

Foreword

This issue of Philippine Journal of Social Development concerns with Transformative Community Organizing (TCO) exemplified by the articles in this journal.

Community Development (CD) employs Community Organizing (CO) as its main strategy fuses with Community Development Planning and Organizational Leadership and Management. It maintains the importance of the influence of the past, the centrality of the present, and the stability of the future through research and documentation. When it was defined as an applied science, it echoes that 'as one is involved, so many are multiplied'. Therefore, transformation is inevitable. However, to pose it as in a sequel, it starts with information, to formation, and consequently, transformation.

Community organizing is both a resource and a recourse. It is a resource because the relational domain of the people is always to take one core value as springboard for any endeavor. In a sense, it requires peoples' time and space, assuming energy in operation to keenly employ negotiation for a change. It is a recourse, and may only be a constant one, because it springs from the principles of sustainability, empowerment of the people, and management of their own affairs.

Community Organizing is prominent in the dynamics of social development. There were agencies in the past that used CO for projects or interest-laden funded projects but its effect is diverse in communities. As soon as they leave, the people fall apart. They failed to realize the main purpose why people organize.

Projects in a minute context and programs on a larger scale can take on a mode of entry to community development but cannot be the end in itself. The process is always that, "the eyes can hear and the ears can see," the supremacy of awareness.

In the recent past, CO's direction was organizing people for establishing Peoples' Organization (PO) in thought that the communities remain as the 'conscience' of the State. This was so during Martial Law (ML). All those part of a movement against corruption of power were tagged as 'rebels' by the state. The Church was the only legal organization. The people

possessed lesser opportunities for participation toward management of themselves because the control rested on the institution.

The act of CO as it used to be a solid organizing process has changed as the Constitution has considered the plight of the powerless in 1987. Significantly, it recognized organizing as a legitimate tool in negotiating with the government.

The emergence of the Local Government Code of 1991 paved the way for a discernment that devolving the powers of government to the local units challenged individual power to assert in local governance. Citizen's empowerment became a subject in the awareness building.

The mode of participation brought the people closer to the challenge of local leadership rather than maintaining a distance and just be critics of the status quo. The aim was to participate in holding local powers in order to govern the affairs of the people themselves, as well as, putting the people on the right place -- "where they are." Rights Based Approach took place citing the state as duty bearer and the people as rights holder creating challenging avenues for peoples' governance.

The following articles cited how in different contexts Community Organizing serves as the best strategy in achieving a vision if not the fulfillment of a vision in itself.

The first article, "Risk Taking and Risk Reduction by the Academe: An Experience in Integrating Teaching, Research and Extension Service in CBDRRM Program" by Dr. Emmanuel M. Luna, articulates the challenges of the people. Brgy. Sta. Ana, San Mateo, Rizal was devastated by Typhoon Ondoy in 2009. In response to the disaster, an action research was launched entitled, "The Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM) Program". It began in April 2010 which continued until October 2011.

Dr. Luna in his writing aimed to reduce disaster risks in the community and promote community development. A participatory method suggested the involvement of researchers in the entire process. In this involvement he sought the participation of students and professors in the processes of extracting meaning from the experience of disaster. The process recognized how individuals and families struggled to see the strength inside them and draw closer to community solidarity.

This piece showed education as a medium leading to transformation: from risk reduction, facing the agony of losses, to management, discovering the kernel of strength of the people. Addressing societal concerns to accepting the courses of life can be facilitated through academic processes by feeling the vulnerabilities of the marginalized. It suggests relevant action.

A program called Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Management (CBDRRM) especially in Barangay Sta. Ana upheld ‘that social development method in organizing communities, capacity building through education and training, and socio-economic work’ could be woven and translated in the way of life of the people to render them sustainability. To make it part of the life of the people it has to be the movement in their being from their own volition.

Dr. Teresita Villamor-Barrameda in her article emphasized the role of research in Community Development practice. Coming from an expression from the experiences of women she sees, she wrote, “The Transformative Value of Research in CD Practice: The Stories of Women Coco Coir Twiners and Weavers in Brgy. Monbon”.

She brings in the importance of research - a grounded one. Culling from the experiences of theorizing from the context of women, an integrative character of the researcher is imperative. She believes in “CD values and principles as participatory, action-oriented, empowering and transformative.” She claims that, “research could bridge the gap between the marginalized women and the CD practitioner in enacting change and serving as evidentiary basis for policy advocacy to improve lives,” especially of women in this article, “the women coco coir twiners and weavers in a community frequently ravaged by recurrent typhoons and disasters.”

In Participatory Research, the subject, planning, and implementation of the study have been integrated with the people. When CO as a strategy for Community Development optimizes on a deeper integration with the people, Participatory Research, as a tool, functions in CO. Dr. Barrameda’s article values “ethical concerns in conducting research in terms of being non-extractive and giving back to the women whatever benefits that could be generated as outcomes of the research.”

She optimized the life stories’ narration of the pressing concerns of women. The research participants became aware of their common plight that, eventually, engaged them to do something about their condition.

The articulation process creates possibility for understanding. “As storytellers of their lives, they have the power to direct the course of their stories for the listener, the researcher.” In itself the method allows the participants to see themselves with clarity of their direction. Thus, for marginalized women this dynamics is empowering. According to Dr. Barrameda, “seeing the women as storytellers rather than research respondents provides an egalitarian way of treating them.”

Ms. Caroliza Tulod-Peteros focused her discussion from experience of Community Organizing in the conflict areas in her article, “Community Development for Transformation: The Role of Community Organizations as Negotiating Leverage in Conflict-Affected Communities.”

She claimed that, “organizations are channels to express the collective strength of the people, especially those who have less in power, so they will have better chances of being heard by government which has the obligation to protect, promote and uphold their rights from being violated by private corporations and other interest groups”.

She affirmed that organizing approach “has strong bearing on the rights of individuals and the right to organize groups.” Being in the issues assumes better understanding of a kind of solution. An issue carries an objective resolution.

Marginalized communities’ defined problems just stayed there for a long time such as, “their claims over rights to land, housing, just wages, and decent working conditions.” The people have high hopes on government for alleviation of poverty and reduction of issues around seemingly endless burdens. However, she claimed that, “government policies aligned with its adherence to liberalization policies aggravated this situation.” Projects in rural areas displaced the already marginalized communities in countless times. Their plight has not reached the ears of the government by allowing even mining companies to continually devour the lands and destroy the environment. Thus, the challenge of community empowerment through community organizing becomes an all-relevant weapon in a conflict-sensitive condition.

The next article expounds on the importance of the application of Social Research in Community Development as providing deeper meaning to action research, participatory research, and development research.

Dr. Ma. Theresa V. Tungpalan and Dr. Aleli B. Bawagan's article, "Development Research: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Practices," illustrates three major themes namely participatory methods, people's action, and social transformation. Interestingly, they posed how individual minds provide opportunities to create meanings around experiences in various walks of life. Seemingly ordinary, they recreate new dimensions of practice when designed in a life-giving language.

Social research, as painted in various dimensions by Dr. Tungpalan and Dr. Bawagan when read in the context of communities seeking and working for change, becomes a ladder of hope appreciating every step of it. Research in Community Development explicates how the academe becomes part of ordinary life. In the same thought, ordinary life gives flesh to research in academe. The article states, "these researches form part of CSWCD's community-engaged scholarship, also called transformative scholarship, where the long-term perspective of academic pursuit is societal change and people's empowerment."

As a unit of the University grounded in the vision for Public Service and Nation Building, this article contributes better ways to achieving its relevance: 'the standpoint for the poor, marginalized, and disempowered communities; interdisciplinary and integrative approaches grounded on theorizing; and production of knowledge.'

The next two articles are written in Filipino. These concern partnerships of the fieldwork area partners, the people, the students learning from the people, and unlearning from their past intertwined with the reflections of the professors.

The article by Gretchel N. Pelaez, Norby R. Salonga and Dr. Leocito S. Gabo dealt with "Lakbay-Aral: Sama-samang Aralan at Paglilinang tungo sa Mapagpaunlad na Pangangasiwa ng Komunidad (Ang Karanasan sa Bulacan Heights). It tells about the experience of so many citizens resettled due to disaster threat from their former residences. Bulacan Heights is an example of a modern Exodus. Though there is nothing to lose from their original homes since they were located in danger zones, the adjustment to the new location is another complex issue. As the receiving barangay reacts strongly to the new settlers, the latter finds the new milieu hostile.

The resolution is posed in the article and the corresponding actions follow the proposals of community governance. Inevitably, people

have to get organized. Going through the processes in awareness building and deciding collectively to create action leads themselves to be counted in the Local Government.

The last article in this issue passed through a unique process using dialogue or discourse. Written by Prof. Maureen Pagaduan, Jeremi Panganiban and Karl Arvin Hapal, “Talakayan, Tunggalian at Diskurso: Isang Pag-uusap tungkol sa Community Organizing at Community Development”, is a conversation documented from their experiences as CD practitioners. The process of this article was reflective of how a spirit is honed to development as the authors integrate their life in communities and their ways. This is a great article as a result of ‘living with’ the people.

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