Community Development Animating Peacebuilding from Below: The Case of GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace in Pikit, North Cotabato

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The paper explores ways by which Community Development (CD) principles and strategies can animate community-based peacebuilding as lens with which to comprehend the latter's dynamics and as means to facilitate its formation. This exploration was done by culling out insights from the experience of GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace. Inversely, the paper also looked at the ways by which CD strategies could be shaped by a situation of large scale violence amidst communities striving to build peace. The paper recommends ways by which community-based peacebuilding can be institutionalized through the mechanisms of community governance and how as a local initiative, it can possibly become the foundation for national level peacebuilding - thus, Peacebuilding from Below.

Keywords: peacebuilding from below, community development, space for peace

Introduction

Armed conflicts cause enormous and far reaching social, economic, political and psychological consequences to civilian population and institutions. Therefore, it makes the resolution of armed conflict and bringing about peace a concern of all citizens. However, under the prevailing approach to resolving armed conflicts, the power and responsibility is exclusively assumed by the state. Oda (2007) attributes this to the ideology of modern nation state. Under such approach,

referred to as "elite pact-making" (Barnes, 2002, p.7) or "state centric peacemaking" (Oda, 2007, p.6), it is mainly the state and its counterpart armed opposition that decide on the terms by which the armed conflict will be resolved into a peace settlement. Peace in this context is defined primarily from the notion of security of the warring parties (Conteh-Morgan, 2005).

This approach generally excludes the views, and does not provide for participation of ordinary citizens, especially those directly experiencing the consequences of armed conflicts. Their contribution to bring about peace, no matter how significant, is often not accounted for. In many cases they are merely regarded as recipients of aid and services necessary to cope with effects of armed conflicts.

During the past two decades, however, the literature on peace and conflict were devoted to highlighting the initiatives of citizens in facilitating community level peace processes and influencing national level ones. These initiatives promote a paradigm shift from national security to human security in proposing solutions to armed conflicts. As such, they emphasize principles like justice and equity, human rights, reconciliation, inclusiveness, people's participation and sustainable development (Accord, 2002; Barnes, 2002; Barnes, 2005; Coronel-Ferrer, 2005; Hancock & Mitchell, 2007; Lederach, 1997; Mitchell 2002; Oda, 2007; Ramsbotham, Miall & Woodhouse, 2011; Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001; Santos, 2005; Van Tongeren, Brenk & Verhoeven, 2005.

The growing assertion of the citizens' right to intervene in national level peace processes is further legitimized by increased support for capacity building of local communities and civil society organizations from local and international development organizations.

This study seeks to contribute to theorizing on peacebuilding initiated by the citizens, particularly community and civil society. It will do so by exploring ways by which Community Development can serve as framework to facilitate and understand the dynamics of Peacebuilding from below.

Conceptual Terrain

Basic concepts on Peacebuilding, Peacebuilding from Below and Zones of Peace will be discussed in this section. It will then look at the elements and the role of Community Development in facilitating Peacebuilding from Below.

Peacebuilding

Galtung (1996) coined Peacebuilding as a new response to large scale conflicts and distinguished it from *Peacekeeping* (managing conflict and preventing its escalation) and *Peacemaking* (resolving conflict to the satisfaction of the parties) (Oda, 2007; Brunk, 2012; Miall, 2004; Ramsbotham, et al., 2011). This new response seeks to transform the social environment that generates or perpetuates violent conflicts and the conflict structure or what Galtung (1996) refers to as conflict triad of *Attitude, Behavior and Contradiction* (Mitchell, 2002; Ramsbotham, et al., 2011).

Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) built on Galtung and popularized Peacebuilding as a post conflict framework that seeks to "identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (para 21).

Lederach (1997) however, proposed a more comprehensive definition of Peacebuilding as one that "encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships" (p. 20). Skrabalo (2003) expounds on the concept further as creating just power relations and "new social meanings that do not reproduce those social patterns and regimes of truth that were predominant before and during the acute stage of conflict" (p. 5). Spence (as cited in Lambourne, 2004) describes it as focusing on the "root causes of conflict, rather than just the effects; support the rebuilding and rehabilitation of all sectors of war-torn society; encourage and support interaction between all sectors of society in order to repair damaged relations and start the process of restoring dignity and trust" (p. 3).
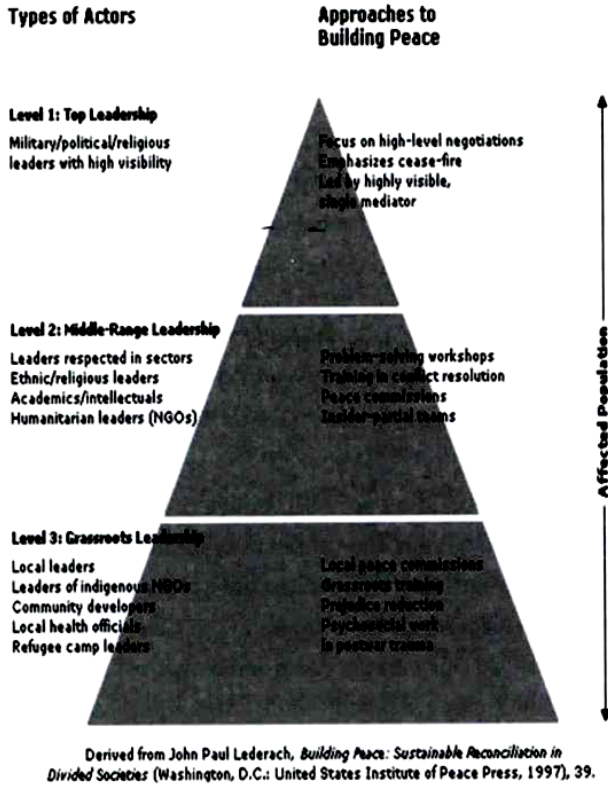
On the whole, Peacebuilding aims to confront and transform perceptual, relational, structural, and cultural/ideological conditions that create or perpetuate violence to create sustained peace (Coronel-Ferrer, 2005). This process is undergirded by values like human rights, justice, equality, self determination, ecological integrity, equitable economy and sustainable development (Barash & Webel, 2002). The outcome of Peacebuilding is a social condition referred to as *positive peace* or one resulting from transformation of social/cultural structures (Barash & Webel, 2002; Brunk, 2012; Galtung, 2012) and brings about objective and subjective security (Reychler, 2001).

Peacebuilding from Below

But as Peacebuilding has been initiated by players from various levels and influenced by the politics and resources of initiating institutions, it becomes necessary to emphasize civil society and grassroots institutions as primary and animating actors (Accord, 2002; Gwerc, 2006; Oda, 2007; Miall, et al., 1999; Ramsbotham et al., 2011) since the depth and breadth of war are most felt by local grassroots communities (Mckeon, 2003). This dimension of Peacebuilding is referred to as *Peacebuilding from Below* (Lederach, 1997; Miall, et al., 1999; Mitchell, 2002; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Conteh-Morgan (2005) suggests that through Peacebuilding from Below the lived experiences and perspectives of local communities could become the agenda of national level peacebuilding.

Lederach (1997), through his *Pyramid of Actors and Approaches*, expounds on the process by which Peacebuilding efforts by grassroots and civil society can influence higher level efforts by the state and opposing party (refer to Figure 1). The framework presents the levels by which violent conflict affects populations in societies and the corresponding types of actors and leaders and the roles each level plays in building peace.

Types of Actors

Approaches to Building Peace

Level 1: Top Leadership

Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility

Focus on high-level negotiations
Emphasizes cease-fire
Led by highly visible, single mediator

Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership

Leaders respected in sectors
Ethnic/religious leaders
Academics/intellectuals
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Problem-solving workshops
Training in conflict resolution
Peace commissions
Insider-partial teams

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership

Local leaders
Leaders of indigenous NGOs
Community developers
Local health officials
Refugee camp leaders

Local peace commissions
Grassroots training
Prejudice reduction
Psychosocial work
in postwar trauma

Affected Population

Derived from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

Figure 1: Lederach's Pyramid of Actors and Approaches (1997)

To summarize, Peacebuilding from Below refers to any peacebuilding effort that is initiated or led by the local communities and citizens/civil society organizations that are caught in the midst of violence. Its ultimate goal is to influence higher level peace processes and policies by building on the lived experiences, institutions and accumulated knowledge of local communities. It requires building local capacities and strengthening local institutions that could facilitate peacebuilding.

Zone of Peace

A zone of peace (ZOP) is a mechanism through which communities caught in the midst of violent conflicts declare their areas as *off limits* to combat

activities by the contending armed forces (Mitchell, 2007). The community negotiates with the armed forces to observe certain norms of conduct, policies, or practices that will ensure the safety or security of people within a particular territory or zone. The goal of ZOP can range from being able to manage or control violence in a locality, to contribute to transformation of conditions that cause or perpetuate violence in the larger society (Coronel-Ferrer, 2005; Hancock & Iyer, 2007).

The Philippine Experience. In the Philippines, the ZOPs or more generally referred to as Peace Zones, were established in response to the adverse effects to outlying communities of hostilities between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP/NPA) and between the AFP and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Avruch & Jose, 2007; Coronel-Ferrer, 2006; Santos, 2005), which often led to deaths and injuries to non-combatants, destruction of livelihoods and properties, internal displacements, and forced recruitment among local residents.

The first wave of building Peace Zones occurred from 1988 -1991 in the context of conflict between the CPP/NPA and the AFP. Among the areas declared as Peace Zones were Naga City in Bicol, Candonia in Negros Occidental, Sagada in Mountain Province, Tabuk in Kalinga, and Tulunan in North Cotabato. The Peace Zones were initiated by combined grassroots communities and civil society organizations (Avruch & Jose, 2007; Coronel-Ferrer, 2006; Santos, 2005).

The next wave of building Peace Zones occurred during the period 2000-2005 mainly in the context of conflict between the MILF and AFP in Central Mindanao, specifically in the provinces of North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat (Avruch & Jose, 2007; Coronel Ferrer, 2006; Santos, 2005). The fierce clashes especially during President Joseph Estrada's All- Out -War Policy in 2000[1] and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's Buliok Complex[2] offensive in 2003 caused massive and widespread internal displacements. It pushed the communities and their support organizations to intensify building of Peace Zones.

Santos (2005) notes that while the Peace Zones were initially established to secure local communities, they eventually aimed to contribute to higher level peace process and building peace constituency. Thus, from two decades of experience, a definition of Peace Zone evolved, to wit: *"a people initiated, community-based arrangement in a local geographical area which residents themselves declare to be off-limits to armed conflict primarily to protect the civilians, livelihood and property there and also to contribute to the more comprehensive peace process"* (Santos, 2005, p.10).

Community Development (CD) in Situation of Armed Conflict and Emergencies

The role of community development (CD) in facilitating Peacebuilding from Below can be drawn from the Community-based Development (CBD) approach. CBD shifts the locus of power from the elite to the people or the community through redistributive and devolutionary measures (Ferrer, 2006). It is anchored on two principles, i.e. "people should really be primarily at the forefront of development endeavors, and the central organ of power should involve and engage its communities in the decision making processes affecting their social, community and economic development" (p.272). Its focus is to bring about development or social change that primarily addresses communities' interest and needs and which the communities can manage. At its core is building the community's capacity to analyze its problems and needs, define and build solutions and chart its development path. As CBD leads to institutionalization of the following systems or capacities, namely *community leadership, community empowerment and community ownership*, it becomes the platform for exercising *community governance* (p.23).

For CD-CBD to become facilitative of Peacebuilding from Below, its strategies of Development Education, Community Organizing, Community-based Resource Management, and Advocacy (Bawagan & Luna, 2009; Luna, 2009) need to be contextualized to situations of massive violence brought about by armed conflict in communities striving to build peace.

Research Methodology

This paper sought to apply CD-CBD principles as lens for understanding the dynamics of a community-based peacebuilding initiative. It will try to distill the principles and strategies that resonate with or correspond to CD-CBD and which animates community-based peacebuilding. It will then explore how CD-CBD can make community-based peacebuilding serve the goal of Peacebuilding from Below.

The research used case study method through the experience of GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace in Pikit, North Cotabato. In undertaking such, the author relied on secondary sources, field observations and semi-structured interviews with persons who were involved with or knowledgeable on GiNaPaLaDTaKa program. Most of these interviews and field observations were conducted during a field visit in GiNaPaLaDTaKa areas and nearby towns of North Cotabato by the author and his class of Community Development 227 (Community-based Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Strategies) in the University of the Philippines in February 2013.

GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace

Background

The municipality of Pikit, in North Cotabato, Central Mindanao was founded in 1913 as a colony for Cebuanos who migrated to Mindanao during the American period. It was then made a resettlement for farmers of Luzon and Visayas prior to World War II. It is bounded by Municipality of Aleosan in the North, Municipality of Pagalungan, Maguindanao in the South, Liguasan Marsh in the West and Municipality of Kabacan in the East. It is located 72 kms. west of Cotabato City. Pikit is a Maguindanaoan word for "connected hills" (Anasarias, 2008, p. 80).

The areas referred to in the study are the seven barangays that comprise the GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace project - *Ginatilan, Nalapaan, Panicupan,*

Lagunde, Dalengaoen, Takepan, and Kalakakan. The barangays are populated by people of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds such as Maguindanaoans (Muslims), Bisaya and Ilocanos (Christians) and Manobos (Lumads). The Maguindanaoans comprise 85% of the population (Anasarias, 2008, p. 79). The total population of the seven barangays estimated at 10,000 in 2008 represents 15% of the total Pikit population (Anasarias, 2008, p. 100).

History of Peaceful Relationship

The Muslims, Christians and Lumads in Pikit share a long history of peaceful relationship (Iyer, 2004). They enjoyed neighborly relationships and accepted religious differences. Local kinship developed strongly not only on the basis of genealogy but also through affinity and cultural bonding. In fact, intermarriage was common (Anasarias, 2008).

Community Life Shattered

In the late 60s, Pikit experienced atrocities perpetrated by paramilitary groups such as the *Ilaga,* which was formed by a segment of the Christian population to fight the Muslims in response to the Mindanao Independence Movement. On the other hand, the *Blackshirts and Barracudas* were formed by a segment of the Muslim population in retaliation to the *Ilagas.* Both groups preyed on civilian population and were used by local and national politicians for their personal ends (Gaspar, Lapad & Maravilla, 2002; Kaufman, 2007; Picardal, 2008). This shattered the harmonious relationship and kinship ties between the Muslims and Christians in Pikit and nearby towns. Memories of atrocities were passed on to succeeding generations, thus creating distrust and prejudices against each other.

From the 70s onward, Pikit became an arena of heavy clashes between the Government (AFP) and secessionist forces (MNLF and later MILF). But what the present residents remember most are three intense and large scale clashes between the MILF and AFP in 1997, 2000 and 2003 (Anasarias, 2008; Gamboa

Interview, 2013, Santos, 2005). It caused deaths, destructions and repeated evacuation of the communities, the most massive of which was in 2000, during President Estrada's All Out War policy against the MILF. It displaced about 60,000 individuals, or about 60% of the population of Pikit. Of these, 40% were children (Anasarias, 2008, p. 79; Gamboa Interview, 2013). The residents sought shelter in the town center and nearby towns. The evacuation usually lasted for an average of six months.

Developmental Response: From Conflict Sensitive Relief and Rehabilitation to Community-based Peacebuilding

In response to the humanitarian crisis spawned by the 1997 hostilities, the Immaculate Conception (IMC) Parish of Pikit under the leadership of Fr. Bert Layson OMI, and the Oblates Missionary Foundation-Interreligious Dialogue (OMF-IRD), organized relief operations among the displaced residents. However, the effort was initially hampered by the Muslim's mistrust of the Christian initiative (Gamboa Interview, 2013). Moreover, the Christian parishioners refused to use congregational fund for non-Christians (RAFI, 2011). This prompted the OMF-IRD to embark on confidence building processes for both groups, ensuring all efforts are conflict-sensitive. The effort eventually paid off with both Muslims and Christians working together. The initiative also reached out to the Manobo Lumads who have experienced exploitation from Christians and Muslims.

The IMC-OMF-IRD embarked on rehabilitation work as soon as the "*bakwits*" (from the word "evacuate" and by which the evacuees fleeing war have been known) returned to their communities. The effort was aptly referred to as "rehabilitation in the midst of the war" as this was done while the war still raged and threats of destruction and displacement loomed (Gamboa Interview, 2013).

During the 2000 war, the rehabilitation work included disaster risk reduction, human rights education and psychosocial services. The latter was meant to address the "invisible damages" (Gamboa Interview, 2013) of anger, hatred, prejudice, and trauma experienced by the residents and which if left unaddressed

may reproduce more violence. At the same time, negotiation for ceasefire between the AFP and MILF and lobbying for LGUs support to the rehabilitation work were conducted.

Culture of Peace as Means for Rebuilding the Community

To facilitate restoration and rebuilding of shattered community life among the Muslims, Christians and Lumads, the OMF-IRD embarked on a Culture of Peace (COP) program along with rehabilitation. The COP is based on *Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw* (Cebuano Visayan term for "Encounter/Dialogue for Peace"), a "Basic Orientation Manual Towards a Culture of Peace for Communities of Mindanao" (UNICEF, 1998). The COP aims to facilitate restoration of trust, cooperation and sense of community among the Muslim Christian and Lumad populations (referred to as tri-people)[3]. The COP was founded on multi-culturalism, non-discrimination, solidarity and participation (Anasarias, 2008).

At the core of COP is Peace Education which aims to enable participants to arrive at a common understanding of the tri-people history of Mindanao and how they were separated by historical conflict, arrive at a shared vision of peace, and resolve to become agents of peace in their communities. According to Iyer (2004), the COP presents the current conflict as opportunity for growth and transformation. The course includes the following topics: the history of Mindanao; prejudice reduction and understanding; skills on conflict management and resolution; negotiation and communication; inter-religious dialogue; role of religion in conflict and peace; and, peace values. The COP sessions invoked the long history of kinship that bound the three groups until the 60s and how it can be developed and enhanced to restore peaceful relationships and vibrant community life (Anasarias Interview, 2013).

The leaders and community trainors were the first batch of COP participants. Later, the course was propagated among adults and children. School teachers were likewise trained to include COP in the curriculum (Gamboa Interview, 2013).

Outcomes of the Culture of Peace Program

The COP program, which consists of both seminars and actual opportunity for tri-people dialogue and cooperation, led to the following outcomes: restored community life as tri-people and a common vision of peace; building space for peace to institutionalize culture of peace; organizing children as zones of peace; and, recognizing religion / spirituality as a crucial resource in peacebuilding.

Restored Community life as tri-people and a common vision of peace. The COP led to the restoration of trust and friendly relationship among the three peoples. Respect for each other's religion/beliefs and other cultural distinctives now prevails. Appropriate conflict management/resolution and adjudication systems to address inter-people and intra-people disputes that complement the official barangay dispute resolution process were also installed (Anasarias Interview, 2013; Gamboa Interview, 2013; Leaders Interview, 2013).

The restoration of tri-people harmony is best expressed through the People's Declaration (2004) which articulates the shared vision of peace and prosperity.

"Pangarap namin na wala nang mang-aapi at walang maaapi. Maibabalik ang magandang pagkakakilanlan at pagtitiwala sa isa't isa. Maghahari ang pagmamahalan, pagpapatawad at pagtanggap sa mga pagkakamali. Magiging makatotohanan ang bawa't isa sa kani-kaniyang paniniwala, kultura't relihiyon".

(We dream of a life where there will be no more oppressors and oppressed. We aspire to restore our trust towards one another. We seek to rebuild our community life where love reigns, and where there is forgiveness and recognition of mistakes. We strive to build our community on good moral principles where one is faithful to one's religion and culture".) (Translation by Berliner, Anasarias & de Casas Soberon, 2010, p. 5)

Building space for peace to institutionalize the culture of peace. Another major outcome of COP is establishment of a collective peace zone (commonly referred to by NGOs as Space for Peace and will be the term used here). Through this initiative, the communities appealed to the AFP, MILF and all armed groups to respect the areas as *off limits* to any combat activities. Within the Space for Peace members of any armed group can pass through or even become part of the community and participate in the maintenance of peace. However, they can not undertake any hostile or combat-related activity while staying within the territory.

The Space for Peace is designed as a "space where displaced people could return and rebuild their community" (Santos, 2005, p. 7) where there is opportunity for children to go to school, for livelihoods to be attended to, and for NGOs to assist in the rebuilding process (Iyer, 2004).

The creation of Space for Peace in 2000 in Barangay Nalapaan was facilitated by Fr. Bert Layson, OMI. During the heavy fighting between MILF and the AFP in Pikit in 2003, the Space for Peace was respected by both groups. While most of Pikit were turned into war zones and about two thirds of the population evacuated, Nalapaan was spared from the fighting. Despite minimum evacuation, the residents remained alert and vigilant (Anasarias, 2008; Iyer, 2004; Leaders Interview, 2013; Santos, 2005). The residents established community managed systems to monitor the security situation and negotiate with any armed group attempting to conduct combat-related activities in the community.

The resulting relatively peaceful condition in Nalapaan attracted livelihood projects such as distribution of seeds, farm tools and goats and infrastructure support such as reconstruction of main road and water line from government and international organizations (Wortz, n.d., p. 9).

Inspired by the gains of the Nalapaan's Space for Peace, six nearby barangays most severely affected by the war, namely Ginatilan, Panicupan, Lagunde, Dalengaoen, Takepan, and Kalakakan decided to join Nalapaan's Space for Peace. The seven barangays called their collective Space for Peace GiNaPaLaDTaKa, the

acronym consisting of the first syllables of their barangays. It literally means "I bless You" (Anasarias, 2008, p. 103). Several civil society organizations such as OMF-IRD/ICP and Balay Rehabilitation Center supported this initiative.

The GiNaPaLaDTaKa was formally launched on November 29, 2004 in Barangay Takepan through a formal declaration of peace and unity. Representatives of the MILF, the Philippine Army, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and various NGOs, church organizations and media attended the ceremony. The municipal council of Pikit endorsed GiNaPaLaDTaKa (Municipality of Pikit, 2004)

The Declaration, entitled *People's Declaration: GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace and Children as Zones of Peace* expresses the communities' aspiration for peace. It traces the history and dynamics of peaceful community life and how such was shattered by wars. The Declaration enumerates the economic, political, social, cultural sufferings that they experienced as a result of those violent episodes. In declaring Space for Peace and Children as Zones of Peace, the communities called on the various armed groups, local and national government officials, NGOs, media and religious organizations to respect their desire for peace. The Declaration concludes with the vision of peace mentioned above (People's Declaration, 2004).

A Council for Peace composed of representatives of each barangay Space for Peace Council and which has a tri-people character leads the GiNaPaLaDTaKa. The Council held consultations down to the household level on the communities' vision of peace and negotiated with the AFP and MILF to respect the Space for Peace. It also led the campaign for support from the general public for the peace activities. It is through the Council that the communities participated in campaigns to influence the conduct and agenda of the peace negotiation between the Philippine Government (GPH) and MILF.

Organizing children as zones of peace. As almost half of the affected population were children and youth (18 years and below), a program that aimed to provide them with "physical, emotional, social, cultural and developmental

space within the Space for Peace" (Anasarias, 2008, p. 148) was developed through the initiative of Balay Rehabilitation Center. Called Children as Zones of Peace (CZOP), the program was developed along with the creation of and to complement the Space for Peace. It worked for protection, trauma healing and reconciliation and development among the children and youth. It enabled them to articulate their views about violence and aspiration of a peaceful life. The program equipped them to participate in the communities' peacebuilding efforts. Among its major components is Peace Education through Culture of Peace seminars and inter-faith dialogues. Through the CZOP, youth and children effectively participated in crafting the GiNaPaLaDTaKa's peace agenda as embodied in the Declaration (Anasarias, 2008).

Recognizing religion/spirituality as crucial resource in community–based peacebuilding. The COP serves as the framework and fulcrum for peacebuilding in GiNaPalaDTaKa. At its core is recovery and enrichment of the people's sense of community before the violent episodes. This vision is very explicit in the People's Declaration. The communities anchor their hope for a tri-people community of peace by accepting each religious distinctive and from which they draw a common resource for peace.

"Kasama ang Diyos, si Allah at Magbabaya, nawa'y ang pagsisikap na ito ay magbunga ng kabutihan para sa ating lahat, ngayon at sa susunod pang mga henerasyon" (People's Declaration, 2004).

(With the blessings of Allah/Magbabaya/God, we hope that this endeavor will bear fruit for the good of all, today, and in the next generation of tri-people in Mindanao.) (translation by Berliner, et al., 2010, p. 5)

The study of Berliner, et al (2010) shows how religion and its stream of spiritualities and respect for religious distinctions serve as the core element from which the Culture of Peace was built on and sustained in GiNaPaLaDTaKa. Upon returning from evacuation centers, one of the first things the people did was to

rebuild religious or sacred places, an act that unequivocally points to the centrality of religion in their lives.

Impact of GiNaPaLaDTaKa

As of this writing, the GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace is holding. Special task forces, mostly composed of *Bantay ceasefire* (community volunteers who monitor compliance with ceasefire agreement between GPH and MILF), regularly monitor behavior of and negotiate with any armed groups seeking to pass through the area (Leaders Interview, 2013).

Plans are underway for nearby communities to embark on similar community-led peacebuilding. Balay Rehabilitation Center is presently doing the groundwork for this in the town of Aleosan (Anasarias interview, 2013).

In terms of influencing the peace process, GiNaPaLaDTaKa leaders participated in ground up efforts by civil society in Mindanao to influence the conduct and agenda of the peace negotiation between the GPH and MILF. Its participation was very pronounced during the campaign to resume the ceasefire and peace talks and to include civilian protection mechanism in the peace talk agenda (Anasarias interview, 2013).

Discussion / Analysis

The following is an attempt to cull out insights on community-based peacebuilding from the GiNaPaLaDTaKa experience. The principles, strategies as well as cultural resources that animate such experience are presented using the lens of CD-CBD.

Elements of GiNaPaLaDTaKa as a Community-based Peacebuilding initiative

GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace bears all features of being community-based, as follows: covered a particular geographic territory; initiated, declared

and being sustained by the residents of the community with assistance from NGOs and church-based organizations; motivated by firm conviction and vision of peace resulting from keen consultation and consensus among the communities; and, formally launched with a written declaration or resolution containing specific conditions and organized with implementing structures within the community (Avruch & Jose, 2007; Santos, 2005).

The vision of peace is not confined to its own localities but seeks to reach the whole of Mindanao society. It resulted from the community's reconstruction and collective understanding of their history and conflict context, present condition and from the meaning ascribed to the past and the present.

The critical role of CD-CBD in facilitating Community-based Peacebuilding

From GiNaPaLaDTaKa communities' exercise of community-based peacebuilding, the following CD-CBD strategies can be culled out:

a. Development Education (DE) in the Context of Peacebuilding

Generally, DE consists of three elements, namely development of awareness of one's value and entitlements, development of critical awareness and development of knowledge and skills necessary for managing development.

In peacebuilding context, DE will be crucial for communities to understand their entitlements to a life of security and peace as well as the right to participate in all decisions which have an impact on their lives. As such, a rights-based approach will be very helpful to create awareness among the communities of their guaranteed rights in situations of armed conflicts and emergencies and the duties of the primary duty bearers such as the State to uphold said rights.

However, it is worth noting how the GiNaPaLaDTaKa communities invoke this right to protection and security to both the AFP and MILF forces in

their Declaration. Rather than using what Anasarias (2008) refers to as "power persuasion approach and coercive diplomacy" (p. 60), the communities reframed their appeal by presenting the GiNaPalaDTaKa initiative as a way of strengthening the peace process. In effect, their appeal was for support to the efforts to redress the long suffering, restore relationship and livelihoods and build a peaceful environment. The Declaration was framed in a manner that regards the combatant forces as also stakeholders to peace.

Another critical component of DE is enhancing capacities of the community to analyze the causes, dynamics and consequences of armed conflicts and how these are intertwined with their over-all social conditions such as poverty. It includes tri-people perception of the conflict, historical roots of the conflict and analysis of the current situation.

DE in this context also included facilitating trauma awareness and healing, community reconciliation, development of peace enhancing values, and skills on mediation, negotiation, and advocacy and planning. This is well covered in the module Peacemaking and Challenges to Transformation and Development.

The tri-people approach to peace education proved to be a key element of the DE. It pays attention to surfacing the perception of each of the tri-people on the conflict and peace issues while challenging each group to listen. Dialoguing and coming to a shared vision of peace caps the process.

Under this approach, greater attention is given to the role of culture, especially religion and kinship ties and the shared values arising from them. From these values, the concept and vision of peace and harmonious community were derived. In this approach to building Culture of Peace, the education facilitators emphasized the use of self awareness techniques, dialogue, sharing of perceptions, appreciation of each other's cultural identity and facilitating common understanding of the conflict.

b. Community Organizing (CO) in the context of Peacebuilding

CO provides the structure or platform with which the community can collectively analyze their conflict condition, craft a vision of peace and work towards realizing such vision. Through their organization, they can work on day to day ameliorative and long term transformative actions.

Being adequately organized and publicly recognized can be leveraged by the communities to demand participation in decision making processes affecting their security and welfare, and to negotiate with forces that bear on their lives. In GiNaPaLaDTaKa, the communities capitalized on their being organized and having the support of the church, media, NGOs and LGU in appealing to the combatants to respect their Space for Peace.

In GiNaPaLaDTaKa, organizing was done to galvanize community consensus around peace. All social mobilizations were directed at minimizing the vulnerabilities of the population on one hand, and rebuilding shattered relationship on the other. It was a process of facilitating certain degree of transformation in the middle of armed conflict situation (Anasarias, 2008).

In building leadership structure i.e. Council of Peace, tri-people representation proved effective to ensure compliance by the residents and armed groups of the norms set within the communities. An example of this is the policy of having a member of each group to deal with its own security issue, e.g. Muslims dealing with Muslims.

Through organizing and networking, the communities and their civil society partners were able to form a moral and political presence that the military and other political forces found difficult to ignore.

c. Community-based Resource Management (CBRM) in the context of Peacebuilding

Through CBRM the communities were able to conduct an inventory of internal and external peace resources which will be used to address the consequences of conflicts and violence, build community solidarity, and achieve sustainable peace.

In GiNaPaLaDTaKa, CBRM was evident in the way the communities appreciated, harnessed and utilized these resources for building a Culture of Peace. Among the internal resources are resilience, cultural and spiritual values, kinship ties, history of neighborly relations and other forms of community ties. The external resources, on the other hand, include material and moral support from religious organizations and NGOs that are tri-people- oriented, e.g. from relief to rehabilitation to building Culture of Peace.

By themselves, the churches and mosques provided symbols of hope. It was mentioned above how upon returning to their communities from evacuation, one of the first things the community members did was to repair or restore their places of worship.

It can be concluded that the whole process of building Culture of Peace rested on being able to restore and strengthen a very important community resource, i.e. *social capital.* This generally refers to "institutions, relationships, attitudes, and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development" (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002, p. 2). In Peacebuilding context, it refers to "valuable social networks that one has and which one can tap on the basis of reciprocity" (Coronel-Ferrer, 2005, p. 60-61) which address violence and work towards peace.

d. Advocacy in the context of Peacebuilding

Advocacy aims to enable the community to influence public opinion and create a policy environment that is favorable to its peace programs.

GiNaPaLaDTaKa leaders advocated to local and national government policy makers such as the LGU and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the MILF leadership, media, and civil society organizations the merit of building Space for Peace. Moreover, beyond attending to its immediate security and peace issues, GiNaPaLaDTaKa participated in the efforts of the peace movement to influence the peace negotiation between the GPH and MILF.

The effort to contribute in influencing the content and conduct of the peace negotiation resonates with Lederach's *Pyramid of Leadership and Functions* illustrated above. Here, the GiNaPaLaDTaKa communities worked on the violence and peace issues at the grassroots level. By doing so, they were provided with facilitative and capacity building assistance by church organizations and NGOs, groups considered to be in the middle level. The latter, through their own networks can reach the upper level of leadership (GPH and MILF negotiators and principals), the wider public and the grassroots. They brought to the attention of the GPH, MILF and the general public the GiNaPaLaDTaKa initiative which enabled the latter to participate in the above mentioned peace negotiation related advocacy. The middle groups also equipped community members to serve as *Bantay Ceasefire*, a civilian volunteer group monitoring compliance to the terms of ceasefire between the GPH and MILF.

It can also be argued that the inclusion of Children as Zones of Peace in the Declaration added strength to the appeal to respect the Space for Peace. It effectively presented the parties to the conflict an example of how to locate children in their "politico-military scheme" (Anasarias, 2008, p. 220).

Notably, the GiNaPaLaDTaKa communities used culturally appropriate ways to frame their appeal to the AFP and MILF to respect their peace initiative. Thus, even the design of the ceremonial launching of GiNaPaLaDTaKa was rich in advocacy value. Its strong symbolic character cannot be underestimated.

Issues and challenges

A peace zone is an attempt to build a sanctuary that provides security and protection from violence. In GiNaPaLaDTaKa's case there is added opportunity to restore normalcy to the communities' lives and rebuild shattered relationships. Having born out of a unilateral declaration by its members, GiNaPaLaDTaKa faces, among others, the following challenges and issues pertaining to *sustainability*.

In this regard, the challenge for GiNaPaLaDTaKa is how to expand the **Inviolability** practice of Space for Peace to the widest and broadest geographic and social regions possible, starting from North Cotabato until it becomes a signific... that the norms that comprise a peace zone are respected by the combatant forces ... MILF and AFP, other armed groups and the civilian population within the zone. As the appeal for respect is based largely on moral and political persuasion, the decision to respect the zone is largely ... building processes appropriate for each level and offers a framework to contextualize CD-CBD in situations of armed conflict.

The challenge for GiNaPaLaDTaKa is how to sustain linkage with and support from influential groups such as civil society, media, church and international organizations that are capable of keeping the pressure on both parties to uphold community-initiated peace efforts ... need to be protected from the ravages of war. Its logic and the social processes that were established were defined by **Broadening of Peace Zone** ... that, the communities gained headway in restoring harmonious relationships among its tri-people population.

To prevent any peace zone initiative such as GiNaPaLaDTaKa from being concerned only with its security ... nearby communities, it should continue to broaden its geographic and social base. Isolation can increase its vulnerability and lead to its marginalization and to ... insignificance. Being perceived as concerned only with its own security interest can decrease support from peace advocacy groups, especially those who are critical of peace zones as "fostering piecemeal and even parochial concept of peace" (Santos, 2005 p. 8). Such can also create a wedge with, even invite animosity from, neighboring communities. There is at the moment others is a little to evidence that the GiNaPaLaDTaKa communities are expanding to nearby communities. Existing attempts are initiated by an NGO and independently by a GiNaPaLaDTaKa ... ment path.

Community leadership will focus on the formulation and dissemination of a vision of peace and development, and ensuring the broadest participation of community members in all affairs. *Community empowerment* will focus on exercising significant access to or control over resources crucial to the communities' survival and development. *Community ownership* will focus on institutionalizing the inclusiveness that has been achieved among the tri-people population and the sense of responsibility and accountability over any development program.

As a community- based peacebuilding initiative, the ultimate challenge for GiNaPaLaDTaKa is how to make its experience – the social solidarity that was developed, the knowledge base accumulated and institutions that evolved - as among the core of Mindanao and national level peacebuilding be it in the level of policy or social practice.

Conclusion

The study applied CBD's principles such as participation, empowerment, and the perspectives and approaches of rights-based and inclusive development to organize the experience of GiNaPaLaDTaKa Space for Peace into a body of knowledge on community-based peacebuilding. At the same time, it tried to distill the processes that animated such initiative. For those in the CD discipline, these processes are referred to as CD strategies -*Development Education, Community Organizing, Community-based Resource Management and Advocacy.* At the same time, the study looked into how these strategies are shaped when applied in a specific context such as armed conflict in a multi-cultural community striving for peace.

The study also shows how a community initiative that was born out of the need for security can generate opportunities for broader community building anchored on rebuilding shattered relationships among people of multi-cultural backgrounds. Institutionalization of such community building process into community governance can serve as platform for influencing national level peacebuilding.

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Endnotes

[1] A military offensive launched in March 2000 to "weaken primarily the MILF capability to undermine the territorial integrity of the Philippines and inflict harm on both government personnel and civilians" (Pobre and Quilop, 2008, p.xxiv). It ended in July with the AFP capturing the MILF Camp Abubakar headquarters that cover the towns of Matanog, Barira, Buldon and Parang in Maguindanao and portions of some towns in Lanao Del Sur. Pobre and Quilop (2008) estimates that the war affected communities in 14 provinces, four cities, 89 municipalities and around 489 barangays of Central Mindanao. It displaced 140,000 families or 755,761 individuals (pp. 107).

[2] The area referred to by the media as Buliok Complex refers to the 5 kilometer radius around Barangay Buliok in Pagalungan, Maguindanao. It is where the MILF relocated after its central headquarters in Camp Abubakar was overtaken by the AFP in July 2000. Pikit, North Cotabato is situated near it. (Pobre and Quilop, n.d., p. 14-15)

[3] The three groups, which comprise the population of Mindanao, are collectively referred to as tri-people. Tri-people has come to refer to multicultural/multi-ethnic approach to peace and development in Mindanao.

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