsible member of the global community. I am very pleased with the outcomes of the conference with five hundred fifty delegates from the Philippines, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, and two non-ASEAN countries, India and Nigeria. In their respective national attire, we were exposed to an inter-faith prayer session, too. The various Special Interest Groups were able to come up with doable projects and action plans related to their individual and collective interests as well as to their current fields and specializations. They also pledged to bring these projects in their respective milieus, as future teachers.

For 2016, I am very pleased to report that the WCCI SC officers and coordinators have conducted three Caravan meetings on Peace Education with Dr. Genevieve Balance-Kupang, the WCCI National and International Peace Education Coordinator as the main speaker. Subsequently, caravans were held at the National Teachers' College in September 9, 2016, with the full support of Dean Galiza; at the Philippine Women's University in October

5, 2016, with the active support of Dean Dr. Erlinda D. Serrano; and at St. Paul University of the Philippines, Tuguegarao on October 29, 2016 with the full cooperation and support of the University President, Sr. Merceditas Ang, SPC. On April 1, 2017 another Caravan on Peace Education was held in Miriam College with the full cooperation of Dean Dr. Rose Aligada. This was conducted in cooperation with WCCI Special Interest Groups.

Now as a visiting part time professor at St. Dominic College of Asia, I am very fortunate to do what I am truly passionate about. I have the opportunity to facilitate/assist future teachers in subjects like Facilitating Learning, Curriculum Development, Principles of Teaching 1&2, Social Dimensions of Education and Teaching Profession. I am continuously inspired by the great improvement I observe in their teaching personalities, as well as the further enhancement of their multiple intelligences which will be useful in their teaching profession. I am proud that they have developed global perspectives while remaining patriotic and true to their roots as 21st century teachers committed to honing learners' skills and nurturing future global citizens and leaders. As an educator, I have sought to provide them with opportunities to grow, as well as open up spaces for their continuous learning, bringing them to the annual WCCI SC Conventions for five years, as well as on WCCI Annual Conventions for two years. As a result, the Junior students were motivated to conduct workshops on varied learning approaches which were student-centered, problem-based, project-based and community-based. Senior students were given a chance to read their simple comparative research papers on the Ten ASEAN countries' curricular programs, teacher formation and culture, among other topics. Via these exposures, these student teachers have demonstrated excellent performance after rigorous training and guidance, they also developed self-confidence, and learned the value of collaboration with others. Most of all, they have taken pride in the teaching profession.

I am very grateful with the way WCCI SC officers from different institutions in the country have expressed their commitment to share their time, talents, expertise, leadership styles and skills with other student teachers in various programs conducted. These officers became very good and special friends, with whom I share mutual respect, varied interests and discoveries, as well as focused goals as future Filipino global teachers.

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In my journey in peace education through the WCCI and other educational institutions and with colleagues in the Peace Education Network, I realized that there are many challenges but I have also learned that they are not necessarily roadblocks but rather wake up calls for us to continue to be the best teachers we possibly can be; to open our vistas to more opportunities for service; and expand the breadth and width of our personal and professional life. I would like to believe that to be a peace educator is to be a model leader, competent, happy, just, peaceful, inspiring to our family, students, colleagues, community and peoples of the world as enshrined in the WCCI mission. ●

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*A Bedan mentor for forty-three years, \***Teresita "Titz" Paed-Pedrajas** is a 1999 Metrobank Outstanding Teacher Awardee, a former national and international President of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction, a convenor of the WCCI Philippines Student Chapter since 2011, and Organizing Committee member of the WCCI-ASEAN Conference for administrators, faculty members, and student teachers on August 17–19, 2017. She is a Sibs-Phoenix Publishing Book author and assists student-teachers and teachers excel in their varied roles in the teaching profession.*



*Part IV*

*MOVING AHEAD, WIDENING  
THE CIRCLE*



## *Peace Education: Measuring Impact*

*by Jasmin Nario-Galace\**

I remember it too well. The place was Camp Corazon R. Gonzales (CRG) in Novaliches, Quezon City. The year was 1988. I attended a peace education workshop organized by the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines (CEAP) facilitated by Dr. Virginia Cawagas and Dr. Toh Swee-Hin. I was a high school teacher in Maryknoll College then. I was sent to this peace education seminar by then Maryknoll President Loreta Castro who I later realized was grooming me to be her peace education partner.

Prior to my participation in this peace education workshop, other groups have tried to recruit me into their slice of the political spectrum. Though I had worked with these groups as a student and as a young professional, I knew I was looking for something else — something that was more in consonance with my faith, values and personal philosophy.

I was born in Quezon City but my father's work relocated the family to Guimba, Nueva Ecija when I was 5. I spent 8 years of my life there. I went to a school run by the Franciscan sisters. Here, I acquired the basic skills and values that have stayed with me today — communication, imagination, creativity and leadership skills. I was Class Vice-President from Kinder to Grade 6. My class had always decided on a male President. I was not a gender equality

advocate yet at that time but in my young mind I always wondered why my class would always insist on a male leader. It was also in this small town in the province where my social and interpersonal skills—my ease at mingling with everyone regardless of socio-economic status, intellectual abilities or place of origin—were developed. The school, being strongly connected to the parish, also gave me the opportunity to develop and enhance my public speaking skills. I remember those years when I was daily commentator and song leader at liturgical services. The daily singing in public and reading of verses from the bible during mass helped build my confidence, as well as my knowledge of ethical teachings of the Church. In addition, my father consistently affirmed and motivated me whenever I brought home medals for exemplary academic performance calling me “the best in the west” even if we lived in the east. From my mother, I learned the value of generosity. She cooked big meals every day and gave out a bowlful of *ulam* to all our neighbors.

In Grade School, I saw the movie “Minsa’y Isang Gamu-gamo” in Manila. I remember crying profusely in the theater and after. It made such an impact on me that I decided to stage a play about human rights in class. My view of the world since then became bigger. I realized that there was a world outside my family, school, and immediate community.

These are some experiences from Grade School that taught me some capacities and values that are still very useful to me now as a missionary, as peace advocate, and teacher.

We moved back to Manila when I was starting high school as my father was elected in Congress. I did not expect that the confidence built in Grade School was going to be put to a test. On the first day of class, I was made laughing stock in my new school because of my *promdi* (colloquial term meaning “from the province,” provincial) ways. I was laughed at for wearing the wrong cut of uniform, for saying “*opo* and *po*,” for addressing teachers madame instead of “miss.” I was laughed at for being unsophisticated and unfashionable. I remember how some of them extorted my allowance and how they laughed as they yelled “nognog” (dark skinned) each time I crossed the school quadrangle. That was my first experience of pain. I realized later that there was a name for that kind of pain you inflict on others. It was



psychological violence manifesting itself in attitudes and behaviors that hurt and shoot down other peoples' self-esteem; that denigrates others because they are different. It is manifested in words and actions that do not consider how these impact on others. I am now a crusader against bullying because of its impact to both the offender and the target. Offenders, most of the time, do not realize the impact of their behavior on others. Both have to be saved. I became friends with many of the offenders later on and high school life became fun than miserable.

A great deal of my time in college was spent in teach-ins, symposiums, seminars and on the street as this was the time when Ninoy Aquino was assassinated. I became deeply involved in activities that called for a change in political leadership. My political and social awareness and involvement were cultivated deeply in Maryknoll College (now called Miriam College) and by the political context of that time.

Hence, the workshop at Camp CRG in 1988 appealed to me and spoke to my values and personal philosophy.

*Eureka!* I thought as I sat through this workshop. *This is what I am looking for. This is what I want to do. This is where I want to be.* The threats to peace—war, militarization, prejudice and discrimination, human rights violations, gender inequality, poverty and injustice, environmental degradation—are the socio-political issues I want to challenge in ways that are nonviolent. A passionate peace educator and advocate was formally born in that conference, although the ground was fertile and ready.

Dr. Castro, who is peace personified, made sure I would be a faithful disciple. She recommended that I go to the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana to do my MA in Peace Studies. My experience at the University of Notre Dame nailed it. My knowledge, understanding and appreciation of peace, nonviolence, human rights, gender equality, human security, political economy, and conflict resolution deepened. I did not only learn from notable teachers like Robert Johansen, George Lopez, David Cortright and Robert Holmes, among many, but also from my classmates who were different from me in terms of nationality, race, religion and ethnicity. The academic discussions as well as the cross-cultural exchange dug out that longing for nonviolent change, inspired me to envision the world I wish to live

in, and inflamed my yearning to contribute to the attainment of this vision.

I returned to the Philippines in 1992. I started teaching Peace in the classroom and in training workshops reaching out to various sectors: teachers, students, and out-of-school-youth, among others. I also started attending networking meetings as well as seminars on peace and conflict to enrich and share my views. In a human security conference in Bangkok, a response of an academican to a query startled me. He was asked a question on what he was doing in relation to the challenges to peace and security. He replied that as an academic, he had no business solving the problems of the world and that his business was solely to theorize. I was astounded. I never made that distinction between theory and practice. I have learned that when you are a peace educator, you do not only teach peace, you live it and work to make that vision happen.

This is why at the Miriam College-Center for Peace Education (CPE), we are big on advocacy work. This is the peace education we know. We discuss the root causes of conflict and ways by which they can be overcome peacefully and constructively. But we don't limit ourselves to musing. We campaign, we lobby, we engage in action to help build that culture of peace we teach and yearn for.

However, we do encounter challenges in our education and advocacy work. We earn the ire of those who profit from war or those who perpetrate and support armed violence. We are challenged by mindsets supportive of violent pathways to confront conflict or social issues. We hold that war solves nothing and that violence begets violence. But in a society where systems of hierarchy and domination persist, beginning with the family, offering this perspective, though backed with solid evidences, is a challenge. When I gave a talk, for example, on challenging bullying in one school, male parents insisted that boys should learn how to fight back physically and that I should consider including that on the list of options to address the problem of bullying.

We are also challenged by attitudes of indifference, helplessness, hopelessness and do-nothingness. We have heard people say that war is inevitable, Muslims are terrorists, weapons are needed to keep the peace, men are naturally aggressive or that we are some kind of freak for thinking that a better world is possible. But we believe that humans are inherently good

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and a culture of violence can be deconstructed. The aggression that we see in humans is a product of socialization. What humans construct can be deconstructed and reconstructed. Peace education and advocacy can help reconstruct beliefs, attitudes, systems, institutions, policies, and structures to those that will move us closer to the goal of establishing a peace culture.

In the course of educating for peace, we have also encountered queries on the impact of what we do. This has been in our mind at the CPE and thus, we have made some efforts to know changes in beliefs and attitudes of participants of our peace focused courses. In 2003, we, together with Peace Education Network members Ateneo de Manila Grade School and Far Eastern University, surveyed students enrolled in peace-focused courses on the effect of their peace education course on them. The survey was part of a project made with the Third World Studies Center housed at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, and the United Nations Development Programme. Four hundred fifty-eight (458) students from grade school, college and graduate school accomplished our questionnaire. Results yielded positive change in attitudes of surveyed students. For example, 92.2% reported change in attitude towards war, while 98% reported change in attitude towards diversity. Among the frequently mentioned changes were the realization that war is not the solution to conflicts, and that diversity should be respected, not scorned.

When I did my dissertation in 2000, I measured the impact of peace education on prejudice reduction. Schools are not spared from unkind, and sometimes violent acts that emanate from the intolerance of differences. Many students who differ in certain characteristics suffer from hateful remarks and exclusion. Hence, my study sought to find out if gain scores of the group who went through peace education were significantly higher than the gain scores of the control group on attitudes of prejudice. I used a quantitative methodology, supplemented by qualitative data. One hundred seventy-one (171) students participated in the experiment. Instruments used were a self-developed Likert-type scale and an open-ended questionnaire. Results of the study showed that the gain scores of the students who went through peace education were statistically higher than the gain score of the students in the control group. In other words, the peace education experience helped reduce various forms of prejudice including abilism, classism,

ethnocentrism, heterosexism, looksism and sexism.

Inspired by this study, and enjoying the construction of valid and reliable tests, we, at the CPE, proceeded to developing similar questionnaires to measure attitudinal change of different sectors we have given peace education seminars to. We tested, for example, if a workshop on women, peace and security was going to change attitudes of UN peacekeepers that were going to be deployed to Golan Heights and Liberia, as well as local government officials from several municipalities in the country on women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Results indicated higher acceptance of peacekeepers and local government officers to the proposition that women have the right to meaningfully participate in matters of peace and security and that they are capable of doing so.

We also conducted a study to find out if Moro, indigenous and Christian women's beliefs and attitudes toward arms control and other peace issues will change after a peace training. It also sought to find out if such training will improve the community women's faith on their agency to provide peace and security in their conflict-affected communities. An internally validated 22-item Likert-type scale was administered prior to, and after the peace training to measure changes. One hundred fifty-seven (157) women from conflict-affected areas in the provinces of Lanao del Norte, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga and Cotabato in Mindanao participated in the study. Post-test scores using ANOVA (analysis of variance) indicated significant differences particularly on issues such as arms control and participation in peace, human rights, security work and governance. Specifically, the peace training helped change participants' views that guns were necessary in providing personal and community security. It also convinced women that they can be effective participants in building peace and promoting security in their communities.

A more recent study we did involved student leaders from 40 schools nationwide, coming from different faiths and cultural traditions who attended a youth peace camp. Results revealed that the peace camp helped reduce beliefs that war is an effective way of resolving conflicts; that physical violence has to be met with the same violence; that revenge is an acceptable response when harmed; and that conflicts are best settled through the use of force.

Before the peace camp, participants had low acceptance of the sugges-

tions that equitable redistribution of wealth can contribute to peace and that the unevenness in the distribution of wealth in the country is a major cause of peacelessness. After the peace camp, the propositions were highly accepted by the participants.

Likewise, the peace camp increased beliefs and attitudes about the need to correct historical injustices against the Moro; that the youth can be effective agents of peace; and that peace and normalcy can be achieved if private armies were disbanded and firearms were reduced and controlled.

Measuring beliefs and attitudes, is of course, just one of the ways by which we determine the impact of what we do as peace educators.

Our work at the CPE has also helped shape policies meant to promote a culture of peace, including the adoption of E.O. 570, Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education. We lobbied the Department of Education and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to get such government order adopted.

The CPE was one of the lead NGOs in formulating a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security in the Philippines. This NAP is meant to increase women's participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Women's voices are normally not heard in these processes and mechanisms when they make up half of the world's population and can offer unique perspectives. Can you imagine what we lose by not hearing the perspectives of half of the world's people on matters that relate to peace and security? The NAP helped instill that message in many peoples' consciousness in both government and civil society.

Internationally, we have strongly helped in the adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in the United Nations (UN) — a treaty that requires States Parties to assess prior to arms transfers if these arms will be used to commit human rights violations, genocide, crimes against humanity and gender-based violence, among others. I was privileged to be among the advocates who worked very hard for the passage of an ATT that had a strong language on gender. We at the IANSA Women's Network and the Control Arms Coalition used every method available to us to encourage States to include and support a provision in the treaty that would require States to

assess before selling arms, if there was serious risk that such arms will be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. Lobbying for the ATT was a very rewarding experience for me.

My lobby work in the UN started with my attendance at the Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2008. Here, I learned about the gravity of small arms violence in countries other than mine. Here, I learned how civil society in the world is working to stop the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons. I have been very privileged to meet passionate, talented, knowledgeable, and committed disarmament advocates in the world who are moving heaven and earth to save lives lost daily from armed violence. It is in lobbying in the UN that I got to polish my advocacy skills, specifically lobbying. Currently, we are actively campaigning for a nuclear ban treaty. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive and indiscriminate weapons ever created. A single nuclear weapon detonated over a populated area could kill hundreds of thousands or millions of people. In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution to begin negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, and CPE is actively lobbying States to see through the adoption of this treaty in July 2017.

Peace processes, when successful, have the potential of ending armed conflicts. CPE and Pax Christi-Pilipinas are ardent supporters of the peace process. We, through WE Act 1325, worked closely, for example, with the former GPH and MILF peace panels to get a peace agreement that will give greater autonomy to the Moros who have been victims of historical injustice. We also lobbied for an engendered Bangsamoro Basic Law—one that would mainstream women's meaningful participation in various spheres of governance, and succeeded in getting rich gender language in the draft. The BBL did not pass in the last Congress but the gender language we won—the language that women count for peace—has already been etched in the minds of policymakers.

The result of our peace education and advocacy work is also manifested in the number of our graduates who go into peace, development, human rights and security work. It is also evidenced in the number of young people

who organize or join peace clubs, organizations and peace campaigns. It is seen in the number of students who join us in our visits to Congress to lobby peace-related bills that will help, for example, control the proliferation of arms, challenge discrimination, or give more autonomy to a group of people who for decades have suffered from historical injustice. It is seen in students who ardently join public actions that call on government to uphold life and human dignity, or that protest human rights violations such as extra-judicial killings.

We see the impact of our work on students who walk hand-in-hand with their Muslim friends during a school fair. We see it in students who voluntarily mediate in conflicts among peers, or in the student who buys rice porridge, ice cream, or cupcake knowing that such purchase will support a project that will help conflict-affected people in Mindanao.

We also see the impact of our work in schools building their own Centers for Peace Education or declaring their institutions as Zones of Peace. We see them in schools integrating peace in the curriculum or in their school vision and mission. We see them in educational institutions creating peace-related programs, such as anti-bullying and peer mediation programs, after going through some form of peace education training. We see them in grassroots peace education participants organizing themselves so that they could help resolve or mediate in conflicts that happen in their communities.

We see the impact of our work on community women who throw their hat into the election ring or play leadership roles in various organizations after having been trained on political participation and peacebuilding. We see it on women finally participating in decision-making mechanisms such as Councils of Elders controlled by men, after our initiatives at challenging the status quo.

We see the impact of our work on the youth from various faith and ethnic traditions who would send us private messages on Facebook after a peace education training telling us how they have been inspired by our message and example.

These and many more are some of the reasons why we are keeping on. We persevere in our efforts because we know that it is in teaching peace that

we can get to peace. It is in touching the mind that we develop compassionate hearts, and encourage action.

We dream of a world free from armed violence, a world where justice and equality prevail, a world where human rights are respected and promoted, and a world where ecosystems function and serve the needs of this generation and the others to come.

But to realize that dream, we have to increase the number of workers in the “peace vineyard.” It was a peace educator, a peace education workshop and a peace studies course that brought me here. It was peace education that turned me into a passionate, relentless, and committed peace advocate.

Hence, this is the pathway I will continue to take if I want to see more workers in the field. ●

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***\*Jasmin Nario-Galace, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education and Professor at the Department of International Studies in Miriam College. She is President of Pax Christi-Pilipinas and Chair of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines’ (CEAP) Justice and Peace Education Program. She is also the Co-Chair of the IANSA Women’s Network and is in the Board of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.***



# *Of Dreamers, Sowers, Teachers, and Healers*

*by Virginia (Jean) Cawagas\**

When I sat down to write my story, I asked myself, “where do I end?” For someone who has just started the journey, three decades seems such a long stretch. But for someone who has been through three decades, the home stretch could not be too far away. It does seem like we’re getting there but not quite. At times, it seems like our journey has just begun.

So I will start with NOW. I will start with the University for Peace located at Costa Rica, a country 16,251 kilometers away from the Philippines, on the other side of the world, across the Pacific Ocean. The University for Peace, as a UN mandated university, has a special obligation *“to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations.”*

Upholding the UPEACE mandate is how I have continued my journey in peace education while I was thousands of miles away from the Philippines. Since 2004, Toh Swee-Hin and I were designated senior professors in the MA Peace Education Programme in the university where we have graduated

more than 200 peace educators, many from Asia, mainly the ASEAN nations and Japan. Several of the Asian alumni have been funded by the Nippon Foundation of Japan in the Asian Peacebuilders Programme which is now a dual degree programme involving UPEACE and Ateneo de Manila University.

Two Filipinos among the more than 200 peace education alumni are here with us in this forum: Major Jean Alia Robles and Abigail Limpin. While they have only recently graduated, they have already made a mark in the institutions they are attached to. Jean Robles aims at infusing peace values in the military formal curriculum and informal education of young cadets as well as officers of the Philippine Military Academy. Abigail Limpin is a very active member of Teach Peace Build Peace Movement.

The UPEACE Programme is basically grounded on the conceptual framework that was first presented by Toh Swee-Hin during the opening of the Xavier Peace Education Center in 1986 and further developed in the Notre Dame University (NDU) Peace Education Programme and the World Council of Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI). That was three decades ago, and since then, the framework has metamorphosed and resulted in what is now globally known as the six-petal “flower” model of peace education. This framework has been quoted, endorsed, applied, and adapted not only here in the Philippines but universally to the point where sometimes it is so freely used without any acknowledgment of the original source.

The University for Peace MA programme in Peace Education has two graduates in Cyprus who have set up their own Center for a Culture of Peace using the six petals in the “flower” framework as the core concepts of their program.

Junior professors from Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who came to UPEACE for their MA took a curriculum development course with me, wrote their final assignment which was a curriculum in MA Peace Education. All of them chose the “flower” model and adapted it to make the framework relevant to their particular social, economic and political contexts. All of these applications have a distinctly “Philippine flavor” no matter what context they were transported to. It is not only the flower model that has spread around the world, the example of the Philippine formal and non-formal education, as perhaps the first,

Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges and still one of the few countries that understands and values the need for educating for a culture of peace among its people.

I will now backtrack to the time before I went to UPEACE. There was Australia, specifically at the Multifaith Centre of Griffith University and before that the University of Alberta in Canada. At the Multifaith Centre in Australia, we were able to integrate peace education in the core principles of interfaith and intercultural education. Again we always were proud to highlight the Philippine experience, inviting such respected colleagues in the peace education and interfaith network like Loreta Castro, Ofelia Durante, Marites Africa and Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra. We invited Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao City to serve on the Advisory Committee of the Centre to share his rich and inspirational experience as co-convenor of the pioneering interfaith organization, the Bishops-Ulama Conference.

The Multi-Faith Centre, where many days and nights were spent building communities and networks among peoples of various faith and spirituality traditions, became a focal point for educating for a culture of peace. As one earlier panel in this Forum emphasized, in interfaith dialogue, we not only learn to understand and respect differences between faiths. Most importantly, we discover that diverse faiths share a common ground in values and principles, which should motivate their followers to join minds, hearts and spirit in building a peaceful world.

All throughout those years, we were continually inspired by the readiness of people to consider the “flower” approach to a holistic and transformative education. Networks were formed between Australian and Filipino peace educators through the Miriam College Center for Peace Education, Silsilah Dialogue Foundation, and the Peacemakers Circle, among others.

In Alberta, Canada, the teaching of peace education was in a formal academic setting. We shared the theory and practice of educating for a culture of peace with Canadian and other international learners seeking to become teachers. Some graduate students studying for their MAs or PhDs also developed interest and commitment to peace education. One doctoral candidate came to the Philippines to study how peace education can play a vital role in helping Filipino caregivers in Canada to assert their human rights as foreign workers. In one project, we invited our academic colleagues

who are First Nations or indigenous peoples of Canada to participate in a conference in the Philippines, where they were inspired by similar struggles for justice and peace by Filipino indigenous sisters and brothers.

May I also share my long involvement in values education in the Philippines, in part while serving as Executive Secretary of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). In her story, my friend and colleague, Tita Pedrajas, shared the work of WCCI in promoting peace education via values education. From the WCCI perspective, values education cannot be reduced to asking learners to know what are the core values in Filipino culture. Moreover, values are not just abstract “good” attributes to be upheld by individuals. Rather, values are embedded also in social, economic and political structures of society. Hence, we need to ask – how can the economic policies of the nation fulfil the desired values of love, dignity, justice, compassion, among others? How can our political structures enact those same values? In sum, values education entails both individual transformation as well as values-guided social and political action and transformation to build a culture of peace. Hence, although WCCI and my own involvement as an active member initially focused on values education, it is already a form of peace education by another name.

What have been the lessons learned in my 3 decades of journey in peace education?

In 1992, Toh Swee-Hin, Ofelia Durante and I wrote the story of the NDU Peace Education Program and Peace Education Center. In that story we shared some critical reflections that I believe are still most relevant after journeying for three decades through three continents, dreaming and sowing and growing seeds of peace education. A number of stories shared, thus far, by Toh Swee-Hin, Ofelia Durante and Estrella Cantallopez overlap. Let me share some of these reflections by envisioning and re-affirming the role of peace educators using the metaphors of dreamers, sowers, teachers and healers.

### **Peace Educators are Dreamers**

As all the stories in this publication illustrated, successful and sustainable peace education is firmly grounded in a clear vision of peace. Peace educators are often dismissed as politically naïve, unrealistic, hopeless dreamers. But

should we not dare to dream of a world where we hear laughter of children rather than screams of pain and horror? Where we see smiling faces rather than sullen looks of hopelessness? Where we breathe and smell the freshness of our environment rather than the smog and dust of development or the smoke from an exploded weapon? Should we not have faith in the ability of human communities to overcome difficulties and transcend seemingly insurmountable tensions and dream of a common vision of a new relationship of trust, respect and caring? Believing in this possibility, at the opening of peace education workshops or courses, it is vital to encourage learners to explore their visions of a peaceful world and a culture of peace. Furthermore, as the diverse themes of peace are examined, learners have the opportunity to concretize their visions by exposure to the realities of peacelessness. For example, in the NDU programs, we included field trips to Mt. Apo to learn about the struggles of the *Lumads* (indigenous peoples) against the geothermal construction project; we visited poor farmers struggling for their land rights and against agribusiness exploitation; we requested street kids to tell their stories of hardships and also struggles to survive; we listened to our Moro sisters and brothers yearning for a just resolution of centuries of injustice and political, economic and cultural marginalization.

### **Peace Educators are Sowers**

One of the common themes shared by our storytellers is the role of mentors or champions or “giants” in the growth of peace education. I would say, the ideal role of peace educators is to be a sower of seeds. A tree, no matter how beautiful and tall and sturdy will have failed its purpose if seeds had not fallen from its branches and multiplied into young plants growing to carry on and spread many more branches and drop many more seeds. It is encouraging therefore, to know of so many overlapping and intersecting circles and ripples of successive generations of peace educators and peace education programs. Moreover, with each new wave of creative designing and implementation, we can see how peace educators are seizing new opportunities for praxis and advocacy, including using new educational technologies, such as social media, but at the same time, not forgetting to learn from the best practices of earlier generations of peace educators.

## Peace Educators are “Teachers”

In many Eastern as well as indigenous traditions, a teacher embodies the most noble and enduring traits of a human being, someone who is wise yet humble, firm yet gentle, complex yet simple, serious yet playful, authoritative and knowledgeable but not authoritarian.

As “teachers” it is vital to dialogue with all audiences, and keep open the minds and hearts of would-be or actual opponents or disbelievers. In clarifying issues of peacelessness, teachers must be willing to allow spaces for others’ personal, but not necessarily unchangeable, worldviews to be heard. It could also be helpful to avoid language that is not necessarily wrong in explanatory power, but which has already been identified as *markinuj* a particular antagonistic ideological position. Thus some political slogans may already evoke hostility or even fear, and trigger the shutting of ears, minds and hearts to the essence of peace education messages (Toh, Cawagas, Durante, 1992). Let’s not confuse this sensitivity to language with pandering to “political correctness” which is a very effective tool of “argumentum ad hominem” ... it’s easier to attack the messenger not the message.

As teachers we need to see ourselves as active subjects within the politics, structures and power relationships within our schools or organizations or government and society; and self-empowered to explore our multiple identities, values and meanings of being teachers. Hopefully, in turn, we seek transformations for a better world through our teaching. As one of the pedagogical principles of our holistic framework stresses, learners need to experience conscientization or critical empowerment. Hence, for example, in the NDU programmes in which Toh Swee-Hin, Ofelia Durante, Ester Sevilla and Estrella Cantallopez and I were involved, critical understanding of injustice, human rights and environmental destruction had led to participation in campaigns in support of Lumads protesting the construction of geothermal plants on their sacred Mt. Apo, and support of poor and hungry farmers arrested for opening the government warehouses to distribute rice in a nonviolent and socially responsible way. While in Canada, our peace education (known as global education) programmes also promoted solidarity and justice campaigns in support of Filipino domestic workers whose rights were being violated by unethical Canadian employers.

Likewise, in critical pedagogy and critical reflective teaching, our learn-

ers need trusting and creative spaces to surface and re-examine their values, assumptions, biases, hopes, fears and dreams in the light of questions and problems posed by the vision of a culture of peace.

Praxis demands that we link theory with consistent action. For teachers, personal praxis is a catalyst for learner role-modelling. However, praxis in peace education is not necessarily expressed in visible political activism (e.g., rallies, development projects). Rather the “action” component in peace education predominantly occurs through, on the one hand, a reorientation of personal and social consciousness that can sustain committed action, and on the other hand, a restructuring of the educational system which has long been neglected in movements for societal change as something to be accomplished after “liberation.” Yet, how can modern societies be peaceful if a major vehicle of citizen formation, the educational system, remains wedded to unpeaceful values and practices.

We even more deeply appreciate the need for those of us involved in intellectual endeavours (however well connected with action) to avoid the temptation to be “gurus” delivering “wisdom” to the “unenlightened masses.” Peace theory must never be separated from the groundedness of critical and self-critical peace practice.

### **Peace Educators are Healers**

This I find the most challenging mission of peace educators. Because of our commitment to justice and human rights, the most important balm to a hardened or broken soul that is “a returning” or healing is most of the time a muted voice in our consciousness. While the example of the Rwandan people and the South Africans in their truth and reconciliation approach may not have fully met the expectations demanded from a legal justice system, many believe that the process of healing had moved faster.

In both micro and macro levels, the role of peace educators is to facilitate the process of healing both for the victims and predators, for the offender and offended. In almost all cases of conflict, everyone is hurting, everyone is diminished, everyone is an actor and everyone needs healing. This healing process requires as the post-apartheid experience and other post-armed conflict exemplars and as interfaith dialogue practitioners remind us, need a telling of ‘truth.’ How can there be healing if the truth of

what happened is not revealed? For example, in the NDU and other peace education programs we were involved in, the curriculum always includes an empathetic understanding of the truth of how the Bangsamoro and also indigenous peoples have suffered historical and present injustices, losing their land, being deprived of their right to self-determination and their ancestral lands and the dignity of their cultural identities. For the Bangsamoro and Lumad participants in the peace education programs, this acknowledgment of truth has been healing and a necessary step toward reconciliation based on justice and human rights. Here, I am also reminded of the experience of the Aboriginal peoples in Australia. After decades of political organizing among the indigenous peoples and with solidarity from non-indigenous Australians, the Australian Parliament in 2010 proclaimed an official apology to the Aboriginal people for the historical wrongs and injustices under colonialism. A simulation of the Australian Government public apology in the Parliament in my peace education classes had always been very informative and inspiring even to students who have had no direct experience with indigenous peoples struggles.

In the Philippines, I believe that together with some peace educators who are here today, we have written a series of textbooks in Civics and Culture where we attempted to tell a faithful narrative of the Filipino people, the IPs, the Moros, the Christians, non-Christians. I am happy to mention all our co-authors, Toh Swee-Hin, Bing Durante, Tita Pedrajas, Genie Kupang, Mei Lamorena and Babylin Tubila. I am proud to announce their contribution to the narratives and our contribution to healing of wounded peoples through centuries of discrimination and marginalisation.

I started earlier by asking, “where do I end my story?” I would like to say that my story and our stories as peace educators have NO ENDING... and while there will be new conflicts, as long as we peace educators are steadfast in our mission and role as DREAMERS, SOWERS, TEACHERS, AND HEALERS, we can be sure the journey continues as the succeeding generations of seeds and plants grow ever more. ●

### **Reference:**

Toh, S. H., Cawagas, V., & Durante, O. (1992). Building a peace education program: Critical reflections on the Notre Dame University Experience in the Philippines. *Peace Education Project Occasional Paper Series*. (1992) University of Alberta:



## Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges

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**\*Dr. Virginia Cawagas** is Adjunct Professor of the Dept. of Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. She was formerly a professor and Coordinator of the MA Peace Education Program at the UN mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. Her contribution to the development of peace education curriculum, instructional modules and materials in North and South contexts is widely recognized. She has been involved in transnational networks in peace education like IIPE, IPRA-PEC, and WCCI.



# *APPENDICES*



# *Sharing Stories of Hope and Challenges*

*June 27–28, 2016*

*Environment Studies Institute, Miriam College*

## **PROGRAM**



8:00 – 8:30     **Arrival & Registration**

8:30 – 9:00     **Welcome Message**

*Dr. Rosario Oreta Lapus*

President, Miriam College

### **Introductions and Rationale**

*Dr. Jasmin Nario Galace*

Executive Director

Center for Peace Education, Miriam College

Dr. Toh Swee-Hin

Head, Dept. of Peace & Conflict Studies

University for Peace (UPEACE)

9:00 – 10:15     **Panel 1:** Moderator: *Dr. Marites Guingona-Africa*  
Peacemakers Circle

### **Story Tellers**

*Dr. Toh Swee-Hin*

UPEACE

*Dr. Ofelia Durante*

Institute of Autonomy & Governance

*Dr. Teresita Pedrajas*

World Council for Curriculum & Instruction

10:15 – 10:40     **Morning Break**

*Appendix 1: FORUM PROGRAM*

10:40 – 11:40 **Panel 2:** Moderator: *Dr. Nina Lim-Yuson*  
Museo Pambata

**Story Tellers**

*Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace*

Center for Peace Education, Miriam College

*Emily Lambio*

Dept. of Education, Basic Education

*Michael Alar*

Conflict, Security & Development Team  
WB Philippine Office

*Angelina Alcazar*

APNIEVE

11:40 – 12:40 **Panel 3:** Moderator: *Emerita Garon*  
World Council for Curriculum  
and Instruction

**Story Tellers**

*Dr. Serafin Arviola*

Philippine Normal University

*Ian Romero De Felipe & Marco Gutang*

Far Eastern University

*Gail de la Rita*

Peace Center Xavier University

12:40 -1:40 **Lunch Break**

1:40 – 2:40 **Panel 4:** Moderator: *Dr. Grace Rebollos*  
Peace Advocates Zamboanga

## Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges

### Story Tellers

*Josephine Perez*

Gaston Z Ortigas Peace Institute

*Major Jean Alia Robles*

Philippine Military Academy

*Dr. Arlene Ledesma, Bablyn Tubilla,*

*& Espiridion Atilano*

Ateneo De Zamboanga University

2:40 – 3:40

**Panel 5:** Moderator: *Dennis Quilala*

University of the Philippines

### Story Tellers

*Arlan de la Cruz*

Holy Angel University

*Dr. Genevieve Kupang*

St. Paul College, Pasig

*Dr. Ronald Allan Mabunga (TBC)*

Philippine Normal University

3:40– 4:20

**Afternoon Break**

4:20 – 5:10

**Small group discussions**

**Topic:** *What are common lessons and best practices for the progress of Peace Education in the Philippines? What common challenges continue to face peace educators? What are possible strategies to overcome these challenges?*

### Facilitators

Group 1: *Renato de la Cruz*

Group 2: *Chito Generoso*

## Appendix 1: FORUM PROGRAM

Group 3: *Atty. Christine Lao*

Group 4: *Estrella Cantallopez*

Group 5: *Marco Gutang*5:10 – 5:30      **Plenary: Group Reports**

## END OF DAY 1

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## DAY 2

8:30 – 9:00      **Arrival & “Getting to know you more”**

Facilitators: UPEACE/Ateneo Alumni and Students

9:00 – 10:15 **Panel 6:** Moderator: *Dr. Genevieve Kupang*  
St. Paul College, Pasig

## Story Tellers

*Amabella Carumba*

Mindanao People Peace Movement

*Mirma Tica*

# Pax Christi-Pilipinas

*Venus Betita*

ForumZFD

*Dr. Lorenzo Balili*

Davao Central College

10:15 – 10:35 **Morning Break**

10:35 – 11:35 **Panel 7:** Moderator: *Sr. Marita Cedeño, FMA*  
Salesian Sister



Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges

**Story Tellers**

*Dr. Marites Guingona Africa*

Peacemakers Circle

*Chito Generoso*

ICCN

*Dr. Grace Rebollos*

Zamboanga Peace Advocates

11:35 – 12:35 **Panel 8:** Moderator: *Dr. Bert Tuga*  
Philippine Normal  
University Visayas

**Story Tellers**

*Dr. Nina Lim Yuson*

Museo Pambata

*Beverly Orozco*

Generation Peace Youth Network

*Bai Robaniza Sumndad-Usman*

Teach Peace, Build Peace Movement

12:35 – 1:30 **Lunch Break**

1:30 – 2:30 **Panel 9:** Moderator: *Jaime Villafuerte*  
Miriam College High School

**Story Tellers**

*Helen Amante*

Ateneo Grade School

*Melinda Lamorena*

Miriam College Grade School

*Appendix 1: FORUM PROGRAM*

*Sr. Marita Cedeño, FMA*

Salesian Sister

2:30 – 3:45     **Panel 10:** Moderator: *Karen Tañada*  
Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace  
Institute

**Story Tellers**

*Dennis Quilala*

University of the Philippines

*Dr. Estrella Cantallopez*

Cotabato State College

*Dr. Virginia Cavagas*

UN-mandated University for Peace

*Dr. Margie Fiesta*

Mindanao State University – Maguindanao

3:45 – 4:05     **Afternoon Break**

4:05 – 5:00     **Small group discussions**

**Topic:** *What are common lessons and best practices for the progress of Peace Education in the Philippines? What common challenges continue to face peace educators? What are possible strategies to overcome these challenges?*

**Facilitators**

Group 1: *Ofelia Durante*

Group 2: *Serafin Arviola*

Group 3: *Perla Ledesma*

Group 4: *Emmy Garon*

Group 5: *Ian Romero De Felipe*

5:00 – 5:30     **Closing Plenary**  
**Group Reports**  
**Closing Activity**

**END OF DAY 2**

# *"Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Sharing Stories of Hopes and Challenges"*

*June 27–28, 2016*

*Environment Studies Institute, Miriam College*

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

| <b>NAME</b>                 | <b>EMAIL ADDRESS / POSITION / ORGANIZATION</b>                         |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Abdul, Jane                 | <a href="mailto:jane_abdul2008@yahoo.com">jane_abdul2008@yahoo.com</a> |
|                             | Graduate of MAPDS                                                      |
|                             | Mindanao State University Maguindanao                                  |
| Alar, Michael               | <a href="mailto:michaelalar@yahoo.es">michaelalar@yahoo.es</a>         |
|                             | Consultant - Conflict, Security and Development Team                   |
|                             | The World Bank Philippine Office                                       |
| Alcazar, Angelina           | <a href="mailto:aalcazar@mc.edu.ph">aalcazar@mc.edu.ph</a>             |
|                             | Associate Dean for Student Affairs/Member                              |
|                             | Miriam College/APNIEVE                                                 |
| Alonto-Sinarimbo, Rosslaini | <a href="mailto:rosslaini@hotmail.com">rosslaini@hotmail.com</a>       |
|                             | Ph.D. Student                                                          |
|                             | Cotabato City State Polytechnic College                                |
| Amante, Helen               | <a href="mailto:hamante@ateneo.edu">hamante@ateneo.edu</a>             |
|                             | Faculty                                                                |
|                             | Ateneo de Manila University Grade School                               |
| Ampis, Mark King Cornel     | HS Faculty                                                             |
|                             | Miriam College HS, Dept. Of Social Sciences                            |
| Anayatin, Susana            | <a href="mailto:sys_anayatin@yahoo.com">sys_anayatin@yahoo.com</a>     |
|                             | Visiting Lecturer on Peace and Development                             |
|                             | MSU, Maguindanao and Cotabato City State Polytechnic College           |
| Aranzanso, Dary Jules       | HS Faculty                                                             |
|                             | Miriam College HS, Dept. Of Arts and Humanities                        |
| Arviola, Serafin            | <a href="mailto:pnucte@gmail.com">pnucte@gmail.com</a>                 |
|                             | Director, Center for Transformative Education                          |
|                             | Philippine Normal University                                           |
| Atilano, Espiridion         | <a href="mailto:atilanoespd@adzu.edu.ph">atilanoespd@adzu.edu.ph</a>   |
|                             | Peace Education Coordinator                                            |
|                             | Peace Institute, Ateneo de Zamboanga University                        |
| Balili, Lorenzo             | <a href="mailto:backstory62@gmail.com">backstory62@gmail.com</a>       |
|                             | Quality Assurance Officer                                              |
|                             | Davao Central College                                                  |
| Betita, Venus               | <a href="mailto:betita@forumZFD.de">betita@forumZFD.de</a>             |
|                             | Project Officer                                                        |
|                             | Forum ZFD                                                              |
| Cantallopez, Estrella       | <a href="mailto:ecantallopez@yahoo.com">ecantallopez@yahoo.com</a>     |
|                             | Director, Community Extension                                          |
|                             | Cotabato City State Polytechnic College                                |

*Appendix 2: FORUM PARTICIPANTS*

| NAME                    | EMAIL ADDRESS / POSITION / ORGANIZATION                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Carumba, Amabella       | <a href="mailto:acarumba@master.upeace.org">acarumba@master.upeace.org</a>               |
|                         | Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement                                                          |
| Catudan, James Marc     | HS Faculty                                                                               |
|                         | Miriam College HS, Dept. Of Business and Trade                                           |
| Cawagas, Virginia       | <a href="mailto:vcawagas@upeace.org">vcawagas@upeace.org</a>                             |
|                         | Coordinator MA Peace Education                                                           |
|                         | University for Peace Costa Rica                                                          |
| Cedeño, Marita, Sr.     | <a href="mailto:tamaritsfma@yahoo.com">tamaritsfma@yahoo.com</a>                         |
|                         | Salesian Sister                                                                          |
|                         | Salesian Sister of Don Bosco                                                             |
| Chua, Wilson            | Founding Member, Angel C. Palanca Peace Program Foundation                               |
|                         | Far Eastern University                                                                   |
| Debide, Arvin           | <a href="mailto:vhinzester@yahoo.com">vhinzester@yahoo.com</a>                           |
|                         | Peace Education Coordinator                                                              |
|                         | Nagdilaab Foundation Inc.                                                                |
| De Felipe, Ian Romeo B. | <a href="mailto:ianromeodefelipe_acp3fi@yahoo.com">ianromeodefelipe_acp3fi@yahoo.com</a> |
|                         | Program Coordinator, Angel C. Palanca Peace Program Foundation                           |
|                         | Far Eastern University                                                                   |
| De la Rita, Gail        | <a href="mailto:gdelarita@xu.edu.ph">gdelarita@xu.edu.ph</a>                             |
|                         | Former Program Director                                                                  |
|                         | Xavier Peace Center                                                                      |
| De la Cruz, Arlan       | <a href="mailto:adelacruz@hau.edu.ph">adelacruz@hau.edu.ph</a>                           |
|                         | Chairperson, Department of Social Science and Philosophy                                 |
|                         | Holy Angel University, Angeles, Pampanga                                                 |
| Dela Cruz, Renato       | <a href="mailto:rdelacruz@mc.edu.ph">rdelacruz@mc.edu.ph</a>                             |
|                         | Faculty                                                                                  |
|                         | Miriam College                                                                           |
| Domes, Manuel           | <a href="mailto:domes@forumzfd.de">domes@forumzfd.de</a>                                 |
|                         | Project Manager                                                                          |
|                         | Forum ZFD                                                                                |
| Durante, Ofelia         | <a href="mailto:bingdurante@gmail.com">bingdurante@gmail.com</a>                         |
|                         | Consultant                                                                               |
|                         | Institute for Autonomy and Governance                                                    |
| Fernandez, Bernadette   | <a href="mailto:thaedab@gmail.com">thaedab@gmail.com</a>                                 |
|                         | Head Secretariat                                                                         |
|                         | Teach Peace Build Peace Movement                                                         |
| Fiesta, Margie          | University Counselor                                                                     |
| Galang-Reyes, Gail      | <a href="mailto:ggalang@mc.edu.ph">ggalang@mc.edu.ph</a>                                 |
|                         | Director, IPPO                                                                           |
|                         | Miriam College                                                                           |
| Garon, Emerita          | <a href="mailto:emmy_i_garon@yahoo.com">emmy_i_garon@yahoo.com</a>                       |
|                         | President                                                                                |
|                         | World Council for Curriculum and Instruction WCCI                                        |
| Generoso, Chito         | <a href="mailto:iccnrcvg@yahoo.com">iccnrcvg@yahoo.com</a>                               |
|                         | Co-Director                                                                              |
|                         | Interfaith Center for a Culture of Nonviolence (ICCN)                                    |

# Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines: Stories of Hope and Challenges

| NAME                         | EMAIL ADDRESS / POSITION / ORGANIZATION              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Guingona-Africa, Marites     | Shekinah8@gmail.com                                  |
|                              | Founder                                              |
|                              | The Peacemakers Circle                               |
| Gutang, Marco                | mgutang@yahoo.com                                    |
|                              | Trainer                                              |
|                              | Angel C. Palanca Peace Program Foundation            |
| Kozaki, Chiho                | ckozaki@master.upeace.org                            |
|                              | Graduate Student                                     |
|                              | UPEACE/Ateneo Dual Programme                         |
| Kupang, Genevieve            | geniebk2000@gmail.com                                |
|                              | Head                                                 |
|                              | Institutional Research, St. Paul College, Pasig      |
| Kupang, Ina Lucy B.          | Student                                              |
| Lambio, Emily                | lambioems@yahoo.com                                  |
|                              | Consultant                                           |
|                              | DepED-Basic Education Sector BEST                    |
| Lamorena, Melinda            | mlamorena@mc.edu.ph                                  |
|                              | Faculty                                              |
|                              | Miriam College Grade School                          |
| Lao, Christine               | clao@mc.edu.ph                                       |
|                              | Faculty                                              |
|                              | Miriam College                                       |
| Ledesma, Perla               | ledesmapers@adzu.edu.ph                              |
|                              | Director                                             |
|                              | Peace Institute, Ateneo de Zamboanga University      |
| Limpin, Abigail Praise       | abilimpin@gmail.com                                  |
|                              | Peace Integration and Children for Peace Team Leader |
|                              | Teach Peace Build Peace Movement                     |
| Lim-Yuson, Nina              | nlyuson@gmail.com                                    |
|                              | Executive Director                                   |
|                              | Museo Pambata                                        |
| Ly, Bunthea                  | bly@master.upeace.org                                |
|                              | Graduate Student                                     |
|                              | UPEACE/ Ateneo Dual Programme                        |
| Mabunga, Ronald Allan, Ph.D. | mabunga.ras@pnu.edu.ph                               |
|                              | Professor                                            |
|                              | Peace Education, Philippine Normal University        |
| Midtanggai, Aisha            | cute_cushama@yahoo.com                               |
|                              | Ph.D. Student                                        |
|                              | Cotabato City State Polytechnic College              |
| Mizuno, Maya                 | mmizuno@master.upeace.org                            |
|                              | Graduate Student                                     |
|                              | UPEACE/Ateneo Dual Programme                         |
| Nario-Galace, Jasmin         | jasminnariogalace@gmail.com                          |
|                              | Executive Director                                   |
|                              | Center for Peace Education - Miriam College          |

*Appendix 2: FORUM PARTICIPANTS*

| NAME                    | EMAIL ADDRESS / POSITION / ORGANIZATION                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Noel, Arnold Maria Sr.  | Mindanao Solidarity Network                                                              |
| Orozco, Beverly         | <a href="mailto:bevorozco@gmail.com">bevorozco@gmail.com</a>                             |
|                         | Program Director                                                                         |
|                         | Generation Peace                                                                         |
| Pedrajas, Teresita      | <a href="mailto:titzmaria@yahoo.com">titzmaria@yahoo.com</a>                             |
|                         | President                                                                                |
|                         | World Council for Curriculum and Instruction                                             |
| Perez, Josephine        | <a href="mailto:josephine.perez2012@gmail.com">josephine.perez2012@gmail.com</a>         |
|                         | Program Director                                                                         |
|                         | Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute                                                        |
| Quilala, Dennis         | <a href="mailto:d_quilala@yahoo.com.sg">d_quilala@yahoo.com.sg</a>                       |
|                         | Assistant Professor                                                                      |
|                         | Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines                           |
| Quiriones, Alfrein      |                                                                                          |
| Rebollos, Grace         | <a href="mailto:rebollos@wmsu.edu.ph">rebollos@wmsu.edu.ph</a>                           |
|                         | Vice President                                                                           |
|                         | PAZ                                                                                      |
| Robles, Jean Alia       | <a href="mailto:aliajean02@yahoo.com">aliajean02@yahoo.com</a>                           |
|                         | Deputy of the Asst. Chief of Staff for Ed., Plans and Programs                           |
|                         | Philippine Military Academy                                                              |
| Santander, Rezamie      | Staff                                                                                    |
| Salam, Norodin, Dr.     | <a href="mailto:norissalam@yahoo.com">norissalam@yahoo.com</a>                           |
|                         | Director, Peace Center                                                                   |
|                         | Cotabato City State Polytechnic College                                                  |
| Sevilla, Ester          | <a href="mailto:estersevilla@yahoo.com">estersevilla@yahoo.com</a>                       |
|                         | Peace Educator                                                                           |
| Sumndad Usman, Rohaniza | <a href="mailto:sumndadusman.teachpeace@gmail.com">sumndadusman.teachpeace@gmail.com</a> |
|                         | Founder                                                                                  |
|                         | Teach Peace Build Peace Movement                                                         |
| Tañada, Karen           | <a href="mailto:ktanada@gmail.com">ktanada@gmail.com</a>                                 |
|                         | Executive Director                                                                       |
|                         | Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute                                                        |
| Tica, Mirma Mae         | <a href="mailto:mtica@mc.edu.ph">mtica@mc.edu.ph</a>                                     |
|                         | Board Member                                                                             |
|                         | Pax Christi Pilipinas                                                                    |
| Toh Swee-Hin            | <a href="mailto:stoh@upeace.org">stoh@upeace.org</a>                                     |
|                         | Head, Department of Peace & Conflict Studies                                             |
|                         | University for Peace Costa Rica                                                          |
| Tubilla, Babylyn        | <a href="mailto:tubillababv@adzu.edu.ph">tubillababv@adzu.edu.ph</a>                     |
|                         | Director, Grade School Peace Institute                                                   |
|                         | Ateneo de Zamboanga University                                                           |
| Tuga, Bert, Dr.         | <a href="mailto:tuga.bj@pnu.edu.ph">tuga.bj@pnu.edu.ph</a>                               |
|                         | Campus Executive Director and Provost                                                    |
|                         | Philippine Normal University Visayas                                                     |
| Ututalum, Jaimelyn, Dr. | <a href="mailto:Janena05@yahoo.com.ph">Janena05@yahoo.com.ph</a>                         |
|                         | Chairperson, Peace & Development                                                         |
|                         | Cotabato City State Polytechnic College                                                  |
| Villafuerte, Jaime      | <a href="mailto:jetv4a@gmail.com">jetv4a@gmail.com</a>                                   |
|                         | Faculty                                                                                  |
|                         | High School Department, Miriam College                                                   |

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# Three Decades of Peace Education in the Philippines

## Stories of Hope and Challenges

The PEN is a loose network of organizations and educational institutions throughout the country that undertake peace education or are keenly interested in promoting education for peace and non-violence in either the school system or through the community-based or alternative learning system

**Loreta Castro, Center for Peace Education**

My story is not mine alone. This is the story of many peace educators and advocates from the communities, whose stories never see print, nor are they shared in public fora. This is the story of the Indigenous Peoples, the Bangsamoro and the Mindanao migrants and their descendants who continue to weave pathways to peace despite the odds that they may face every day.

**Amabella Carumba, Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement**

In peace education, the learning process is important in designing the program. As peace educators, it is important not to be grim but rather to be determined about changing the mindset of the youth by setting an example -- living the values and passion of a peace educator and advocate.

**Generation Peace Youth Network.**

In the course of this peace building journey, we have learned that there is no standard way or approach to teaching peace. Neither is there a single formula for peace advocacy and work towards the promotion of justice and development for the greater good. It is always dependent on the needs and the current realities of those whose ways of thinking we seek to change.

**Arlene Ledesma, et al, Ateneo de Zamboanga University**

I realize that for peace education to be meaningful and attractive to people everywhere, we must begin to educate people from here where they are -- rooted in the realities of their lives -- and, from here encourage the practice of jihad al-nafs or inner work for self-awareness and transformation so that peacebuilding will be a natural expression of hearts that are deeply listening and able to respond to the challenges around us out of love and not of fear.

**Marites Africa Guingona, The Peacemakers Circle**

If we don't act now to nurture the sensitivity of our children to manifestations of violence (i.e. corruption, poverty, gender inequality, human made environmental degradation, prejudice against minority groups, marginalization of indigenous people, etc.) and equip them with the skills to proactively address them and build a culture of peace, then we lose an opportunity to break the cycle of violence for the next generation.

**Emily T. Lambio, Dept. of Education**

The great challenge of today is how to motivate the new generation to be "radical" for something good that can inspire them. How do we tell the youth of today, and all in general, that we are part of the same human family? Thus, we have to welcome and love people of all cultures and religions and our love has to be for all, giving attention to the less privileged of society.

**Sebastiano D'Ambra, Silsilah Dialogue**

While not trivializing justice issues, many small community conflicts can be resolved without prejudices, biases, and without the intervention, either by warlord politicians or by partisan ideologues who may agitate the situation to escalate the conflict for political ends.

**Chito Generoso, Interfaith Center for a Culture of Nonviolence (ICCN)**



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