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# Philippine Journal of Social Development

Volume 14    2021

*“RESISTANCE AND HOPE  
FROM THE FRINGES:  
GRASSROOTS-LED RESPONSES  
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC”*



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## FOREWORD

In this volume of the Philippine Journal of Social Development, we present six research articles and one feature article. All except for one share stories and the lessons to be learned of how grassroots communities and civil society organizations responded creatively to the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are indeed welcome contributions to the body of literature on social and community development especially in the context that both mainstream and social media coverage of the unprecedented crisis mostly highlighted how government was responding and the precarious plight of ordinary citizens and communities as COVID-19 continues to rage. We were looking for accounts that would demonstrate resistance and hope from the fringes—distinctive and inspiring narratives of communities and civil society groups who resisted victimhood and hopelessness and chose to take bold actions to address their needs and promote the collective good.

In “Ambagan,” Paul Edward N. Muego takes us to Brgy. Janosa in Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal where the Sto. Domingo Parish together with local parishioners launched emergency relief operations to address deprivation as a result of the government-imposed lockdowns. Guided by basic concepts from the Catholic Social Teachings and social development, the author reflects on peoples’ collective action by highlighting *pagtutulungan*, *pagdadamayán*, and *pagkakapatiran* as key driving forces, and solidarity, participation, human rights, social responsibility, and accountability as important ingredients in mobilizing communities.

The second article written by Aleli B. Bawagan, Rose Angelie M. Hernandez, and Celeste F. Vallejos describes the widescale economic dislocation that the pandemic wrought on many sectors of UP Diliman. With the University’s drastic shift to remote, online learning, and work-from-home arrangements, jeepney drivers, vendors, and some urban poor residents in the UPD Campus lost their main sources of livelihood, thus needing relief assistance. “Sa Gitna ng Pandemya” narrates the formation and activities of the UP Diliman COVID-19 Response Volunteers (UPD CRV), a volunteer group composed of UP employees, faculty, students, and organizations such as the All UP Workers Alliance. The article details the strategies utilized by the UPD CRV to fulfill its mandate. These include not only mobilizing humanitarian assistance but also community education and organizing, information dissemination, and advocacy

work. The authors conclude with important lessons that can enrich the discipline and practice of Community Development and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).

In “Surviving the Pandemic,” Lisa Victoria N. Rosel and Victor G. Obedicen apply a gender lens to analyze the impacts of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) on the lives of women leaders and members of the Samahan ng Kababaihan para sa Kaunlaran at Kinabukasan ng Sitio Sapang Munti, an organization of women in Sapang Munti, Brgy. San Mateo, Norzagaray, Bulacan. Existing gender inequalities rooted in their differing position and condition in society render poor women more vulnerable to the impacts of disasters compared to their men counterparts. While the ECQ affected the lives of families in Sapang Munti in general, women’s economic activities came to a halt, even while the multiple burden of their reproductive and care work intensified. The authors give an account of how these women, through their organization, exercised leadership in different fronts such as in planning and organizing the distribution of much-needed food assistance, and in fundraising and resource generation from within and outside their community. More importantly, the women saw the pandemic as an opportunity to strengthen their organization and leadership abilities. The article concludes by putting in center stage the importance of organizing women as partners, building their capacities, and creating gender-responsive organizational processes.

“Seeds of Hope” discusses the experiences of MASIPAG, a network of small farmers’ organizations in the Philippines, in building social solidarity and collective responses to the pandemic. The author, Maria Corazon Jimenez-Tan, asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic only brought to the surface the deep-seated problems of the country’s public health system, the absence of adequate and accessible basic social services, and the long-standing crisis in the agriculture and food systems. She then describes the challenging yet creative ways through which small farmers and women farmers persisted in feeding their families and their communities through their practice and promotion of collective, sustainable, and agroecological agriculture. Reflecting on the meaning and practice of social solidarity, the article ends by underscoring the important foundations or building blocks: long years of painstaking organizing and advocacy work, organizational strengthening, and social movement building of people’s organizations and grassroots communities towards radical social transformation.



The article “Network Formation,” written by Remvert Bryan G. Placido, Louise Jashil R. Sonido, and Judy M. Taguiwalo, focuses on the experience of the Citizen’s Urgent Response to End COVID-19 (CURE COVID) in creating and sustaining a network of community and development organizations, groups, and individuals to address concerns related to the pandemic. The prolonged and recurring lockdowns, the strict health protocols setting restrictions on people’s mobility and gathering, the inadequate government response amidst state repression, and the ensuing economic and health problems created new challenges to community organizing and required new forms of community engagement and mobilization. From the experience of CURE COVID, network building utilizing social media and other online platforms and participation in protest actions while observing proper health protocols were proven to be effective strategies for amplifying and asserting the voices and demands of civil society organizations and communities in the time of pandemic.

The sixth research article by Jiza Mari S. Jimenez examines the Family Farm School (FFS) in Roxas, Mindoro Oriental from the lens of human capabilities building and as a strategy for Community Development. Using a qualitative research design, the study looks into the context, perceptions, and experiences of FFS students, parents, tutors, and partners who served as research participants. The author proposes a framework on human capabilities development organized into three categories—foundational capabilities, relational capabilities, and transformational capabilities—emphasizing its potential as an agent of Community Development.

Finally, this volume ends with a feature article collectively written by the members of the Department of Community Development Field Instruction Program (DCD FIP) Committee. Regarded as the “heart and soul” of the Community Development academic program, the FIP is a requirement for all graduate and undergraduate students, with their participation in the program being essential and non-negotiable. However, the abrupt shift to online, remote learning and teaching in the whole UP System as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the deferment of the FIP for two terms due to the continuing lockdowns. The DCD embarked on redesigning the program in search of more adaptive modes of social solidarity and partnership, thus paving the way for the Modified Field Instruction Program. The feature article provides a description of the Modified FIP’s bubble and remote modes, narrates initial experiences, and shares preliminary learning from reflecting on

these experiences. The article brings to the fore the emerging challenges and questions for reflection on the choice of methods and technologies that are appropriate to a crisis context while ensuring the twin imperatives of learning and service.

Coming out with Volume 14 in the time of a pandemic took a longer time than we expected and presented us with what initially seemed to be insurmountable challenges. Our heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to all the authors for plodding on, to our peer reviewers for sharing their time and expertise, and to the PJSD Volume 14 editorial team, for holding on and never giving up amidst the many hurdles, COVID-19 related or otherwise.

We hope that we have managed to fulfill your expectations and that you will look forward to succeeding issues of the PJSD. Thank you very much.

**Lenore Polotan-dela Cruz**

*Issue Editor*

August 2021





**AMBAGAN**  
**SAMA-SAMANG PAGKILOS NG MGA TAO**  
**SA PANAHAON NG PANDEMYA**  
**(ANG KUWENTO NG PAROKYA NG**  
**STO. DOMINGO, BRGY. JANOSA,**  
**ISLA NG TALIM, BINANGONAN, RIZAL)**

**Ambagan: People's Collective Actions During the Pandemic**  
**(The Story of Sto. Domingo Parish, Brgy. Janosa,**  
**Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal)**

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**Paul Edward N. Muego, DSD**

**Abstrak**

*Isa ang Simbahan, sa pamamagitan ng mga maliliit na parokya gaya ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo sa Isla ng Talim, Binangonan, Rizal, ang mabilisang kumilos para tumugon sa kalagayan ng mga tao noong nag-umpisa ang COVID-19 pandemya at ang mga kaalinsabay na mga lockdown. Layunin ng pag-aaral na ito na mailahad, maipagdiwang, mapagnilayan, at hanguan ng aral ang kuwento ng sama-samang pagkilos ng Parokya at ng mga tao sa Isla. Ang paglalarawan, na nasa porma ng isang case study, ay humugot mula sa mga kuwento ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim na nakuha sa pamamagitan ng mga panayam, pakikipagkuwentuhan sa pamamagitan ng mga online platforms at pati na rin sa nauna nang naisulat ng mga mag-aaral ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan na naitalaga sa Isla bago ang lockdown sa ilalim ng Field Instruction Program (FIP). Ang pagninilay at pagtukoy ng ilang rekomendasyon naman ay ginabayan ng mga piling batayang konsepto mula sa mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan (Catholic Social Teachings) at ng Panlipunang Kaunlaran o Pagpapaunlad (social development). Lumilitaw sa kuwento ng sama-samang pagkilos ng mga taong bumubuo ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo na likas sa mga tao ang paghahangad sa ganap na pagbabago, at makikita ito sa buhay na buhay na pagtutulungan, pagdadamay, at pagkakapatiran. Makikita rin na ang pakikiisa at pakikilahok, ang karapatan at pananagutan ay mga mahahalagang sangkap sa mobilisasyon ng pamayanan. Ang karanasan*

*ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim ay nagbibigay din ng mahalagang aral sa pamahalaan, na ito dapat ay maging pamahalaan ng lahat at hindi lang ng iilan. Panghuli, makikita na ang mga tao ay hindi nasanay na umaasa sa tulong ng iba para makakain at matugunan ang iba't iba nilang mga pangangailangan, kung kaya't ang pagtulong dapat ay umiikot sa dangal ng sangkatauhan (human dignity). Batay sa pag-aaral, mahalaga na ang tuloy-tuloy na pagkilos ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim ay tumuon sa pagtiyak sa kasiguruhan sa pagkain, pagpaparami ng disenteng trabaho at kabuhayan, pagpapalakas ng mga batayang serbisyong pangkalusugan, pagpapaigting sa pamamahala ng pamayanan (community governance), at patuloy na pagpapalakas sa social action ministry ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo.*

**Keywords:** field instruction, faith-based organizations, community participation, Catholic social teachings, social development, solidarity, COVID-19 pandemic, community quarantine

## **Panimula**

“Ang pagtugon pa rin sa pandemya ay mga maliliit na mga pagkilos sa pamayanan,” ito ang sambit ni Fr. Rommel Felizardo, kura paroko ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo, habang pinag-uusapan namin ang mga paghahandang ginagawa nila para sa napipintong *lockdown* noong Marso 2020. Sa umpisa pa lang ay nakikita na nila ang malawakang gutom na idudulot ng *lockdown* para sa mga mamamayan ng Isla ng Talim. Malamang, sa kagaya nila Fr. Rommel at iba pang mga kumikilos sa hanay ng mga *religious* at mga *faith-based organizations*, ay malinaw kaagad sa kanila ang papel ng Simbahan sa ganitong mga sakuna. Malamang, malinaw rin sa kanila kung anu-ano ang mga batayan ng kanilang mga tindig, tinig, at tugon sa panahon ng mga sakuna kagaya nitong pandemya. Ang pakikisangkot o pagtugon ng Simbahan sa iba't ibang usapin at usapan pambayan/pangkomunidad ay nakikitang isang porma ng pagpapadama ng kaniyang mapagkalinga at mapagpalayang tradisyon ng paglilingkod. At sa kabilang banda nama'y ang hindi nito pakikisangkot lalo na sa mga usaping nakaugnay sa katarungang panlipunan, karapatan, at mga mahahalagang usaping bayan ay nagpapakita na tila ang Simbahan ay hindi nakikiisa sa (*not in solidarity with*) mga maralita at mga hindi isinasama sa buhay ng pamayanan, na tila ito ay nakakalimot sa kaniyang misyong ipalaganap ang Magandang Balita ng pagmamahal, katarungan, at paglaya.

Ang Parokya ng Sto. Domingo<sup>1</sup> (PSD) ay matatagpuan sa Isla ng Talim sa Brgy. Janosa, Binangonan, Rizal. Bagama't walong barangay ang nasasakupan nito, ito ay maliit lang na parokya kung ikukumpara halimbawa sa Parokya ng bayan ng Binangonan. Kung titingnan din ang kaniyang pampinasyang rekurso, ang Parokya ay maaaring maituring na isang *mission church*. Gayunpaman, bakit tumugon ang Parokya? Anu-ano ang mga naging batayan ng kanilang pagtugon o pagkilos? Anu-ano ang mga naging pagtugon ng Parokya? Anu-ano ang mga kinahinatnan ng mga pagkilos na ito? Anu-ano bang mga aral ang mahihimalay mula sa karanasan ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo at ng mga taga-Talim?

Ang pangkalahatang layunin ng maikling pag-aaral na ito ay mailahad ang kuwento ng sama-samang pagkilos ng mga tao sa Isla ng Talim sa Binangonan, Rizal bilang lokal na pagtugon sa mga hamon dulot ng pandemya, hindi lang sa usaping pangkalusugan ngunit sa pangkalahatang kaginhawaan (*well-being*). Ang mga partikular na layunin ng pag-aaral na ito ay ang mga sumusunod:

1. Mailarawan, maipagdiwang, at maparangalan kung paano tinignan at sinuri ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo ang sitwasyon ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim sa gitna ng pandemya at ang naging pagtugon nito, pati na rin ang mga umusbong na iba pang mga porma ng pag-aambagan at pagbabayanihan ng mga mamamayan ng Talim;
2. Matukoy ang ilang mahahalagang aspeto o tema ng mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan o *Catholic Social Teachings*, at maiugnay ito sa mga batayang konsepto ng panlipunang kaunlaran o *social development*; at
3. Mapagnilayan kung paano ang mga ito maaaring maging balangkas ng pagkilos ng mga maliliit na parokya kagaya ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo at makapanghimalay ng mga mahahalagang mga aral at kabatiran mula sa mga karanasang ito tungo sa pagpapahayag ng ilang mga rekomendasyon.

Ang maikling pag-aaral at pagninilay na ito ay gumamit ng mga panayam sa ilang mga susing tao sa pamamagitan ng mga *online platforms* gaya ng Zoom at Messenger, pagsusuri sa mga piling mga literatura at kaugnay na mga pag-aaral—partikular dito ang ilan sa mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan (*Catholic Social Teachings*) at mga paunang saliksik na ginawa at isinulat ng mga naunang mga grupo ng mga estudyante ng Field Instruction Program (FIP) ng Departamento

ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan. Humugot din ng ilang mga ideya at inspirasyon mula sa isang *episode* ng *Kwentong Kwarantín*<sup>2</sup> na pinamagatang “Simbahan at Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan sa Panahon ng Pandemya” (matatagpuan ang video sa <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1718479868316130>) kung saan naging kabahagi sa talakayan ang mananaliksik.

## Ang pagkilos ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo sa Talim

*Ang Isla Talim... bago ang pandemya*

Matatagpuan sa Lawa ng Laguna ang Isla ng Talim. Ang pampulitikang pangangasiwa ng Isla ay nasa kamay ng bayan ng Cardona at Binangonan. Ang mas malaking bilang ng mga barangay sa Isla, 17, ay nasa ilalim ng pamamahala ng Lokal na Pamahalaan ng Binangonan, isang *first class municipality*. At ang bilang naman na ito ay halos kalahati ng kabuuang bilang ng barangay ng bayan. Bagama’t ito ang sitwasyon, kapansin-pansin na ang imprastraktura at mga serbisyo publiko sa kabayanan ay malayo sa kung ano ang nasa Isla maliban marahil sa lumang Municipal Extension at Rural Health Unit na matatagpuan sa Brgy. Gulod at ilang mga paaralang pampubliko at pribado na nasa Brgy. Kaytome, Janosa, at Bangad. Kaya karamihan ng mga serbisyo, katulad ng sa pangkalusugan at edukasyon, ay pinupuntahan pa rin ng mga tao sa kabayanan ng Binangonan.

Mararating ang Isla sa pamamagitan lamang ng mga malalaking bangkang de-motor mula sa prtil ng Binangonan. Dumadaong ito sa mga prtil sa iba’t ibang barangay sa Isla ng Talim. Bukod sa transportasyon ng mga pasahero, ang mga bangkang ito rin ang ginagamit para ipasok o ilabas sa Isla ang mga kalakal, pagkain, gamot, mga paninda, at iba pang mga pangunahing mga pangangailangan kagaya ng gasolina, LPG para sa pagluluto, at iba pa. Bukod sa mga nabanggit, nakasalalay din sa mga bangka ang kabuhayan ng marami sa mga taga-Isla—mula sa mga piloto at kaniyang mga kasamahan, sa mga mekaniko hanggang sa mga kargador.

Tradisyunal na ring kinukuhanan ng ikinabubuhay ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim ang pangingisda. Bukod dito, ang paggawa ng mga produktong gamit ang kawayan, katulad ng mga muwebles, kulungan ng manok, at pati mga pantuhog sa *barbecue*, *fishballs*, at iba pa, na ibinebenta sa bayan ay isa rin sa pangunahing kabuhayan sa Isla. Marami



rin sa mga taga-Isla ang nagtatrabaho sa mga *garment industries* at sa iba't ibang mga pagawaan sa iba pang bayan ng Rizal, Laguna, at Kalakhang Maynila. Bukod dito, may mga maliliit ding mga pinagkakakitaan kagaya ng paglalako ng mga lutong ulam at pamamahala ng sari-sari *store*.

Buhay na buhay rin ang pagsasamahan sa Isla ng Talim. May mga samahan ang mga mangingisda sa iba't ibang mga barangay; ang iba rito'y nagiging kabahagi sa Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council ng Binangonan. Dahil na rin sa patuloy na pagdami ng mga nananahi sa Isla na naka-ugnay sa *garments industry* sa lalawigan ng Rizal, mayroon na ring mga samahan ng mga mananahi na madalas ay binubuo at pinamumunuan ng mga kababaihan. Mayaman rin sa karanasan sa pagkokooperatiba ang mga taga-Isla ng Talim; bagama't marami rin sa mga koop na itinayo nang mabilisan ay nangamatay na rin. Gayunpaman, mayroon pa ring mga buhay na koop gaya ng San Damiano Bamboo Producers Cooperative at ang Gulod Waterwork System—samahan ng mga mamamayan ng Brgy. Gulod na nagpapatakbo sa kanilang patubig. Ayon nga sa mga naunang mga estudyante ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan na na-*deploy* sa isla, buhay na buhay pa rin ang diwa ng kooperasyon, bolunterismo, at pagsasamahan sa Isla ng Talim. Ayon pa sa kanila, ang pagtutulungan ng mga tao ay nakaugat sa kanilang pananampalataya at espiritwalidad (Cruz et al., 2019).

### *Ang Parokya ng Sto. Domingo*

Walong barangay ng Binangonan-*side* ng Isla ng Talim ang nakapaloob sa Parokya ng Sto. Domingo. Sa kasalukuyan, ang pangangasiwa at pangangalaga ng Parokya ay pinangungunahan ni Fr. Rommel Felizardo ng Diocese ng Antipolo. Katuwang ng kura paroko ang Parish Pastoral Council at ang mga mas maliliit na mga *pastoral councils* sa bawat barangay sa pagsusulong ng iba't ibang mga programa, proyekto, at gawain ng Parokya. Ang pagbuo ng mga programa, proyekto, at mga gawain ay ginagabayan ng WESTYVFLA o Worship, Evangelization, Social Transformation, Youth, Vocation, and Family Life Apostolate. Ito ang istruktura ng mga programa o ministeryo na pinaiiral sa Diyosesis ng Antipolo. Ayon kina Cruz et al. (2019), “nakatuon [ang] gawain [ng parokya] sa Social Transformation Ministry dahil naniniwala [sila] na malaki ang mai-aambag na impluwensiya ng simbahan sa pagpapabuti ng pamumuhay ng mga tao sa isla.”

### *Ang ugnayan ng DCD FIP at PSD*

Ang Departamento ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan (Department of Community Development o DCD) ng Kolehiyo ng Gawaing Panlipunan at Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan (College of Social Work and Community Development o CSWCD) ay nagkaroon ng pagkakataong makipamuhay at makipag-aralan sa mga taga-Isla ng Talim sa paanyaya ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo (PSD), partikular ni Fr. Felizardo noong Marso 2019. Naantala ang pagde-*deploy* ng mga mag-aaral sa ilalim ng Field Instruction Program (FIP), kaya Setyembre 2019 na nung tuluyang nakarating sa Isla ng Talim ang unang pangkat ng mag-aaral. Sa loob ng ilang buwan, ang mga mag-aaral ay nakiisa at nakipamuhay sa unang apat na barangay; at tumulong sa pagpapadaloy ng mga pagsusuring nakatuon sa pagpapalalim ng kabatiran sa umiiral na kalagayan ng mga tao sa pamayanan. Ang unang grupo ng mga mag-aaral ay nasundan ng isa pang *batch* noong Enero 2020. Katulad ng nauna, sila'y nakiisa at nakipamuhay sa dalawa pang mga barangay na sakop ng Parokya. Sa prosesong ito, layon ay maipagpapatuloy ang mga naumpisahang saliksik sa antas ng pamayanan. Lalong lalalim ang pagkaunawa ng mga mag-aaral sa buhay, karanasan, at pangarap ng mga mamamayan sa Isla ng Talim. Bago pansamantalang umalis ang pangalawang grupo sa Isla noong Marso 2020, pinag-uusapan na ang pagtulong sa paglililaw sa kanilang binabalak na pagpapatayo o pagpapalakas ng mga kooperatiba. Ngunit bago nakabalik sa Isla, idineklara ang COVID-19 na pandemya at ang pambansang pamahalaan ay nagpatupad ng pagsasara, *lockdown* o pagka-kwarantin sa kalakhang Luzon.

### *Ang sitwasyon sa Isla ng Talim sa kasagsagan ng pandemya*

Nang magsara ang mga pampublikong transportasyon dahil na rin sa pagdedeklara ng Enhanced Community Quarantine o ECQ, hindi na rin pumalaot ang mga pampasaherong bangka. Dahil dito, natigil ang paglabas-pasok ng mga tao sa Isla. Sa isang banda, ang pagsasara sa mga prtil ay nakatulong na hindi magkaroon ng kaso ng pagkakahawa sa COVID-19 kung kaya't hindi ang pagkakahawa sa sakit na ito ang naging pangunahing problema ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim. Ngunit sa kabilang banda naman, ang pagsara ng prtil ay lubos na nakaapekto sa kasiguruhan sa *supply* ng pagkain at mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng mga naninirahan sa Isla ng Talim. Bagama't sa umpisa ay mayroon pang mga naitabi, ang mga ito ay dahan-dahan ding naubos sa pagtagal ng ECQ. Ayon sa mga taga-Talim, makikita ito sa isa-isang pagsara ng mga maliliit na mga tindahan at kainan.

Bukod sa kasiguruhan sa *supply* ng pagkain, lubhang naapektuhan din ang kabuhayan ng mga tao sa Isla ng Talim. Ang mga tradisyunal na pinagkukunan ng kabuhayan, kagaya ng paggawa ng mga produktong yari sa kawayan, ay tumigil. Bukod sa walang masasakyan para dalhin ang mga ito sa palengke, hindi na rin ito naging prayoridad ng mga mamimili sa bayan. At dahil wala ring transportasyon, hindi na rin makapasok ang mga arawang namamasukan. Kasabay rin nito ang pagsasara ng marami sa mga establisemento sa kabayanan at sa mga karatig lugar. Dahil dito, patuloy na lumiit at naging limitado ang kita ng mga pamilya sa Isla. At dahil patuloy rin ang pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilingin, mas ikinabahala ng mga taga-Isla ng Talim kung paano nila tutustusan ang pang araw-araw na pamumuhay. At kahit na nagluwag na ang transportasyon sa pagkakadeklara ng Modified General Community Quarantine o MGCQ sa lalawigan ng Rizal, hindi pa rin naging madali ang pagbiyahe dahil dumoble ang halaga ng pamasaha—mula sa Php30.00 kada tao naging Php65.00 kada tao.

Dagdag pa, dahil nakasalalay pa rin sa mga serbisyong nasa bayan, lalo na sa usaping pangkalusugan, naging mahirap rin ang pagkuha sa mga ito. Walang naging malinaw na mga plano sa transportasyon kung may mga *health emergencies*. Bukod dito, naging mabagal din ang pangkalahatang pagtugon ng pamahalaang lokal at ng pamahalaang bayan sa lumalalang sitwasyon sa Isla, lalo na sa usapin ng kasiguruhan sa pagkain. May pakiramdam ang mga tao na tila hindi naging prayoridad ang Isla sa pagtugon ng lokal na pamahalaan kahit na halos kalahati ng mga barangay ng bayan ng Binangonan ay nasa Isla. Sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office ng Rizal, na siya namang nakipag-usap sa Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office ng Binangonan, napag-alaman na mayroong mga inihahandang *food packs* para sa Isla, ngunit ang inaasahan daw ay ang mga barangay muna ang magbibigay ng paunang ayuda. Ngunit ayon sa mga nakapanayam, tila hindi naman ito alam ng mga namumuno sa mga barangay. Pati ang inaasahang tulong na makukuha sa Social Amelioration Program o SAP ay naantala. Matatapos na ang Abril ay SAP *form* pa rin lang ang nahahawakan ng mga kwalipikadong mga benepisyaryo.

### *Ang mga pagkilos ng Simbahan at ng pamayanan*

Sa umpisa pa lang, malinaw na sa Parokya na paparating ang gutom bunsod na rin ng pagsasara ng transportasyon at ang pagkawala ng mga kinukunan ng ikinabubuhay ng mga tao. Ayon kay Fr. Rommel at sa iba pang mga taga-Isla, “Habang tumatagal ang kwarantin,

mas tumitindi ang sitwasyon, mas dumarami ang nagugutom!” Ang sitwasyong ito ang nagsilbing hamon sa mamamayan ng Talim, partikular sa Parokya ng Sto. Domingo sa pangunguna ng kura paroko, si Fr. Rommel, upang agarang kumilos para matugunan ang tumitinding pangangailangang ito.

Ngunit hindi rin naging madali ang pagkilos. Una, dahil nga sa pagbabawal lumabas ng kanilang mga bahay, ang komunikasyon ng mga lider ng Parokya na nasa iba’t ibang barangay ay hindi naging madali dahil na rin sa isyu ng *connectivity*—maaaring hindi sila aktibong gumagamit ng mga *messaging applications* o hindi kaya ay hrap din sila sa pagbili ng *prepaid load* para sa *cellphone*. Pangalawa, dahil maliit lang ang pampinansyang rekursong PSD, kinakailangan nilang ituon palabas ang kanilang paghahanap ng maisusuporta sa mga mamamayan ng Isla. Ngunit hindi ito nangangahulugan na walang mga rekursong nagmula sa komunidad mismo. Pangatlo, dahil sa malaking bilang ng dapat maabot at mabigyan ng tulong, kinakailangan ang sustenidong pagkilos. Panghuli, hindi rin ganun kadali ang manghingi sa mga dati na nilang nahihingan dahil nga pati ang mga ito ay lubha na ring naapektuhan ng pandemya sa katagalan.

Ang malaking proyektong isinulong ng Parokya ay ang *relief operations* sa siyam na barangay. Ang naunang plano ay tututukan lamang ng Parokya ang 100 pamilya sa bawat barangay, mga pamilyang pinakahihigit na nangangailangan ng ayuda. Ngunit habang tumatagal, lalo pang dumarami ang nangangailangan ng ayuda. Pati ang mga bangkero na nawalan ng hanapbuhay dahil sa tigil pasada ay napagkalooban din ng Parokya ng suporta. Habang sinisikap na pantay-pantay na mabigyan lahat, sinikap pa rin ng Parokya na maabutan ng mas malaking suporta ang halos 200 na pinakamahirap. Kung susumahin, humigit-kumulang 4,000 na pamilya o higit pa ang naabutan ng tulong ng Parokya.

Sa kanilang pagtataya, umabot sa humigit-kumulang PhP5M ang namobilisa ng Parokya at ng pamayanan para sa ayuda. Saan nanggaling ang rekursong ginamit ng Parokya para bigyan katuparan ang hangarin nitong tumulong sa mga nangangailangan sa panahon ng pandemya? Isa sa pinagkunan ng rekursong ay ang Caritas Manila. Tumulong rin ang mga ka-*partner* ng Parokya na mga paaralan katulad ng Ateneo de Manila University at mga estudyante ng CSWCD na noon ay naka-*enroll* sa Field Instruction Program (FIP). Nakipag-ugnayan rin sila sa mga

pribadong grupo at mga *foundation* ng malalaking *media companies* para sa karagdagang suporta. Bukod pa ito sa mga indibidwal na nagpaabot rin ng kanilang ambag sa isinasagawang *relief operations* ng Parokya.

Gamit ang bangka ng Parokya, hinakot papunta sa Isla ng Talim ang napamiling mga pagkain (bigas, de lata, kape, asukal, at iba pa), mga *personal hygiene items* kagaya ng sabon at *alcohol*, at iba pang mga ayuda. Pagdating sa Isla, ang simbahan ay nagsilbi bilang isang *relief operations center*. Sako-sakong bigas, kahon-kahong mga de lata, at iba pang pagkain at ayuda ang ini-*repack* sa loob at harap ng simbahan—sa pagtutulong-tulong ng mga miyembro ng Parokya. Napupuno ang mga silya at pasilyo ng simbahan ng mga *eco-bag* na naglalaman ng pagkain at iba pang ayuda. Hindi lang minsan, ngunit tuloy-tuloy nila itong ginawa habang patuloy na may suportang dumarating.



**Larawan 1.** Manggagawa at boluntaryo ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo habang nagre-*repack* ng ipapamahaging ayuda (Sto. Domingo Parish, Talim Island, 2020)



**Larawan 2.** Sa halip na mga tao, napuno ng mga bag ng bigas, de lata, at iba pa ang mga upuan ng simbahang ito. (Sto. Domingo Parish, Talim Island, 2020)

Habang nangyayari ito, patuloy din ang panawagan ng Parokya sa buong pamayanan na patuloy ring makibahagi. Isang araw, mayroong nagmamay-ari ng mga palaisdaan at mga baklad (*fish pens*) na nagkaloob ng mga isda kagaya ng tilapia para isama sa mga ipinamimigay na *relief*. Kilo-kilong isda ang ipinagkaloob at ipinamahagi sa mga pamilyang higit na nangangailangan.

Ang isa naman ay nagkatay ng kanyang pinatatabang baboy at ipinamahagi ito sa iba. Sabi nga nila, hindi lang may bigas, may pang-ulam na rin. Ang iba namang mga pamilyang mas may mapagkukunan ay nag-umpisa na ring magbalot ng mga dagdag na *relief packs* para maitulong sa kanilang mga kapitbahay. Naging buhay na buhay na ang ambagan!



**Larawan 3.** Pala-palangganang tilapiang kaloob ng mga mangingisda ang inihahanda para ipamahagi. (Sto. Domingo Parish, Talim Island, 2020)



**Larawan 4.** Inaayos ng mga taga-Parokya ang ipapamahaging mga karne. (Sto. Domingo Parish, Talim Island, 2020)

Habang nag-iikot ang mga lider at mga miyembro ng Parokya upang ipamahagi ang mga ayuda, napapansin nila na maraming mga bata ang nagugutom. Nag-usap sila at nagpasiyang hindi nila hahayaang may mga batang magugutom sa panahong ito. Batid rin nila na ang pagpapanatili ng lakas ng pangangatawan ay isang paraan para maiwasan ang pagkakasakit. Dahil dito, naglunsad sila ng dagdag na proyekto—ang *community kitchen*. Nagtulung-tulong ulit ang mga tao sa Parokya at sa mas malawak na pamayanan. Nag-ambagan sila para sa lulutuing sopas at sinigurado nila na ang sopas para sa mga musmos ay hindi tinipid sa sangkap, at naiisipan din nilang magbigay ng gatas para sa mga paslit.

Bukod sa ayuda sa pagkain at pati na rin ang *community kitchen*, nakaisip ulit ang mga tao ng isa pang proyektong makatutulong hindi lang sa pagpapanatili ng personal na kalinisan ngunit sa pagpapanatili din ng malusog na isipan o *mental health*. Naglunsad ang Parokya ng libreng gupitan para sa mga nakatatanda at pati rin sa mga bata. Kaugnay rin nito ang tuloy-tuloy na pamamahagi ng mga *hygiene kits* sa mga kabataan.



Sa ngayon, kahit na may pagluluwag na sa mga umiiral na kwarantín, hindi pa rin ganoong kadali o kabilis ang pagbangon. Patuloy na nagsusuri at nagninilay ang Parokya sa kasalukuyang kalagayan sa pamayanan. Isa sa nakikitang matingkad na usapin na kailangang matugunan ay ang edukasyon ng mga bata't kabataan. Batid na, dahil sa umiiral na *remote* o *online* na sistema ng pag-aaral, marami ang nahihirapan dahil na rin sa mga kaakibat na gastusin sa ganitong sistema. Nandiyan ang kawalan ng mga gamit katulad ng *computer* at limitadong koneksyon sa *internet* dahil na rin sa walang imprastraktura at sa mataas na gastos sa pagbili ng *data load*. Isa sa naisip gawin ng Parokya ay buksan ang simbahan at gamitin ito bilang *study area*. Dito maaaring makigamit ang mga estudyante sa *internet connection* ng Parokya. Bukod dito, tuloy-tuloy rin ang paghahanap ng rekurso para ipambili ng mga *computer sets* na magagamit ng 45 mga iskolar ng Parokya.

Mula sa ayuda sa pagkain, *community kitchen*, libreng gupit, at pagtulong sa mga mag-aaral, makikitang buhay na buhay ang pagkilos ng Parokya at mas malawak na pamayanan ng Isla ng Talim. Masisilayan sa mga kuwento ng pagkilos ng Simbahan at ng pamayanan/mamamayan ang pagpapahalaga sa dangal ng tao, ang pagtiyak sa kagalingan ng lahat, at ang pagkiling at pakikiisa sa mga maralita at mas higit na nangangailangan. Makikita rin na buhay na buhay ang partisipasyon sa iba't ibang mga anyo ng pagkilos na inilunsad bilang pagtugon sa mga pangangailangan ng pamayanan sa panahon ng pandemya.

Makikita sa mga inisyatiba ng simbahan at pamayanan na ang mga tao'y nag-aambagan. Malawak ang naging mga pagkilos ng mga tao sa loob at labas ng Isla ng Talim; damang-dama ang diwa ng kooperasyon, bolunterismo, at pagsasamahan. Para sa isang simpleng pagsusuma ng mga naging karanasan, mainam na balikan ang ilang kabatirang ipinahayag ni Fr. Rommel sa opisyal na Facebook Page ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo:

“Lahat ng ito ay naging posible sa pamamagitan ng mga *donors* at *sponsors*, sa walang humpay na serbisyo ng mga *volunteers* at sa pagbabayanihan ng Sto. Domingo Parish at ng buong pamayanan. Ang kolektibong ambag natin ay malayo ang nararating. Makakatawid tayo sa gutom kahit papaano dahil sa ating binabahaging kabutihan sa kapwa lalo na sa higit na nangangailangan. Ang sabi ng ating Pope Francis, isang

bangka lang tayo. Salamat at magkakasama tayo sa bangkang ito! Pagpupugay sa inyong lahat! Tunay ngang nakahahawa ang kabutihan ng Diyos. Maraming salamat po!”

### **Panlipunang turo ng Simbahan at Kaunlarang Panlipunan (Social Development)**

Ang mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan o PTS ay isang komprehensibong tradisyon ng mga tuntuning tumutugon sa mga hamon at iba't ibang mga usaping nakaugat o umuusbong sa pampulitika, pang-ekonomiya, panlipunan, at pangkulturang aspeto ng buhay ng tao (Brenden, 2007; Deguma et al., 2020). Ang mga pangunahing pinagmulan ng mga turo ng ito ay ang mga *social encyclicals* kagaya ng *Rerum Novarum*<sup>3</sup> (RN, 1891) na isinulat ni Papa Leo XIII na tumalakay sa di-makatarungang kalagayan ng mga manggagawa dahil sa katigasan ng puso ng mga maypatrabaho (*employers*) at ang pagiging gahaman ng umiiral na sistema ng kompetisyon at iba pang mga kadahilanan kagaya ng usura o labis na pagpapatubo sa mga utang. Ang isa pang halimbawa ay ang *Populorum Progressio* (PP, 1967) ni Papa Pablo VI. Tumalakay rin ito ng mga mahahalagang katanungang panlipunan at tinuligsa rin nito ang mga napapanahong mga isyu kagaya ng lumalawak na di-pagkakapantay-pantay at mga epekto ng *unbridled liberalism* (blg. 26) na nagreresulta sa mga di-makatarungang relasyon at patuloy na paghihirap ng nakararami (blg. 27).

Sa kasalukuyang panahon, tatlong *encyclicals* ang sinulat ni Papa Francisco, ang *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, at *Fratelli tutti*. Kagaya ng mga nauna, tinuligsa rin ng *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG, 2013) ang mga krisis ng lipunan at sistema ng ekonomiyang nakamamatay na tinawag niyang *economy of exclusion and inequality* (blg. 53). Sa ganitong kalagayan, hinahamon tayo ng *Evangelii Gaudium* na patuloy na makiisa sa mga maralita, lalo na sa mas higit na naiiwan kagaya ng mga katutubo, kababaihan, mga migrante, at iba pa. Ang pakikiisang ito (*solidarity*) ay sumusuhay sa kaisipang umuugat sa kagalingan ng komunidad at buhay ng lahat at hindi lang sa iilan (blg. 188); kung saan ang mga tao'y nagiging tagapaglikha ng kanilang kapalaran (blg. 190). Hinihimok din ng *Evangelii Gaudium* ang estado o pamahalaan na pangalagaan at itaguyod ang kabutihan ng lahat, lalo na sa pagsusulong ng kaunlarang walang naiiwan at iniwan (blg. 24).



Ang *Laudato si'* (LI, 2015) naman ay hinihimok ang lahat na iwanan ang kaunlarang nakasentro lamang sa mga pang-ekonomiyang mga interes at isulong ang tinatawag niyang *authentic development* (blg. 147)—kaunlarang nakaugat sa malalim na paggalang sa dangal ng bawat tao, ng sanlibutan, at ng kalikasan at nakatuon sa pagpapabuti ng kalidad ng buhay ng lahat. Para sa *Laudato si'*, mahalaga ang diwa ng pakikiisa o *solidarity* at ang prinsipyo ng panlipunang pagmamahal o *social love* (blg. 231)—pagmamahal sa kagalingan ng lahat, sa makatarungang mga relasyon, sa pagbuo ng mga mas mabubuting mga pamayanan. Ang panlipunang pagmamahal ay susi sa mga mas mabuting mga pamayanan, sa tunay at ganap na kaunlaran.

At ang *Fratelli tutti* (FT, 2020) na sinulat ni Papa Francisco at inilabas sa kasagsagan ng pandaigdigang pandemya naman ay maliwanag na inilahad ang hindi magandang dulot ng imposisyon ng iisang modelo ng kaunlaran at kulturang nakasentro sa merkado. Isinusulong ng modelong ito ang indibidwal na interes habang pinahihina naman nito ang “*communitarian dimensions of life*” (blg. 12). Kagaya rin ng mga nauna, mariin din ang pagpapahalaga sa *solidarity*. Ang pakikiisa ay konkretong ipinapahayag sa pamamagitan ng paglilingkod sa mga maralita at vulnerable (blg. 115), hindi lamang sa pamamagitan ng kabutihang-loob ngunit sa pamamagitan ng pakikibaka sa mga “istraktural na sanhi ng kahirapan, di-pagkakapantay-pantay, kawalan ng trabaho, lupa at pabahay, pagtanggì sa mga karapatang panlipunan at paggawa” (FT, 2020, blg. 116). Sa Kolehiyo ng Gawaing Panlipunan at Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan, ang pakikiisa’y “pagsusulong ng mapagkalinga at mapagpalayang paglilingkod” (Manalili, n.d., p. 14).

Ang mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan kagaya ng mga nabanggit ay nagsisilbing mga gabay sa kung paano ang relasyon ng tao sa kanyang kapwa at pati na rin sa kabuuan ng kanyang kapaligiran at pati ng kalikasan. Ang mga dokumentong ito’y sensitibo sa mga umiiral na panlipunang konteksto at tumutugon sa mga iba’t ibang usaping mahalaga sa buhay ng mga tao sa mga pamayanan, lalo na ang mga maralita (Dagmang, 2016). Ayon kay Brenden (2007), may sampung mga prinsipyong bumibigkis sa lahat ng mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan:

- a. Dangal ng Tao (*Human Dignity*)
- b. Pamayanan at ang Kabutihan/Kagalingan ng Lahat (*Community and the Common Good*)
- c. Mga Karapatan at Katungkulan (*Rights and Responsibilities*)

- d. Pagkiling sa mga Maralita at Pinagsasamantalahan (*Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*)
- e. Partisipasyon (*Participation*)
- f. Dangal sa Paggawa at Karapatan ng mga Manggagawa (*Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers*)
- g. Pangangasiwa/Pangangalaga sa Sangnilikha (*Stewardship of Creation*)
- h. Pakikiisa (*Solidarity*)
- i. Katungkulan ng Pamahalaan (*Role of Government*)
- j. Pagsusulong ng Kapayapaan (*Promotion of Peace*)

Mainam na idagdag sa talaang ito ang tatlo pang mga prinsipyo o mga pinahahalagahan. Una rito ay ang katarungan/hustisya (*justice*). Malinaw sa mga PTS ang pagkondena nito sa iba't ibang sitwasyon ng hindi pagkakapantay-pantay at kawalan ng katarungan. Malinaw ang panawagan nito para sa *economic justice, climate justice, social justice*, at iba pa. Pangalawa, ang transpormasyong panlipunan (*social transformation*). Malinaw rin sa mga PTS ang paghahangad nito sa mas magandang mga ugnayan o relasyon sa iba't ibang larangan ng buhay ng tao, sa mga mas mabubuting mga pamayanan, sa kaunlarang walang naiwan, walang iniwan, at kaunlarang pinagsasaluhan ng lahat (PP, 1967, blg. 81; EG, 2013, blg. 102; FT, 2020, blg. 159).

Ang mga prinsipyo/pinahahalagahang nabanggit sa itaas ay nagsilbi ring inspirasyon at gabay sa PCP II o Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Ang katarungan at transpormasyong panlipunan, halimbawa, ay isa sa sentrong tema ng PCP II (1991). Maaalala rin natin ang panawagan ng PCP II na ang Simbahan ay dapat maging Simbahan ng mga Maralita o *Church of the Poor* (PCP II, 1991). Batay sa artikulong isinulat ni Dennis Murphy na pinamagatang "Too late for a 'Church of the Poor'?" at nailathala sa *Philippine Daily Inquirer* noong ika-21 ng Hulyo, 2015, ang konseptong ito ay "*transformative*." Bakit? Ayon kay Murphy (2015), dahil taliwas ito sa madalas na sistemang iniaasa sa mga maykaya at makapangyarihan ang mga pagbabagong kinakailangan. Ayon sa kaniya, malinaw na ang mga maralita mismo ang may pangunahing papel sa pagsusulong ng pagbabago, sa pagsusulong ng pagpapalaya (Murphy, 2015). Kaya ang pangatlong prinsipyo o pinahahalagahan na mahalagang maidagdag ay pag-oorganisa at sama-samang pagkilos ng mga maralita.

Ang pangarap, ang pangitain, at mga prinsipyo na nakalahad sa PTS ay nangangahulugan ng malaliman at malawakang transpormasyon ng lipunan (Torres, 2009; Dagmang, 2012; Manalili, n.d.). Ang

transpormasyon nais ng PTS ang siya ring nasa sentro ng kaunlarang panlipunan o *social development*. Ayon sa United Nations Research Institute for Social Development o UNRISD (2011, p. 2), ang kaunlarang panlipunan ay nakatuon sa mga proseso ng pagbabagong likas-kaya, makatarungan, at naaayon sa mga prinsipyo ng demokratikong pamamahala at hustisya sosyal. Ang tunguhin ng pagbabagong ito ay pagpapabuti ng kaginhawaan ng mga tao (*peoples' well-being*), ugnayang panlipunan (*social relations*), at mga institusyong panlipunan (*social institutions*) (UNRISD, 2011; Midgley, 2014).

Maraming susing pagkakapareho ang PTS sa batayang kahulugan ng *social development* na ipinakita sa taas. Ang Table 1 sa ibaba ay isang simpleng paglalahad ng mga batayang konsepto ng dalawa. Bagama't mayroong mga pagkakaiba sa mga termino, kung susuriin nang mas malapitan, makikita ang pagkakapareho ng dalawa.

**Table 1**

*Mga batayang konsepto ng PTS at SD*

<b>Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan (PTS)</b>	<b>Panlipunang Kaunlaran (SD)</b>
<i>Social transformation</i>	<i>Processes of change</i>
<i>Community and the common good</i>	<i>Human/peoples' well-being</i>
<i>Social relations</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>
<i>Role of government</i>	<i>Social institutions</i>
<i>Social justice</i>	<i>Social justice; equitable</i>
<i>Participation; rights and responsibilities</i>	<i>Democratic governance</i>
<i>Stewardship of creation</i>	<i>Sustainable</i>

Ngunit ang panlipunang pagpapaunlad o *social development* ay maaaring mas maging matalas pa kung mas magiging hayag ito sa pagkiling sa mga maralita at pinagsasamantalahan (*option for the poor and vulnerable*). Tama na ang tunguhin ay kagalingan o kaginhawaan ng lahat ng tao, ngunit mainam na magbigay ng partikular na diin sa mga tao at pamayanang madalas iniwan at naiiwan sa umiiral na proseso ng kaunlaran. Mahalaga ring mas patingkarin pa ang pag-oorganisa at sama-samang pagkilos ng mga maralita sa pagsusulong ng panlipunang kaunlaran. Mahalaga ito kung nais ng mas malawak at mas malalim na partisipasyon o pakikilahok ng mga tao sa mga pagpapasiya at sa iba't ibang larangan ng buhay kagaya ng pang-ekonomiya, pampulitika, at pangkultura (UNRISD, 2011).

### ***Pagninilay sa karanasan, mga aral mula sa ambagan***

Marahil ay mas laganap ang pagtingin na ang Simbahan, kagaya ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo, ay dapat na abala lamang sa mga gawaing ikinakategoryang religio-spiritwal (sa isang makitid na pagtingin na ito ay nangangahulugan lang ng pagdarasal). Ngunit mayroon din namang mga naninindigan na isa lamang ito sa mahalagang ginagampanan ng Simbahan bilang institusyon sa pamayanan. Ayon kay Abellanosa (2015), ang Simbahan ay isang pampulitikang institusyon na mayroong *transformative role* sa lipunan. Bukod pa dito, mayroon din itong mahalagang *prophetic role* na magsalita laban sa kahirapan at sa mga istraktural na sanhi nito. Kung tutuusin, ang mga prinsipyo at tunguhin ng mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan at ng panlipunang kaunlaran (*social development*) ang dapat gumagabay sa pagkilos nito (ng Simbahan) bilang isang susing institusyon sa pamayanan.

Bagama't mayroong ganitong mas progresibong pagtingin, marami rin ang nagsasabing malayo ang mga ito sa aktwal na katotohanan. May malaking agwat sa pagitan ng teorya at praktika, ng turo sa gawa. Kung kaya't madalas sinasabing ang mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan ang "pinakatagong lihim" ng Simbahan. Ngunit talaga nga bang walang nangyayari? Ang mga pinahahalagahan at tunguhin ba ng mga PTS at panlipunang kaunlaran ba ay hindi talaga naisasalin sa gawa? Sa gitna ng pandemya, ang Simbahan bilang institusyon ba ay kumilos para salingin ang buhay ng maliliit at ng mga maralita?

Nag-umpisa ang maikling pag-aaral na ito na may pangunahing layuning mailahad ang kuwento ng sama-samang pagkilos ng mga tao sa Isla ng Talim sa Binangonan, Rizal bilang lokal na pagtugon sa mga hamon dulot ng pandemya. Ipinamalas ng kuwento ng mga pamayanan at mamamayan ng Isla ng Talim at ang bumubuo ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo sa Isla ng Talim na buhay na buhay ang mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan at tuloy-tuloy na isinusulong ang panlipunang kaunlaran. Taus-pusong pagbati at pagpupugay ang pinapaabot ng may-akda sa mamamayan ng Isla Talim. Ang mga sumusunod ay ilang mga aral mula sa karanasan ng mga taga-isla ng Talim.

### ***Likas sa mga tao ang paghahangad sa ganap na pagbabago***

Makikita sa kuwento ng mga pagkilos ng mga mamamayan ng Isla ng Talim na ang mga ito ay nakaugat sa mga Panlipunang Turo ng

Simbahan. Maaaring ipagpalagay na bunga ito ng mga gawaing edukasyon ng Simbahan sa antas ng pamayanan sa pamamagitan ng mga tradisyunal na pamamaraan kagaya ng mga sermon ng kura paroko, mga pag-aaral, at mga palihan. Maaari ring ipagpalagay na bunga ito ng kanilang mga karanasan sa pakikilahok sa mga programa at proyektong nakapaloob sa ministryo ng *Social Transformation*. Ngunit sa pakikipagkuwentuhan at pakikipag-aralan sa mga tao, at batay rin sa mga kuwentong ibinahagi ng mga estudyanteng na-deploy sa Isla sa ilalim ng FIP, ang sama-samang pagkilos ng Parokya at pamayanan para tugunan ang mga pangangailangang lumitaw o hindi kaya'y pinatindi ng pandemya ay patunay na ang mga PTS ay mahalaga hindi dahil ito'y sinabi o sinulat o itinuturo ng institusyong Simbahan. Ngunit, patunay ang mga sama-samang pagkilos ng mga tao na ang mga nilalaman ng mga Panlipunang Turo ay mahalaga dahil halaw ang mga ito mula sa buhay, karanasan, at pangarap ng mga tao, lalo na ng mga maralita—ang tunay na Simbahan—para sa mas magandang ngayon at bukas.

*Malaki ang papel ng mga maliliit na parokya sa pagsusulong ng kabutihan/kagalingan ng lahat*

Ayon kay Midgley (2014), patuloy ang paglaki o paglawak ng partisipasyon ng mga *faith-based organizations* (FBOs) at mga simbahan sa larangan ng panlipunang pagpapaunlad. Dahil dito, nagiging malawak na rin aniya ang pagkilala sa FBOs at mga simbahan bilang mga *social development agents*; hindi na natatali lamang sa mga mas “tradisyunal” na mga gawain kagaya ng pagdarasal at pagmimisyon. Ngunit kung babalikan ang mga Panlipunang Turo at lalo na ang mga pagkilos ng mga tao sa Isla ng Talim, makikitang isa talaga sa papel ng Simbahan ay maging ahente ng panlipunang pagbabago o transpormasyon at tagapagsulong ng kabutihan ng lahat. Ibig sabihin, ang mga pagkilos ng Simbahan kagaya ng ginawa at patuloy na ginagawa ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo bilang tugon sa mga hamong ibinunga ng pandemya ay hindi dapat ituring na “bago.” Sa katunayan, ang ganitong mga pagkilos ay dapat na nangyayari sa lahat ng mga simbahan—*not pockets of success stories, but patterns of collective action driven by faith founded on social justice*. Pinapalangkapan ng mayakda ang Parokya ng Sto. Domingo at mga mamamayan ng Isla ng Talim dahil patuloy nilang pinatutunayan na ang paglilingkod ay mapagkalinga, sumasaling sa buhay ng mga maralita, at mapagpalaya, naghahangad ng kaunlarang pinagsasaluhan ng lahat.

*Pakikiisa at pakikilahok, karapatan at pananagutan, mga mahahalagang sangkap sa mobilisasyon ng pamayanan*

Isa pang mahalagang punto na maaaring ikutan ng pagninilay ay ang nabanggit ni Emil Ibero ng St. Vincent School of Theology o SVST noong siya'y nakibahagi sa ika-walong *episode* ng *Kwentong Kwarantín*. Sabi niya, “Tumulong ang SVST sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng mga mainit na pagkain sa mga taong nasa lansangan, sa mga nasa ilalim ng tulay. Nagbigay kami ng maiinom. *Significant* ba ang mga ito? Di namin tinanong ito, bagkus ang panukat ay kung sino ang nangangailangan.” Ngunit ang pangalawa niyang punto ang mas matindi. Sabi ni Emil, “Ang mga inisyatiba ng simbahan ay naging pagkakataon para ma-*activate* yung pag-aambagan ng mga tao sa komunidad. Na-*activate* yung pagkilos na di kailangan o di naghahangad i-*publicize*. Di mo na kailangang pwersahin para umambag.” Ganito rin ang nangyari sa Isla ng Talim. Maliit lang ang rekursong mayroon ang Parokya kung tutuusin para tugunan ang pangangailangan ng siyam hanggang sampung mga barangay. Ngunit habang ginagawa ang pagtulong, nagising o hindi kaya'y nahawa rin ang iba pa para umambag din. Dahan-dahan ay sumigla muli ang diwa ng pakikipagkapwa at bayanihan. Ang ganitong kuwento ay hindi malayo sa kuwento sa Bibliya tungkol sa himala ng pagpapakain sa limanlibong katao (makikita sa Mateo 14:13-21). Ang himala ay hindi ang pagdami ng tinapay at isda na parang madyik kundi ang pagbubukas-loob ng bawat isa na umambag, na magbahagi, at makibahagi sa pagpasan sa mga usapin at mga pangangailangan ng mga mamamayan. Ang pakikiisa o *solidarity with the people* ay bunga ng paglalim ng kabatiran ng mga tao sa umiiral na kalagayan sa pamayanan (*critical consciousness*) at sa pagkakaugnay-ugnay (*interconnectedness*) ng buhay nila.

*Pamahalaan at pamamahala para sa lahat at hindi para sa iilan*

Sa mas praktikal na aspeto, maganda ring tingnan ang naging mahusay na pamamaraan ng Simbahan, paraan na mas naibabagay sa konteksto ng mga pangyayari. Batay sa mga kuwentong naibahagi, naging mabilis at mapagpatuloy ang mga pagkilos. Mga katangiang dapat taglay ng mga inisyatiba dahil na rin nga sa lawak ng kagyat na pangangailangan—gutom/kagutuman. Bagama't dapat bahagi ng pagtugon sa usapin ng gutom/kagutuman ang mga pagkilos na isratehiko, pangmatagalan, at tumutugon sa mga istraktural na mga kadahilanan, dapat din talagang sinasabayan ito ng agaran at kagyat na lunas. Paano ito nagawa ng

isang maliit na simbahan? Una, pinagana nila ang kanilang mga *social networks*—mga kaibigan at tagatangkilik sa loob at labas ng Isla; ang mga taong ito ang nag-ambag ng pera, panahon, panalangin, pagkain, at iba pa. Pangalawa, ginamit nila kung ano ang mayroon sila—ang maliit na bangkang de motor para mamili sa bayan habang walang transportasyon; ang simbahan na ginawang imbakan at kung saan nagbalot ng mga ayuda; mga kaldero, kalan, at mga gamit pang-kusina para sa *feeding program*. Pangatlo, ang pagkakaroon ng istrakturang di-kumplikado kung ihahambing sa burukrasya ng lokal na pamahalaan. Pang-apat, at marahil pinakamahalaga, ang Simbahan ay bahagi mismo ng pamayanan—alam at ramdam nila ang kalagayan at mga pangangailangan ng mga mamamayan. Ang mga aral na ito mula sa karanasan ng Parokya at mga mamamayan ng Isla ng Talim sa naging pagtugon sa pandemya ay marapat na sikap ng matutunan ng pamahalaan sa iba’t bang antas kung nais na maging mas masinop at angkop ang mga gagawing pagtugon sa mga darating pang mga krisis at sakuna sa pamayanan.

*Ang panlipunang pagbabago’y dapat umiikot sa dangal ng sangkatauhan*

Sa pagtatapos, mainam na balikan ang isang nabanggit ni Fr. Rommel noong nakapanayam siya at nagkukuwento siya tungkol sa pangangailangang pang-edukasyon ng mga kabataan. Sabi niya, “Hanggang ngayon ba’y *relief operations* pa rin talaga ang kailangan? Di ba dapat tapos na tayo dito? Di ba dapat ay mga konkretong *response* na sa mga aktwal ng mga pangangailangan gaya ng sa edukasyon?” Kung nanamnamin, makikita natin na ang mga tanong na ito’y nakaugat sa isa sa pundamental na tema ng mga Panlipunang Turo—ang dangal ng tao. Sa maikling pakikipamuhay sa Isla, makikita natin na ang mga tao, kahit na ang mga maralita’y hindi nasanay na umaasa sa tulong ng iba para makakain at matugunan ang iba’t iba nilang mga pangangailangan. Hindi nito sinasabing hindi nila kailangan ng tulong. Ang magandang tingnan ay kung anu-ano ang itutulong at kung paano gagawin ang pagtulong. Ang tulong ba at ang proseso ng pagtulong ay naaayon sa dangal ng tao? Ito ba ay mapanghamak at mapang-alipin o ito ba ay mapagkalinga at mapagpalaya?

## **Ilang mga mungkahi para sa tuloy-tuloy na pagkilos**

Batay sa pagsusuri sa kalagayan sa Isla ng Talim bago ang pandemya, sa panahong ipinatutupad ang malawakang mahigpit na kwarantin, at ngayong nagluluwag na ang mga kwarantin, may apat na

larangan dapat tutukan sa pangmatagalan. Ang mga ito ay hindi lang iminumungkahi para sa Parokya ng Sto. Domingo ngunit para na rin sa iba pang mga institusyon sa Isla ng Talim, kagaya ng mga pamahalaang barangay, at pati na rin sa mga suportang institusyon kagaya ng CSWCD na kasalukuyang nakikipagtuwangan sa Parokya at sa mga pamayanan sa pamamagitan ng FIP.

**Una, kasiguruhan sa pagkain.** Mahalagang gumawa ng mga hakbang para matiyak na ang lahat ng mamamayan ng Isla ay mayroong maaasahang mapagkukunan ng sapat, hindi mahal, at masusustansyang pagkain sa lahat ng panahon.

**Pangalawa, disentang trabaho at kabuhayan.** Habang mayroong mga trabaho at pinagkukunan ng kabuhayan ang mga taga-Isla ng Talim, kailangang matiyak na ang mga ito'y makapagbibigay sa mga tao ng sapat at makatarungang kita. Kaugnay rin nito ang pagpapalakas ng *social protection* upang ang nangyari ngayong pandemya kung saan ang pagkawala ng kita ay nagresulta sa gutom ay hindi na muling maulit.

**Pangatlo, serbisyong pangkalusugan.** Mainam ring matutukan ang pagsulong ng mga *community-based health programs* o ang pagpapalakas ng kapasidad na matugunan ang mga pangangailangang pangkalusugan sa pinakamababang antas ng pamayanan.

**Pang-apat, pamamahala ng pamayanan o community governance.** Kailangan pa ring tuloy-tuloy ang pag-oorganisa at pagpapalakas ng mga samahan. Malaki ang papel ng mga samahan upang matiyak na ang pamahalaan ay para sa lahat at hindi lang sa iilan, na nagagampanan nito nang maayos ang kaniyang pananagutan sa mamamayan. Bahagi rin nito ang patuloy pang pagpapalakas sa kapasidad ng lokal na pamahalaan, lalo na sa antas barangay, na maging mas mapanlahok at maging mas mahusay sa pagbuo ng mga polisiya, programa, at mga proyektong tumutugon sa mga tunay na kagalingan ng pamayanan lalo na ng mga higit na nangangailangan.

**Panghuli, iminumungkahi ring patuloy na sinsinin at palakasin ang social action ministry ng Parokya ng Sto. Domingo.** Bahagi ng pagpapalakas na ito ang mas malalim na pag-aaral sa mga Panlipunang Turo ng Simbahan at pagbuo ng mga programa at proyektong magsasabuhay sa mga tunguhin at pinahahalagahan nito. Hindi maihihiwalay dito ang



patuloy na pagtukoy at pagpanday ng mga lider at patuloy na pag-oorganisa ng mga maliliit na sambayanang Kristiyano o *basic ecclesial communities*.

## Mga Tala

<sup>1</sup> Sa kabuuan ng papel na ito, magkahalinhinang gagamitin ang PSD at Parokya para tukuyin ang Parokya ng Sto. Domingo.

<sup>2</sup> Ang *Kwentong Kwarantín* ay isang *podcast* na inilunsad ng Departamento ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan ng CSWCD. Ito ay isang malayang espasyo kung saan tinatalakay ang mga mahahalalaga at maiinit na isyu ng lipunan sa panahon ng *community quarantine* (CQ) sa Pilipinas.

<sup>3</sup> Ang pangalan ng mga *encyclicals* o liham ng Santo Papa sa mga obispo ay hango sa unang mga salita nito: *Rerum Novarum* [*Of New Things*], *Populorum Progressio* [*The Progress of Peoples*], *Evangelii Gaudium* [*The Joy of the Gospel*], *Laudato si'* [*On Care for Our Common Home*], *Fratelli Tutti* [*All Brothers and Sisters*].

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# SA GITNA NG PANDEMYA NA COVID-19 PAGTUGON NG MGA MANININDA, TSUPER, AT MAMAMAYAN NG POOK MALINIS SA UP DILIMAN

Getting Through the COVID-19 Pandemic: Responses of Vendors,  
Drivers, and Residents of Pook Malinis, UP Diliman

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## Abstrak

*Malinaw na ang epekto ng pandemya dala ng COVID-19 ay dama sa halos lahat ng bansa sa buong mundo, sa halos lahat ng sektor at pamayanan. Isa ang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas sa apektadong institusyon; hindi lamang ang kanyang mga pang-akademikong programa, kundi pati ang iba't ibang sektor at pamayanan na nakapaloob sa buong kampus.*

*Nagbuo ang Tsanselor ng UP Diliman COVID-19 Task Force noong Marso 2020 upang bumuo ng mga kinakailangang programa sa pagtugon sa pandemya. Noong Abril naman ay nabuo ang UP Diliman COVID-19 Response Volunteers o ang UPD CRV na binuo ng mga organisasyon at mga indibidwal upang tumulong sa mga sektor na apektado sa loob ng Brgy. UP Campus. Marami ang tumugon sa panawagan para sa mga boluntaryo—mga guro, kawani, mga mag-aaral, mga samahan sa kampus, at iba pang mga indibidwal. Sila ay agad tumugon sa mga sektor na nangangailangan ng tulong at ito ay nagpatuloy sa halos pitong buwang panahon.*

*Layunin ng papel na ito na maisalarawan ang epekto ng COVID-19 sa mga sektor ng manininda at mga tsuper at sa mga pamayanan ng maralita tulad ng Pook Malinis. Ibabahagi din ang naging stratehiya ng UPD CRV sa kanyang pagtugon na hindi lamang pagbibigay ng relief operations kung hindi kasama ang pagbibigay ng edukasyon sa pamayanan at ang paglalahad ng kanilang mga kahilingan sa mga otoridad sa UP. Pupulot*

*din ng mga aral mula sa karanasan na ito na kaugnay sa disiplina ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan at sa usapin ng disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).*

Keywords: COVID-19, UP Diliman COVID-19 Response Volunteers, community development

## **Panimula**

Ang buong mundo ay hindi naging handa sa pandemya na COVID-19 simula sa pagpasok ng taong 2020. Nag-umpisa ang sakit dulot ng SARS-CoV-2 na virus sa Tsina noong Disyembre 2019 (WHO, 2020a). Habang sinusulat ang papel na ito, sa buong mundo, umabot na sa 43,766,712 ang kabuuang kaso at 1,163,459 na ang namatay (WHO, 2020b). Sa Pilipinas, naman, 375,180 ang kabuuang kaso at 7,114 na ang namatay—karamihan sa mga kaso ay nasa Metro Manila (184,275), at ang Lungsod ng Quezon ay may 33,454 (DOH, 2020).

Simula noong 13 Marso 2020, nilagay ang kabuuan ng Metro Manila sa Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) mula Marso 15 hanggang Abril 14 kung saan pansamantalang sinara ang mga klase, pinagbawal ang maramihang kumpulan ng mga tao (*mass gathering*), at byahe papunta ng Metro Manila mula sa ibang mga probinsiya (PCOO, 2020).

Ang ECQ ay nagtagal hanggang Mayo 15. Naging Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) sa Metro Manila naman noong Mayo 16 hanggang 31. General Community Quarantine (GCQ) na ang Metro Manila mula noong Hunyo 01 hanggang Agosto 03; ngunit binalik sa MECQ mula Agosto 04 hanggang 18 dahil sa tumataas na bilang ng mga kaso. Bumalik na muli sa GCQ ang Metro Manila hanggang sa kasalukuyan (mula sa serye ng balita mula sa [pcoo.gov.ph](http://pcoo.gov.ph)).

Iba iba ang antas ng mga pinapayagan at pinagbabawal na kilos ng mga tao sa iba't ibang antas ng *quarantine*. Ngunit ilalahad lamang sa artikulo na ito ang mga probisyon na nakakaapekto sa ilang mga sektor sa loob ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP), tulad ng mga manininda, mga tsuper, at mga pamayanan ng mga maralita.

Ito ang mga mahahalagang probisyon sa ilalim ng *community quarantine* (IATF, 2020):

1. Pinagbawal ang pagkakaroon ng *face-to-face* na klase ng mga mag-aaral at ginawang *remote learning* ang pamamaraan ng pag-aaral;
2. Pinagbawal ang paglabas ng mga may edad 21 pababa at 60 pataas, kasama iyong mga may *comorbidity* (tulad ng diabetes, mataas ang presyon ng dugo, at iba pa), mga buntis; maliban na lamang kung ito ay para sa mahalagang lakad katulad ng pagpunta sa ospital, pagbili ng mga pagkain, at iba pa;
3. Pinagbawal ang pagpasada ng mga pampublikong sasakyan; pinayagan na lamang ang pasada ng ibang mga ruta nito noong nag-GCQ muli; at
4. Bilang pagtugon sa probisyon na istriktong pananatili sa bahay, pinapayagan ang ibang porma ng pagtrabaho tulad ng *work from home*, lalo sa mga may edad higit 60 at sa mga may ibang mga sakit.

Sinuspinde ang klase sa UP Diliman mula noong 10 Marso 2020 at naging *online* ang moda ng pag-aaral at pagtatapos ng semestre. Nang nagsimula ang unang semestre AY 2020-2021, ganoon pa din ang moda ng pag-aaral kung kaya halos walang mga guro at mag-aaral sa kampus. Ang mga kawani naman ay maaaring *work from home* ang pamamaraan ng pagtrabaho. Ilan lamang kawani ang pumupunta sa kanilang mga opisina upang gumampan ng mga *essential services*.

Dahil sa mga kaganapan na ito, halos pitong buwan nang walang biyahe ang mga tsuper ng mga dyip na UP ang ruta. Hindi din nagbukas ang mga *kiosk* ng mga manininda. Samantalang maraming nakatira sa mga pamayanan, nawalan sila ng hanapbuhay dahil nagsara din ang kanilang mga pinapasukan, o kaya walang kumuha ng kanilang mga serbisyo. Maraming grupo ang tumulong sa mga sektor at mga pamayanan, at isa na dito ang UPD CRV.

Layunin ng papel na ito na maisalarawan ang epekto ng COVID-19 sa mga sektor ng manininda, at mga tsuper, at sa mga pamayanan ng maralita tulad ng Pook Malinis at ang kanilang pagbangon, sa tulong ng mga samahan tulad ng UPD CRV. Pupulot

din ng mga aral mula sa karanasan na ito na kaugnay sa disiplina ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan at sa usapin ng *disaster risk reduction and management* (DRRM).

Ang papel ay may apat na bahagi: 1) pagtalakay sa ilang pag-aaral sa usapin ng kalamidad, pandemya, at ang mga piling salik para sa pagtugon ng mga pamayanan at pagbangon mula sa mga kalamidad at krisis; 2) pagsalarawan ng mga sektor at pamayanan sa kampus ng UP at ang epekto ng COVID-19 sa kanila; 3) pagtalakay ng mga naging tugon ng mga pamayanan, kasama ang UPD CRV; at 4) pagsuma sa karanasan at pagtukoy ng mga mahalagang aral hinggil sa pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan, kaugnay ng usapin ng *disaster*.

Ang mga datos sa pag-aaral na ito ay nakuha sa pamamagitan ng mga pormal at impormal na talakayan kasama ang mga miyembro sa sektor ng manininda, drayber, at ilang residente ng Pook Malinis. Nakasama ang mga sektor at komunidad na ito sa ilang mga pag-aaral na tumatalakay sa kanilang kalagayan sa panahon ng pandemya, mula Mayo hanggang Oktubre 2020. Kasama din sa mga talakayang ito ang kanilang pagpapalano at kampanya kung paano nila haharapin ang epekto ng pandemya sa kanilang sektor at komunidad. Bilang mga boluntir ng UPD CRV, nagawang maidokumento ng mga awtor ang mga kuwento at danas ng mga manininda, drayber, at komunidad.

### **Mga kaugnay na pag-aaral**

Apat na paksa ang ilalarawan sa bahagi na ito: mga pandemyang naranasan nitong huling isang daang taon; ang COVID-19; ang COVID-19 sa Metro Manila; at ang piling salik sa pagtugon ng mga pamayanan sa panahon ng kalamidad.

#### *Mga pandemya*

Ang pandemya ay ang pandaigdigang paglaganap ng isang bagong sakit (WHO, 2010). Sa nakaraang isang daang taon, tatlong pandemya na nagdulot ng pinakamataas na bilang ng mga namatay ay ang (MPHOnline, n.d.):

1. Spanish Flu noong 1918-1920. Tinatantyang 500 milyon katao ang nagkasakit nito at mga 50 milyon ang namatay. Ang tinaguriang H1N1 na *virus* ang naging sanhi ng pandemya na ito;

2. AIDS (*Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome*) simula 1981 hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Ang HIV (*human immunodeficiency virus*) ang nagiging sanhi ng AIDS. Simula noong 1981, tinatantya na 35 milyon na ang namatay mula sa AIDS; at
3. Asian Flu mula 1956 hanggang 1958 kung saan dalawang milyon ang tinatantyang namatay. Nagmula naman ito sa H2N2 na *virus*.

May ibang pandemya at epidemya na hindi umabot ng isang milyong namatay ay ang mga sumusunod: *sixth cholera pandemic* (1910-1911), mga higit 800,000 ang namatay; *H1N1 swine flu pandemic* (2009-2010) kung saan mga 200,000 ang tinatantyang nasawi; at *West African ebola virus epidemic* (2014-2016) na may mga 12,000 katao ang nasawi (Jarus, 2020; MPHOnline, n.d.).

### COVID-19

Ang pandemyang naranasan ng mundo ngayong 2020 ay ang COVID-19, dala ng SARS-COV-2 (*Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2*). Una itong lumabas sa Wuhan, Tsina noong Disyembre 2019. Mabilis itong kumalat sa ibang parte ng mundo lalo na noong unang tatlong buwan ng 2020.

Maraming bansa ang nabigla sa dagsa ng mga pasyente sa kanilang mga ospital at taas ng bilang ng mga namatay. Iba iba ang naging pagtugon ng mga bansang apektado ng COVID-19, depende sa epekto sa kanilang kapasidad para sa serbisyong pangkalusugan. Ilan dito ay: 1) *lockdown* sa mga mayor na mga lungsod o sa mga ilang piling lugar kung saan mataas ang bilang ng nagkakasakit; 2) pagtayo ng mga dagdag na pasilidad para sa mga pasyente ng COVID-19; 3) pananaliksik para sa bakuna; 4) pagsara ng mga klase at mga trabaho upang maiwasan ang kumpulan ng mga tao; at 5) ang pagkaroon ng alternatibong pamamaraan para mapagpatuloy ang trabaho, tulad ng *work from home*.

### COVID-19 sa Metro Manila

Ang unang kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa ay naiulat noong Enero 20; isang babaeng Tsino na may kasamang kapwa Tsino na lalaki. Ang huli ay namatay sa COVID-19 noong Pebrero 01. Siya ang unang kaso ng COVID na namatay labas sa Tsina (Ramzy & May, 2020).



Noong Enero 2020 ay binuo ang Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases batay sa Executive Order No. 168, s. 2014. Binuo ito ng iba't ibang departamento ng pamahalaan na pinangunahan ng Pangasiwaan ng Kalusugan.

Mula noon hanggang ngayon, ang IATF ang pangunahing namamahala sa pagtugon sa sitwasyong dinulot ng COVID-19 sa bansa. Sa paglagay sa mga lugar sa ilalim ng *community quarantine*, maraming manggagawa ang nawalan ng hanapbuhay at maraming mga negosyo ay nagsara. Nagdulot ito ng dagdag na kahirapan sa mga pamilya na dati pa man ay nakakaranas na ng kahirapan sa pamumuhay. Halos 75% ng ekonomiya ay nagsara at umabot sa 17.7% ang walang trabaho habang bumaba ang GDP ng 16.5% (NEDA, 2020a).

Upang mapaglaanan ng pondo ang mga proyektong tutugon sa tumataas na bilang ng mga kaso ng COVID-19, pagbibigay ng sapat na serbisyong pangkalusugan at pagbibigay ng ayuda sa mga apektado ng sitwasyon, pinirmahan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang Bayanihan to Heal as One Act o R.A. 11469 (GOVPH, 2020a) noong Marso 24 na may bisa sa loob ng tatlong buwan. Isa sa mga probisyon ng batas ang pagbibigay ayuda sa mahihirap na pamilya na nagkakahalaga ng Php5,000.00 hanggang Php8,000.00. Tinawag itong Social Amelioration Program (SAP) na ipamimigay ng Kagawaran ng Kagalingan at Pagpapaunlad Panlipunan (Department of Social Welfare and Development o DSWD) ng dalawang beses sa loob ng tatlong buwan (Chavez, 2020).

Para dugtungan ang mga napamahaging programa sa Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, pinirmahan ni Pangulong Duterte ang Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2) o R.A. 11494 noong Setyembre 11 (GOVPH, 2020b). Ito ay may bisa hanggang 19 Disyembre 2020.

Pinaglaanan ng pondo para sa Bayanihan 2 ang mga programang pangkalusugan, panlipunang kagalingan, turismo, edukasyon, transportasyon, agrikultura, pagnenegosyo, at lokal na pamahalaan. Inaasahan na sa pamamagitan ng Php165.6B na pondong ilalaan para sa batas na ito ay mas mabilis ang pag-ahon ng mga sektor na naapektuhan ng pandemya. Ilan sa mga mayor na paglalagakan ng pondo ay ang mga sumusunod (P&A Grant Thornton, 2020):

1. Programang pangkalusugan, tulad ng pagtatayo ng mga pasilidad pang-*quarantine*, dagdag na *special risk allowance* para sa mga manggagawang pangkalusugan, pagdadagdag ng mga *contact tracers*, pananaliksik, at pambili ng bakuna para sa COVID-19;
2. Programa para sa panlipunang kagalingan tulad ng Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS), suporta pangkabuhayan, at subsidiyo para sa mga lugar na malalagay sa *granular lockdown*; at
3. Programa para sa transportasyon, tulad ng tulong pangkabuhayan sa mga apektado gaya ng mga tsuper ng dyip at iba pang pampublikong sasakyan.

Ayon sa Senado, agad mailalabas ang halagang PhP140B; samantalang ang natitirang PhP25.5B ay hahanapan pa ng gobyerno ng pondo (Gotinga, 2020).

*Mga piling salik sa pagtugon at pagbangon ng mga pamayanan mula sa panahon ng kalamidad*

Paano nga ba tinutugunan ng mga pamayanan ang mga krisis na nararanasan? Ang pinakamalapit na maaaring tingnan ay ang mga tugon sa mga bagyong dinaranas taun-taon, nandiyan din ang lindol, pagputok ng bulkan, pagguho ng lupa mula sa mga kabundukan, at iba pa (Bawagan et al., 2015; Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance, 2018).

Sa nakalipas na tatlung taon, nararanasan ng Pilipinas ang pagputok ng bulkang Pinatubo (1991), bagyong Ondoy (2009), at bagyong Yolanda (2013). Dahil sa tindi ng epekto sa maraming bilang na pamayanan at indibidwal mula sa mga kalamidad na ito, matagal ang panahon na ginugol para sa mga *relief operations* ganoon din sa programa para makabangon. Ang mga sumusunod na mahalagang salik ang napulot mula sa mga pananaliksik ukol sa pagtugon at pagbangon mula sa mga kalamidad: ang tiwala sa Diyos; pagbabayanihan; pagkilos ng samahan; at suporta mula sa iba't ibang mga samahan.

### *Tiwala sa Diyos*

Ang kilos ng indibidwal ay ginagabayan ng kanyang malakas na tiwala sa Diyos sa panahon ng kalamidad; naniniwala na hindi siya pababayaan ng Diyos na magliligtas sa kanya sa panahon ng kahirapan. Nakita ito sa mga nawalan ng tirahan dahil sa pagputok ng bulkang Pinatubo at bagyong Yolanda (Bawagan et al., 2015; Quiambao, 2015), at sa mga namatayan dahil sa lakas ng bagyong Yolanda (ESRC DFID Research Impact, 2018). Hindi sila nawalan ng pag-asa at ang kanilang tiwala ang nagtulak sa kanila upang muling bumangon at mag-umpisa. Ayon naman kay Raj (2017), batay sa kanyang mga pag-aaral sa hanay ng mga maliliit na mangingisda, ang “*spirituality*” ay may dalawang aspeto—ang personal na relasyon sa Diyos at ang pakikipagtulungan sa kapwa. Higit itong nakikita sa panahon ng mga kalamidad.

### *Bayanihan*

Bukod sa pang-indibidwal na kilos, mahalaga din ang tulong mula sa malapit na mga kapitbahay o kamag-anak. Nakikita ito sa tulungan ng mga magkakapitbahay, sa maliitang antas (Su & Mangada, 2016), halimbawa ang pagbahaginan ng makakain, tulungan sa pagkumpuni ng mga bahay, paghango ng mga bangka at paglalagay nito sa mas ligtas na lugar, o pagpapatira sa mas matibay na bahay (CARE International UK Shelter Team, 2016). Nakita ito sa muling pagbuo ng pamayanan pagkatapos ng pagputok ng bulkang Pinatubo sa Tokwing *resettlement area* (Quiambao, 2015). Nasulat din ni Barrameda at Barrameda (2011) ang kahalagahan ng bayanihan at damayan sa pagbangon mula sa serye ng mga kalamidad sa Albay.

### *Pagkilos ng samahan*

Labas sa bayanihan, epektibo din ang pagkilos ng mga magkakasama sa isang samahan, lokal na samahan man ito o samahan na may ugnay sa mga samahang pang-rehiyon o pambansa (Reliefweb, 2017). Nakita na ang pag-oorganisa ng pamayanan ay malakas na puwersa upang marinig ang boses ng mga tunay na apektado at upang makipag-ugnayan sa ibang mga organisasyon, maging pribado man ito o mula sa pamahalaan (Reliefweb, 2017). Isang halimbawa nito ay ang pagkakatatag ng People’s Surge, isang alyansa ng iba’t ibang organisasyon, samahan, at indibidwal na apektado ng bagyong Yolanda. Ang alyansa

ang naging daluyan ng adbokasiya at kampanya para hingin sa nasyunal na pamahalaan ang sapat na pondo at maayos na programa para sa mga apektadong mamamayan (Abis, 2016).

Binigyang diin din ito ni Luna (2011) mula sa kanyang pananaliksik sa mga pamayanang naapektuhan ng bagyong Ondoy. Hindi maisantabi ang kontribusyon ng mga organisadong pamayanan sa kanilang pagbangon, na sinasabayan ng patuloy na pagpapataas ng antas na kamalayan at kasanayan. Ang malalim na pagkaunawa ng mga pang-masang organisasyon sa ugat ng pagiging vulnerable ng kanilang komunidad sa kalamidad ay nakatulong din sa pagbangon ng mga apektadong mamamayan. Kung nauunawaan ng mga tao ang istorikal at sosyo-pulitikal na ugat ng kanilang bulnerabilidad sa kalamidad, malalaman nila ang solusyon upang ito ay matugunan (Abis, 2016).

#### *Suporta mula sa iba't ibang mga organisasyon*

Karamihan ng karanasan ng pagbangon mula sa kalamidad ay nagsasaad sa kahalagahan ng suporta mula sa iba't ibang organisasyon; lalo't higit kapag halos lahat ng ari-arian ng mga pamilya ay naanod ng baha, natabunan ng putik o lahar. Dito pumapasok ang iba't ibang *humanitarian organizations* tulad ng Care Philippines, Save the Children, ACCORD, at CARITAS. Mayroon ding mga inisyatibo mula sa mga pribadong samahan mula sa sektor ng simbahan, mga paaralan at mga *foundations* na nangangalap ng mga rekurso at nagpapatupad ng mga programa. Malaki din ang papel ng mga opisina ng pamahalaan sa antas barangay, munisipyo, lungsod, probinsiya, at pang-nasyunal.

Malinaw na ang kolaborasyon ng mga ahensiya na ito ay nagpapalakas ng kakayahan ng mga pamayanan na makabangon at muling makapanimula ng kanilang buhay mula sa kalamidad (Barrameda & Barrameda, 2011; Bawagan et al., 2015; Luna, 2011; Quiambao, 2015; Reliefweb, 2017).

#### **Epekto ng COVID-19 sa ilang piling sektor sa UP Diliman**

Apektado ang lahat ng mga sektor at komunidad sa loob ng UP Diliman ng pandemya. Agad na tinigil ang pasok sa eskwela at trabaho sa mga opisina bilang pagsunod sa pambansang pamahalaan sa deklarasyong ECQ. Nawalan ng mayor na pinagkukunan ng kabuhayan ang mga drayber, manininda, at mga nasa komunidad.

*Noong biglang hinto kami sa pasada, talagang maluha-luha ako kasi iniisip ko saan kukunin ang kakainin namin, ang bayad sa tubig at kuryente. Kinabahan ako nang husto, sobrang takot ko sa mangyayari sa amin.* - Romy Pascual, Pangulo, UP Pantranco

Dahil biglaan ang pag-anunsyo ng ECQ, halos 500 na mag-aaral ang istranded sa mga *dorm* at *boarding house* sa paligid ng Unibersidad. Mayroon ding higit 500 na *construction workers* ang pinahinto sa pagtatrabaho at istranded sa kani-kanilang *project site* sa UP Diliman. Bukod sa wala silang kinikita at maipadadala sa mga pamilya sa probinsya, wala na rin silang makain dahil wala o hindi kaya ay kulang ang binibigay ng kanilang pribadong kumpanya.

Marami din sa mga nanirahan sa mga komunidad ng Brgy. UP Campus ay nawalan ng trabaho dahil sa pandemya. Kalakhan sa kanila ay mga *skilled* at *semi-skilled workers* (mangaggawa sa mga pagawaan, *construction worker*, *security guard*, kusinero, tindera) na namamasukan sa labas ng Unibersidad. Ang iba naman ay mangangalakal. Ang ilan naman sa kanila ay hindi makapasok sa kanilang trabaho dahil walang pampublikong sasakyan. Isa sa pinakaapektado sa mga komunidad ng Brgy. UP Campus ay ang mga nakatira sa Pook Malinis sa Brgy. UP Campus.

Magpopokus ang pag-aaral na ito sa hanay ng mga drayber, manininda, at residente ng Pook Malinis ng UP Campus.

Mayroong anim na ruta sa Unibersidad na binubuo sa kasalukuyan ng 322 tsuper. Ang mga ruta at bilang ng drayber ay: Ikot (65); Toki (14); Philcoa (36); Katipunan (85); SM North (50); at Pantranco (72).

Ang ilan sa mga drayber ay ikalawang henerasyon na ng mga namamasada ng dyip sa loob ng UP Campus. Ang pinakamatagal nang drayber sa UP ay 69 na ang edad at 35 taon nang nagmamaneho; ang pinakabata naman ay limang taon nang nagmamaneho.

Ayon sa mga pangulo ng mga ruta, ang mga drayber ay walang naipon bago ang pandemya dahil sapat lamang ang kinikita nila sa pagmamaneho para sa pagpapaaral ng mga anak at pagsuporta sa pangangailangan ng kanilang pamilya. “Hindi nila naiisip na magsubi,” ayon sa pangulo ng rutang SM North. Dagdag pa, malakas din ang ugaling “kanya-kanya” sa mga drayber bago ang pandemya dahil kaya nilang kumita nang hindi nangangailangan ng tulong ng kapwa nila drayber.

Kaya naman tunay ang pangamba para sa buhay ang naranasan nila nang nahinto ang mga byahe. Gutom ang inabot ng mga drayber at ng kanilang pamilya. Ang ilan sa kanila ay umuwi na muna ng probinsya. Ang mga naiwan naman sa lungsod ay gumawa ng iba't ibang pamamaraan para mabuhay at ito ang umpisa ng pagbubuklod-buklod ng mga drayber at ng mga ruta sa loob ng UP Campus.

Samantala, 70 naman ang kasapiang ng Samahan ng mga Manininda sa UP Campus (SMUPC). Ang SMUPC ay 35 taon nang samahan sa UP Campus buhat nang ipinaglaban ng mga estudyante at manininda na kilalanin sila ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas noong 1986. Bago nito ay pinagbabawal ang mga manininda at hinahabol sila ng mga pulis ng UP upang pagbawalan sa pagtitinda. Ang SMUPC ay kasapi ng Multi-Sectoral Alliance (MSA), isa sa pinakamalawak na alyansa sa loob ng UP Diliman kung saan kasapi ang iba't ibang organisasyon ng mga mag-aaral, manininda, empleyado, at komunidad.

Ang pinakamatagal na miyembro ng samahan ng manininda ay 30 taon nang nagtitinda sa UP. Ang karamihan naman sa miyembro nito ay ikalawang henerasyon na ng manininda.

Arawang kita mula sa pagtitinda sa mga estudyante at empleyado ng Unibersidad ang pinagmumulan ng kabuhayan ng mga manininda. Ayon sa pangulo ng samahan, paralisado ang kabuhayan ng bawat manininda noong nagsimula ang pandemya, kung kaya paralisado rin ang samahan. Marami ang walang ipon kung kaya gutom at utang ang kanilang inabot.

Bago magkaroon ng pandemya ay sinasagot ng samahan ang hulong sa PhilHealth, SSS, Damayan, at Group Insurance ng mga miyembro. Pagtitiyak ito ng samahan na may proteksyong sosyal ang kaniyang mga miyembro ngunit nawala ang lahat ng ito noong pandemya. Bumili rin sila ng bagong sasakyan na gagamitin pangdeliber. Nakapaghulog na sila rito ng 1/3 ng halaga ng sasakyan ngunit dahil wala nang pambayad, napahatak na rin nila ito. Dagdag pa rito, wala na rin ang regular na *team building activities* tulad ng *leadership training* ng samahan dahil wala nang panustos rito. Hindi na rin nakapagbigay ng regular na suporta ang samahan sa mga kampanya ng estudyante, empleyado, at komunidad sa loob at labas ng Unibersidad. Ayon kay Narry Fernandez:

*“Dati kapag may nanghihingi ng tulong sa amin, kamukha noong sa Taal Eruption, nakapagbigay kami ng PhP10,000.00 sa USC Office. Hindi kami makapag-share man lang sa mga rally ngayon. Kung hindi nagkaroon ng pandemya, bukas kami sa kahit sinong humihingi ng tulong, e.”*

Base sa datos ng Brgy. UP Campus, mayroong 460 na kabahayan sa Pook Malinis (PoMa). Hindi lamang isang pamilya mayroon sa bawat bahay. Mayroon ding 156 na bata na edad 0–tatlong taong gulang sa Pook. Arawan din ang trabaho ng mga residente ng Pook Malinis. Ang kalakhan sa kanila ay pangangalakal ang trabaho. Sila ay mga tulak-kariton at nililibot ang mga kalapit na barangay para maghanap ng pwedeng kalakal. Ang ilan naman ay nangangamuhan sa mga malalapit na lugar, ang iba ay drayber ng *tricycle*, ng dyip, o ng Lalamove at Grab. May iilan ding *construction worker* at mekaniko sa Pook.

Bago ang pandemya, nairaraos lamang ng PoMa ang kanilang pang-araw-araw mula sa mga nabanggit na kabuhayan. Walang ipon dahil sapat o minsan ay kapos pa nga ang kanilang kinikita. Nang pumasok ang panahon ng pandemya, gutom din ang dinanas ng kalakhan. Lahat ng kabuhayan ng mga taga-PoMa ay ipinagbawal kung kaya tanging sa ayuda lamang sila umaasa.

## **Mga pagtugon ng mga sektor**

### *Ilang inisyatiba ng mga apektado*

Alam ng mga drayber at manininida na magtatagal pa ang pandemya kaya gumawa sila ng mga paraan kung paano makakayanan ang buhay sa gitna ng pandemya. Sumubok magtinda *online* ang ilang manininida. Sa tulong ng mga estudyante, gumawa sila ng Facebook Page ng kanilang mga tinda at kumukuha ng *order online*. Ang mga taga-PoMa naman ay um-*extra* sa mga trabaho tulad ng *construction worker* at nagpatuloy ng pangangalakal nang nagkaroon ng kaunting luwag sa kilos ng mga tao.

Pina-arkila ng mga tsuper para sa pribadong paggamit ang kanilang mga *jeep*. Ang ilan naman sa kanila ay namasukan muna bilang *construction worker*, tsuper ng Lalamove o kaya ng *tricycle*. May ilan na nagtanim ng gulay sa kanilang bakuran, at ilan naman na may kaunting ipon ay nagtinda.

Ginamit na muna ng ilang asosasyon ng mga drayber ang kanilang natitirang pondo para makapagbigay ng tulong sa mga miyembro. Ngunit dahil kakaunti lang ang pondo, mabilis din itong naubos.

Agad ding tinipon ng mga asosasyon ang mga kasapian para makapag-usap kung paano makakapagtulungan. Nagkaroon sila ng mekanismo sa pag-aayos ng mga rekisito sa pagkuha ng mga ayuda mula sa LGU. Nagtalaga ng mga taong mag-iipon ng mga papeles at maglalagak ng ayuda. Tiniyak din na maihahatid ang mga *relief goods* sa lahat ng mga miyembro sa pamamagitan ng pag-iikot sa mga ito o hindi kaya paglalagak ng ayuda sa kanilang *terminal*.

Samantala, wala namang pondong natira ang Samahan ng Manininda sa UP Campus (SMUPC) noong nagsimula ang *lockdown*. Sumulat sila sa iba't ibang grupo at indibidwal upang humingi ng tulong. Aktibo ring nagpapa-interbyu ang pangulo ng samahan para maipahayag sa marami ang kanilang kalagayan. Tiniyak din nila ang pamamaraan na mabigyan ng ayuda bagaman magkakalayo ang kanilang mga tirahan. Naging kapaki-pakinabang ang *group chat* para magkamustahan, magbigay ng *update* at magbigay ng mga rekisito sa mga ayuda na ibinibigay ng LGU. Inihihi rin ng mga manininda ng tulong ang kanilang miyembro na may espesyal na pangangailangan tulad ng dalawang miyembro nila na may *breast cancer*.

Habang naghihintay ng ayuda mula sa lokal na pamahalaan ang mga taga-PoMa, naisipan ng mga ilang magkakapitbahay na humingi ng sobrang bigas at sardinas na maaaring ibahagi sa mga kapitbahay nilang gutom at walang makain. Nakipag-ugnayan din sila sa ilang mga may-ari ng mga tindahan sa Maginhawa para ihingi ng gatas ang mga sanggol ng lugar. Naibsan nito ang panandaliang gutom ng maraming residente.

Mula nang naisagawa ng University Student Council UP Diliman ang programa nilang *#IskoOps*, ang pinakaunang *relief operations* sa UP Campus noong *lockdown*, dito na umasa nang regular na ayuda ang mga taga-Pook Malinis.

### *Pagbubuo ng UPD CRV*

Bilang mga empleyado ng Unibersidad na aktibo rin sa iba't ibang adbokasiya, hindi bago para sa All UP Workers Alliance ang paghahatid ng ayuda at pagbibigay ng proteksyon para sa mga nangangailangan. May



dagdag na hamon ang pagpaabot ng tulong ngayong pandemya—ang posibilidad na mahawa sa *virus* at unang pagkakataon lamang nila na magsagawa nang matagalan at komprehensibong *humanitarian response*.

Sa kabila ng mga hamon na ito, malay sa pangangailangan ng mga apektadong sektor at komunidad ang Alliance, lalo pa't kasama sa MSA ang ilan sa labis na naapektuhan ng pandemya. Kaya naman noong huling bahagi ng Abril, napagpasyahan ng mga indibidwal sa All UP Workers Alliance na magbuo ng grupo na naglalayong magbigay ng alwan at komprehensibong tugon sa komunidad ng UP sa gitna ng pandemya. Nakatuntong ang paniniwala na ito na ang lahat ng apektado ng kahit na anong uri ng kalamidad ay may karapatang makatanggap ng tulong upang maipagpatuloy ang buhay na may dignidad (Sphere, 2018, p. 30).

Nabuo ang UP Diliman COVID-19 Response Volunteers (UPD CRV) noong huling bahagi ng Abril sa pamamagitan ng serye ng usap na *online*. Malinaw na mayor na kailangang matulungan ay ang mga pinakabulnerable tulad ng mga nawalan ng kabuhayan at ang mga dati nang hirap sa buhay na ngayo'y lalong nahirapan dahil sa pandemya. Napag-usapan na bukod sa pagbibigay ng *relief goods*, mahalaga din ang pagbibigay ng batayang kaalaman kaugnay ng pag-iwas sa COVID-19, at pagtulong sa pagpaparami ng boluntaryo sa mga programa ng University Health Service.

Pitong komite ang bumuo ng UPD CRV: *Data Gathering; Logistics Support; Education; Information Dissemination; Health Workers/ Frontliners; Counselling; Legal; at Cultural*.

Nangalap ng datos ang komite sa Data Gathering; prayoridad na makuha ang bilang ng mga pamilya at ang kanilang kagyat na pangangailangan. Ang nanguna naman sa pangangalap, transportasyon at distribusyon ng rekurso ay ang Logistics Support. Samantala, ang komite sa Edukasyon ang nanguna sa mga pag-aaral sa komunidad kaugnay ng pag-iwas sa *virus*, mga *protocol* sakaling mayroong kapamilya o taga-komunidad ang magpakita ng sintomas, at ilang diskusyon kaugnay ng sitwasyong COVID-19 at susing usaping pangmamamayan. Ang komite ng Information Dissemination ang nagbibigay ng *update* sa *social media* kaugnay ng aktibidad ng UPD CRV.

Ang mga komite naman ng Health Workers/Frontliners, Counselling, at Legal ay may layong tumulong sa pagpaparami ng boluntaryo sa mga nakatayo nang programa ng Unibersidad ngayong pandemya. Tulad ng panghikayat ng mga *health workers* at indibidwal na magboluntaryo bilang mga nars at *contact tracers* sa University Health Service, mga *counselors* para tumugon sa napansing pagtaas ng bilang ng mga nakaranas ng *mental health* na usapin, at suportang ligal sa mga magsasagawa ng *relief operations*. Sa panahon na binubuo ang UPD CRV, may mga karanasan nang panghuhuli sa mga nagsasagawa ng *relief operations*. Nais tiyakin na magiging ligtas ang mga boluntaryo sa isasagawang pag-aaral, *relief operations*, at iba pang gawain. At huli, ang komite sa Kultural na gawain ay naglalayong magbigay ng pagkakataong matuto ng sining habang nasa *lockdown* ang mga tao.

Dalawa ang pamamaraan ng UPD CRV upang makapanghikayat ng mga boluntaryo. Una ay sa pamamagitan ng pagbuo ng Facebook Page upang maging daluyan ng lahat ng impormasyon. May kabuuang 148 na indibidwal ang nagboluntaryo sa iba't ibang komite ng UPD CRV. Ikalawa ay ang paglapit sa mga organisasyon na dati nang nakakasama ng MSA at mga organisasyon na aktibo sa kampus sa panahon ng pandemya. Nahikayat na maging kabahagi ang mga estudyanteng istranded sa Brgy. Krus na Ligas, ang Anakbayan, Alaysining, at iba pang miyembro ng All UP Workers Alliance.

Kasabay nito ay naipormal ang pagpapailalim ng UPD CRV sa UP Diliman COVID-19 Task Force sa pamamagitan ni Vice Chancellor Gonzalo Campoamor II. Siya ang naging Incident Commander ng UPD CRV sa loob ng *taskforce* ng UP Diliman. Sa Institute for Small Scale Industries naman nilalagak ang mga donasyon.

### *Ayuda mula sa pamahalaan*

Bilang bahagi ng pag-alam ng antas ng bulnerabilidad ng mga sektor at komunidad, inalam kung ilan ang nakatanggap ng ayuda mula sa pambansang pamahalaan. Mula sa inilabas na tala ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Lungsod Quezon sa kanilang Facebook Page noong 23 Abril 2020, mayroon lamang 46% ng pamilya sa Brgy. UP Campus ang makakatanggap ng SAP (unang *tranche*). Natapos ang pamamahagi sa unang *tranche* ng SAP mula sa DSWD sa Quezon City noong Mayo at nakumpleto naman ang ikalawang *tranche* noong Oktubre. Ngunit ayon sa isang Kagawad ng

Lungsod, marami ang hindi nakatanggap ng ayuda mula sa DSWD, kung kaya gumawa ang lokal na pamahalaan ng sariling SAP.

Sa tala ng UPD CRV noong Mayo, dalawang buwan matapos ideklara ang ECQ, ay nakatanggap ng tatlo hanggang apat na beses ng ayuda ang mga komunidad sa UP mula sa barangay at lungsod. Ayon sa mga nakapanayam, ang mga ito ay hindi tumatagal ng isang linggo para sa kanilang pamilya. Upang makayanan ang sitwasyon, mas lalo silang naghigpit ng sinturon at nagpapasalamat sa mga pribadong samahan na nakapagbibigay ng ayuda.

Samantala, may mga pahayag naman ang komunidad na marami sa kanila ang nagpasa ng mga rekisitos para sa Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) na programa ng Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) ngunit hindi sila nakatanggap ng ayuda mula dito. Ang mga tsuper ng UP naman na nakumpleto ang *requirements* para makakuha sa ayudang Php8,000.00 sa DSWD ay hindi nakakuha hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Ayon sa kanilang *spokesperson*, tatlo lamang na tsuper ang nakatanggap nito.

#### *Ang UPD CRV at ang humanitarian response*

Namaksimisa ng UPD CRV ang *online platform* sa kanyang gawain. Sa serye ng mga pulong na ito mas naitatag ang oryentasyon at gawain ng mga komite ng UPD CRV. Dito rin nagpapalitan ng impormasyon at nakakapagplano.

May kakapusan sa kaalaman at karanasan sa pagbibigay ng komprehensibo at pangmatagalang *humanitarian response* ang mga boluntaryo ng UPD CRV. Kung kaya inaral nila ang Sphere Handbook, mga tipon na karanasan ng mga *non-government organizations* sa *humanitarian response*. Ang sumusunod ang binanggit na *Top Code of Conduct: Ten (10) Core Principles* (Sphere, 2018, p. 18) na isinasaalang-alang sa pagsasagawa ng mga aktibidad:

1. *The humanitarian imperative comes first.*
2. *Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.*
3. *Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.*

4. *We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.*
5. *We shall respect culture and custom.*
6. *We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.*
7. *Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.*
8. *Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.*
9. *We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.*
10. *In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.*

Naging mabunga ang gawain sa Resource Management. Unang linggo ng Mayo ang unang matagumpay na *relief operations* ng UPD CRV at nasundan pa ito hanggang Oktubre. Maraming mga indibidwal na nagpapadala ng tulong ay nagpaabot din ng mensahe ng pagsuporta at pasasalamat tulad ng “*Thank you for taking care of the UP Community!!!*” at “*Sana po makatulong ang kaunti po naming tulong.*” Mahirap mangalap ng donasyon ngunit nagiging madali dahil sa suporta ng maraming tao. Labas sa mga indibidwal, maraming mga pribadong kumpanya at organisasyon ang nagbigay ng mga donasyon, tulad ng mga UP alumni na nag-abot ng tulong sa mga tsuper.

Hindi lamang nakatuwang ang mga organisasyon sa pangangalap ng rekurso kundi nakatulong din sila upang maging mahusay ang proseso ng *relief operations*. Ang isang organisasyon mula sa College of Engineering ay tumulong upang gumawa ng *spreadsheet* na magsasaayos ng pagtatala ng pinansya at rekursong pumapasok (*inflow*) at lumalabas (*outflow*) sa UPD CRV. Kasama rin dito ang maayos na listahan para sa mga dapat makatanggap ng *relief operations*.

Nagsilbing daluyan ang UPD CRV ng mga *alumni*, organisasyon ng mga estudyante, at grupo sa pag-abot sa mga drayber at manininda na naging bahagi ng buhay nila sa Unibersidad. Maraming pamamaraan ang nasaksihan ng UPD CRV na isinagawa ng mga organisasyon at mga grupo upang makakalap ng pinansya. Ang iba ay naglunsad *online* ng mga paligsahan tulad ng *debate competition*, Zumba, at nagbenta ng *art works* at marami pang iba para lamang makalikom ng halaga na maibibigay sa komunidad ng UP.

Nagkaisa ang UPD CRV na ang prayoridad na ibibigay sa mga benepisyaryo ay mga pangunahing pangangailangan tulad ng bigas, gulay, mga pagkain, *vitamins*, at *face mask*. Sa pamamagitan ng mga bagay na ito mananatiling malusog ang pangangatawan na siyang panlaban ng mga tao sa COVID-19 (WHO, 2020). Hangga't maaari ay sinisikap ng UPD CRV na magkaroon ng *standard* na laman ang *relief packs* na nakabase sa pangangailangan at limitasyon sa rekurso. Ang mga kasapi ng samahan ng tsuper, manininda, at residente ng Pook Malinis ang naging pangunahing makinarya para sa *repacking*, transportasyon, at distribusyon sa kanilang mga miyembro.

### *Edukasyon at pag-oorganisa*

Mahalagang bahagi ng tugon ng UPD CRV ang pagbibigay ng mga pag-aaral kaugnay ng pag-iwas sa COVID-19, *update* sa sitwasyon ng pandemya sa Pilipinas at buong mundo, mga tugon laban sa COVID-19 sa ibang mga bansa na nagtagumpay, at ilan pang mga susing usaping pangbayan. Kadalasang isinasagawa ang mga pag-aaral kasabay ng *repacking* at distribusyon ng mga *relief goods*.

Katuwang din ang UPD CRV sa *mobile*-kamustahan sa mga komunidad upang magpaalala hinggil sa *physical distancing*, tamang paggamit ng *face mask*, pagkain nang masusustansyang pagkain, at pagtulog nang maaga upang makaiwas sa COVID-19. Ang *mobile*-kamustahan ay sinikap maisagawa nang dalawang beses sa isang linggo.

Ngunit matapos ang ilang buwang walang hanapbuhay, hindi na COVID-19 ang inaalala ng mga tao kundi ang kakainin ng kanilang pamilya. Ayon sa mga tsuper, hindi na sila takot mamatay sa COVID-19, takot silang mamatay sa gutom.

*“Sa totoo lang, hindi ubra sa amin itong nanghihingi/namamalimos. Mga drayber kami, marunong kaming magtrabaho. Kaso sa nangyayari na hindi kami makapasada, hindi kami sa COVID mamamatay, sa gutom.”* - Ka Ernie, 70, Tsuper ng UP

Labis ang pagpapasalamat ng samahan ng tsuper, manininda, at mga naninirahan sa Pook Malinis sa tuwing magsasagawa ng *relief operations*, kusinang bayan (*community kitchen*), at mga pag-aaral ang UPD CRV. Ngunit lagi nilang sinasabi na bagaman malaking tulong ang naibibigay sa kanila, kailangan pa rin nilang maghanapbuhay.

Dumadaing na rin ang SMUPC sa nangyari sa kanila ngayong pandemya. Bilang mga maliliit na manininda na umaasa lang sa pagpapaikot ng kanilang puhunan, lugi na ang kanilang maliit na negosyo ngunit hindi tumigil ang mga bayarin sa pagkain, bahay, kuryente, at tubig. Nais na rin nilang makapagtinda.

*“Dati, kami ang nagbibigay ng pagkain sa mga estudyanteng kapos. Ngayon dahil wala kaming tinda, kami naman ang nangangailangan ng tulong. Sana payagan na kaming makabalik uli ng UP para makaraos naman kami.”* - Narry, Presidente, SMUPC

Kaya isa sa naging bunga ng mga pakikipag-alyansa ng UPD CRV sa pangunguna ng mga estudyante ay ang pagtatayo ng alyansa ng lahat ng asosasyon ng anim na ruta sa UP. Nabuo ang UP Transport Group na tumatayong kinatawan ng lahat ng 322 tsuper sa Unibersidad. Kaisahan nito na maitulak ang pagbabalik pasada sa panahon ng pandemya at matutulan ang *jeepney phaseout*.

*“Hindi namin kailangan ng ayuda, ang kailangan talaga namin ay pumasada. Malalakas pa kami, kaya pa naming magtrabaho. Sana ay hayaan na kaming makapagtrabaho ng gobyerno,”* sabi ng isang tsuper ng UP.

Samantala, sa Pook Malinis tulad ng ibang pook na nakakausap ng UPD CRV ay mayroong pare-parehong hinaing. Ang ilan ay kakulangan sa ayuda na naibibigay ng pamahalaan, usapin ng trabaho at demolisyon sa gitna ng pandemya. Upang epektibo nilang matugunan ang kanilang mga pangangailangan, nagbigay-daan ang ganitong sitwasyon upang mabuo ang samahan ng magkakapitbahay sa Pook Malinis. Nabuo ang Nagkakaisang Residente ng Pook Malinis (NAREPOMA) na tumutugon sa kasalukuyang mga hamon sa kanilang komunidad.

### *Gawaing adbokasiya*

Nang tumuntong sa GCQ ang Metro Manila noong Hunyo 01, mayroong mga kumpanya na pinahintulutan makabalik sa kanilang operasyon at maraming tindahan na rin ang nagbukas. Nakapagbiyahe ang ilang ruta ng bus at *jeep* sa Metro Manila ngunit hindi kasama sa napahintulutan ang mga ruta ng *jeep* sa UP.

Nakipagdayalogo ang mga tsuper, manininda, at komunidad upang igiit ang kanilang mga karapatan at kahilingan sa ilang opisyal ng Unibersidad noong Setyembre 18. Tatlong mahalagang kahilingan ang kanilang pinaabot:

1. Hayaang makapasada na ang mga *jeep* sa UP para magkaroon na ng kabuhayan;
2. Hayaang makapagtinda na ang SMUPC sa mga mapipiling lugar na maaaring makapagtinda sa loob ng UP Campus; at
3. Walang demolisyon habang may pandemya.

Ang mga ito ay pinakinggan ng opsiyales ng UP at kasalukuyang nagpoproseso ng mga kongkreto tugon sa mga samahan. Habang sinusulat ang artikulo na ito, nakapaglabas na ng memo ang UP Diliman sa muling pagpasada ng mga *jeep* sa UP simula Oktubre 31.

Sa bahagi ng manininda, kasalukuyan nilang tinutukoy ang mga puwesto para sila makapaninda at ito ay ihahain din nila sa mga opisyal ng Unibersidad.

### **Mga aral mula sa karanasan kaugnay sa disiplina ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan at ng DRRM**

Habang nasa panahon ng ECQ ang buong Metro Manila, nalimitahan nito ang galaw ng mga samahan na nais mag-abot ng tulong dahil mahigpit ang pagpapatupad ng *quarantine* sa mga barangay at hindi nagpapapasok ng ibang mga tao. Wala din pampublikong sasakyan. Kung kaya natagalan din bago nakarating ang ibang mga samahan sa mga apektadong sektor. Ang mga lokal na pamahalaan ang gumampan sa pamamagitan ng pamamahagi ng *relief packs*. Ngunit hindi ito sumasapat sa haba ng panahon na walang hanapbuhay ang mga tao.

Sa unang yugto ng COVID-19 na hindi pa nagbibigay ng pinansiyal na ayuda ang pamahalaan, malaking ambag ang tulong mula sa mga kasapi ng samahan dahil pareho ang kanilang naranasan ng kawalan ng hanapbuhay. Hindi lamang sila umasa mula sa ayuda ng pamahalaan; mahabang panahon din na umasa sila sa isa't isa. Naging prayoridad nila ang magkaroon ng makakain, lalo para sa mga pamilyang may mga

maliliit na anak. Nakahanap sila ng ibang mapagkikitaan. Dumating ang iba pang samahan upang mag-abot ng tulong noong lumuwag na ang *quarantine* noong Mayo.

Nakikita mula sa karanasan na ito ang mga salik na nabanggit sa mga kaugnay na pag-aaral—ang pagkilos ng samahan at ang suporta mula sa iba’t ibang mga organisasyon. Ngunit may mga kaibahan pa din ang mga kuwento ng pagtugon sa COVID-19 na mapupulutan ng aral para sa gawain ng pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan at sa usapin ng DRRM. Ano ang nakikitang kaibahan nito sa iba pang mga kuwento ng pagtugon ng mga pamayanan sa panahon ng kalamidad?

### *Pangmatagalang kalamidad*

Ang kalamidad na tumama sa Pilipinas at sa buong mundo ay kakaiba. Hindi tulad ng dati, kapag may parating na bagyo, alam na ng karamihan kung paano ito paghahandaan. Alam ng karamihan na ito ay magdudulot ng sama ng panahon sa maikling oras lamang; at kinabukasan ay muling mag-aayos ng bahay at kagamitan at hindi kalaunan ay babalik na muli sa dating takbo ng buhay. Ngunit hindi nakapaghanda para sa COVID-19. Hanggang sa ngayon, walang nakakaalam kung hanggang kailan matatapos ang pandemya, kailan babalik sa normal o sa sinasabing “bagong normal.”

Nakita na napakahalaga ng pag-aaral dahil kapag natututunan ng mga sektor at mga pamayanan ang katangian ng kalamidad, sila ay gumagawa ng mga pamamaraan upang mapanatiling ligtas ang kanilang sarili at ang pamilya. Ang ginawang paghahanda ay batay sa kanilang natutunan mula sa mga pag-aaral kung paano makaiwas sa COVID-19. Nagbago din ang kanilang gawi—naging bahagi na ng kanilang regular na ugali ang pagsuot ng *face mask*, paghuhugas ng kamay, at pananatili ng distansya sa isa’t isa.

### *Pag-angkop ng mga samahan sa pagtulong*

Ang mga samahan na kasapi ng UPD CRV ay mula sa mga iba’t ibang sektor na nagsusulong ng kanilang kagalingan at nakikipag-alyansa din sa ibang mga sektor sa UP Diliman. Kapag may kalamidad, ang iba sa kanila ay tumutugon sa ilang mga *relief operations*. Ngunit hindi sila mga *humanitarian organizations* na may kasanayan para tumugon sa



mga kalamidad sa pang-matagalang panahon. Kung kaya kinailangan din nilang sumailalim sa ilang mga pag-aaral upang maayos ang *framework* ng pagkilos, dahil alam nilang pang-matagalan ito.

Malaking ambag naman ang nakagawiang pagkilos ng isang samahan o alyansa. Nariyan ang pagbuo ng pangkalahatang pagtingin o *framework* sa papasukang gampanin, pagbuo ng mga komite upang mapadaloy ang mga iba't ibang gawain, ang pagbibigay ng pag-aaral upang higit na maintindihan ng mga tao ang sitwasyon at ang mga kinakailangang pang-indibidwal at pang-samahang pagkilos, at ang pakikipag-alyansa sa ibang mga samahan para sa iisang layunin.

Habang wala pa ang UPD CRV, malaking tulong din ang ginampanan ng SMUPC, asosasyon ng mga tsuper, at samahang magkakapitbahay sa PoMa.

#### *Panibagong kasanayan, panibagong hanapbuhay*

Dahil sa mahabang panahon na walang hanapbuhay, nagdulot ito ng mas matinding kahirapan at kagutuman. Ayon sa Social Weather Station (Lalu, 2020), halos dumoble ang bilang ng mga Pilipino na nakaranas ng *involuntary hunger* kung ikukumpara sa datos noong Disyembre 2019 (16.7% sa Mayo 2020 at 8.8% sa Disyembre 2019). Ayaw ng mga tao umasa na lamang sa ayuda mula sa pamahalaan at ibang mga grupo. Nais nilang bumalik sa paghahanapbuhay at kumita para sa pamilya. Natuto ang mga tao ng panibagong mga pamamaraan upang kumita, naging malikhain, at ginamit ang teknolohiya para sa kanilang hanapbuhay tulad ng mga nabanggit na pagpasok sa larangan ng *online selling*, *pag-deliver* sa pamamagitan ng Lalamove, at iba pa.

#### *Gamit ng teknolohiya*

Hindi lamang sa mga bagong pamamaraan ng paghanapbuhay nakatulong ang teknolohiya para sa mga manininda. Naging malaking ambag din ito sa pamamaraan ng pagpupulong at pagpapalano na hindi nakagawian dati. Habang mahigpit pa ang *quarantine*, isang paraan para magpatuloy ng komunikasyon ay ang mga *video conferencing apps* at kahit lumuwag na ang *quarantine*, malawak pa rin ang gamit nito.

### *Pagtindi ng bulnerabilidad ng mga pamilya*

Higit na lumitaw sa panahon ng pandemya ang mga tumitinding bulnerabilidad ng maraming mahihirap na sektor sa lipunan—ang kahirapan dulot na mababang pasuweldo, ang kawalan ng kasiguruhan sa hanapbuhay, ang kawalan ng ipon. Kung pagbabatayan ang ulat ng NDRRMC noong katapusan ng Hunyo 2020, mga 17.5M na mahihirap na pamilya ang nakatanggap ng Social Amelioration Program (SAP) (National Task Force, 2020). Ito ay halos 86% ng kabuuang bilang ng pamilya sa Pilipinas (Statista, 2020). Ganito karami ang bulnerable sa populasyon. Bulnerable na sila bago pa dumating ang COVID-19, higit pa itong tumindi dahil sa dagok ng pandemya.

### **Pagsusuma**

Muling pinakita mula sa mga karanasan ng mga manininda, drayber, at mga taga PoMa ang kanilang katatagan sa panahon ng trahedyang at krisis, tulad ng dinulot ng pandemyang COVID-19. Mula sa mga karanasan na ito, ilang mahahalagang aral ang mapupulot para sa disiplina ng Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan at sa DRRM.

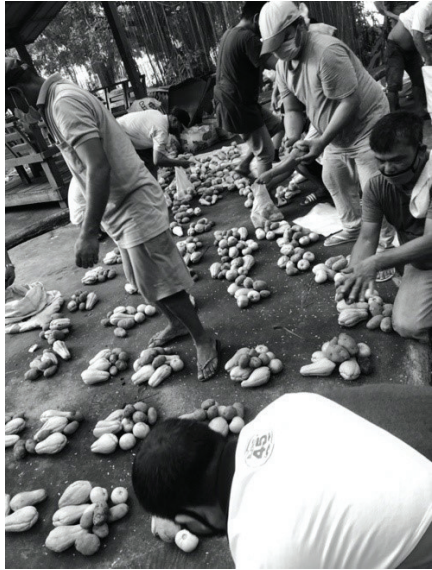
Una na dito ang kahalagahan na masuma ang mga buhay na karanasan upang maidagdag sa mga modyul sa pag-aaral ng DRRM, partikular sa aspeto ng paghahanda at pagbangon. Ikalawa, ang paghahanda ng mga samahan upang tumugon sa mga pananalasa ng mga kalamidad, hindi lamang mga *humanitarian organizations*, kung hindi kasama din ang mga samahan sa pamayanan at samahan ng mga sektor, upang hindi manatiling benepisyaryo kundi aktibong boses para sa pagpapaabot ng mga hinaing at pangangailangan. Ikatlo, mahusay na pag-aralan kung paano higit na mamaksima ang gamit ng teknolohiya sa gawaing pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan. At ikaapat, mapagnilayan ang mga stratehiya upang matugunan ang mga bulnerabilidad ng malawak na populasyon ng bansa.

\*Nagpapasalamat ang mga awtor sa mga tsuper, manininda, mga taga-Pook Malinis, at mga kasapi ng UPD CRV sa pagbuo ng artikulo na ito.

*Mga Larawan ng UPD COVID-19 Response Volunteers (UPD CRV)*



**Larawan 1.**  
Pagbubuhat ng mga bigas  
patungo sa komunidad



**Larawan 2.** Katuwang ang  
mga tsuper sa pagbabalot  
ng gulay



**Larawan 3.** Advocacy work: Pulong ng mga tsuper, manininda, at mga  
taga-Pook Malinis sa opisina ng OCR



**Larawan 4.** Pag-aaral ng komunidad Pook Malinis



**Larawan 5 at 6.** Mobile-kumustahan sa komunidad ng UP

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# SURVIVING THE PANDEMIC

## SAPANG MUNTI WOMEN'S STORIES

### DURING THE ECQ

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#### Abstract

*This article discusses the experiences of women leaders and members of the Samahan ng Kababaihan para sa Kaunlaran at Kinabukasan ng Sitio Sapang Munti (SK3SSM) in Sitio Sapang Munti, Brgy. San Mateo, Norzagaray, Bulacan during the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*The lockdown seriously affected the lives of families in Sitio Sapang Munti. This was most felt by women in the community because of existing unequal gender roles. It put a halt to women's livelihood activities. Reproductive and care work were felt to be heavier due to limited or no incomes which affected responsibilities in securing food and health care.*

*The women responded to their situation by securing food for their families and going back to farming to augment food needs. Most families were also recipients of different forms of aid from external organizations and the government.*

*SK3SSM played a vital role in responding to issues encountered by families during the lockdown by taking the lead in conducting a census of families in the community and in the planning and distribution of food packs. Despite the pandemic's impact on women, it also served as an opportunity for members of SK3SSM to strengthen their leadership roles by actively taking part in decision making, especially in relief work.*

*The article concludes by reflecting on the importance of recognizing women as partners in resolving community issues, organizing them, building their capacities in disaster risk management, and making organizational processes more gender inclusive and responsive.*

**Keywords:** indigenous women, gender-responsive disaster risk management, women organizing

## **Introduction**

This paper is about the experiences of families from the perspective of women from Sitio Sapang Munti, Brgy. San Mateo, Norzagaray, Bulacan during the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents some of the key issues and challenges in the implementation of quarantine measures, and the socio-economic impacts on the residents of Sitio Sapang Munti such as mobility, livelihood opportunities, access to social services, and overall well-being. This paper also presents the initiatives and capacities shown by the women and the community to address the issues related to the ECQ, and how ongoing community organizing efforts contributed to enhancing the leadership role of women in times of emergency. This paper concludes by analyzing the experiences of the women of Sapang Munti through a gender-responsive Disaster Risk Management framework to highlight how pandemics as disasters magnify gender inequalities, and how the community stands to benefit in managing disaster risks when women's capacities and roles for community governance are recognized and strengthened.

Sitio Sapang Munti is located within the Ipo Watershed which is part of the Angat-Umiray-Ipo network. The watershed supplies 96% of Metro Manila's water needs. As of July 2020, there are 116 families living in Sitio Sapang Munti, mostly composed of the Dumagats who consider the watershed as part of their ancestral domain.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) is implementing the Forest for Water Program that aims conservation efforts towards the protection, conservation, and management of forests and wetlands in the Ipo Watershed (Alcantara et al., 2017). The Forest for Water Program uses the Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) approach which involves the participation of community residents inside the watershed for land preparation, planting, and maintenance of forest land.

Since 2016, WWF-Philippines and the Department of Community Development (DCD) of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), University of the Philippines have been partners under the latter's Field Instruction Program (FIP) to help

organize and build capacities of Sitio Sapang Munti residents and other communities inside the Ipo Watershed. Under the FIP, Community Development (CD) students are required to live in the community for one to two semesters. It is through community integration that “students become more grounded, analytical/critical, and incrementally gain deeper understanding of the complex local situation and dynamics as it relates to national and even global conditions” (Department of Community Development, 2019, p. 10). Specific to the partnership with WWF, the students’ integration and community organizing work aims to increase capacities of community members so that they can participate in decision-making in programs of institutions engaged in the preservation of the watershed such as the Forest for Water Program.

The Samahan ng Kababaihan para sa Kaunlaran at Kinabukasan ng Sitio Sapang Munti (SK3SSM) is an organization of women that aims to address the needs of women in Sitio Sapang Munti. Since its formation in April 2018, the organization has been involved in increasing livelihood opportunities and access to health services by women in the community. Currently, the organization has 70 members. Students under the FIP are directly working with SK3SSM in terms of leadership development, organizational strengthening, and capacity building.

## **Methodology**

This paper presents the results of a qualitative research conducted after the Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) was declared in Bulacan. Interviews were conducted with six women leaders of SK3SSM, aged 26 to 58 years old. They were selected because of 1) their active involvement in the different activities of SK3SSM during lockdown, and 2) their representation of different areas within Sitio Sapang Munti. The interview data were validated during a general assembly (GA) of SK3SSM members. The attendees also shared their experiences during the lockdown which were also used in this research. There were 40 members present during the GA, with ages ranging from 18 to 62 years old. All the women leaders and members who shared their stories have families and children.

## Conceptual Discussion

A considerable amount of literature on disaster risk management points out that disasters affect women and men differently because of existing gender inequalities brought about by their differing condition and position in society (Ariyabandu & Wickramasinghe, 2004, in Ariyabandu, 2009; Ciampi et al., 2011; Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery [GFDRR], 2020; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2017b). Socioeconomic conditions, cultural beliefs, and traditional practices have continuously put women in a subordinate position. Gender roles and gender relations have rendered women poorer and more vulnerable compared to men in the same social group or class (Ariyabandu, 2009). In poor communities, women tend to have less access to and control over resources and less power which marginalizes them and makes them more vulnerable. Different sectors of society, including women, that are poor and marginalized are more vulnerable when disasters happen (Ciampi et al., 2011).

It is also because of these gender roles and relations and the gender division of labor that women and men are perceived to have different skills and capacities (Ariyabandu & Wickramasinghe, 2004, in Ariyabandu, 2009). Gender stereotypes have led society to believe that women are weaker and mere victims of disasters, when in fact they are active agents and first responders when disasters strike (Ciampi et al., 2011; UNDRR, 2017a; Yonder et al., 2009). Women's skills and capacities in performing and balancing their productive, reproductive, and community management work have made them capable to lead and be active in rebuilding their communities, calling for community meetings, and organizing disaster response coalitions to address their communities' immediate needs (Enarson & Morrow, 1998, in Yonder et al., 2009). More women than men are leaders and members of grassroots organizations focused on addressing disaster issues, and communities with strong women's organizations respond more quickly when disasters strike (Delaney & Schrader, 2000; Enarson, 2000; Fothergill, 1998; in Yonder et al., 2009).

In disaster preparedness and disaster mitigation, it is vital to organize women and recognize their potentials and capacities (Ciampi et al., 2011). The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) also explains that women's empowerment is an essential approach in building community resilience and contributing to sustainable development and this can be realized through gender-responsive disaster

risk management which involves “analyzing how gender differences and gaps—in terms of access to political, economic, and social resources—affect women and men’s resilience to natural hazards; planning concrete actions to address those differences/gaps to reduce underlying vulnerabilities; and assessing the impacts of those actions” (GFDRR, 2020, para. 2).

Empowerment and participation of women are also given priority in the Guiding Principles and Priority Action 4 of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) (United Nations, 2015).

At the forefront of facilitating empowerment and participation among marginalized groups, including women, is Community Development (CD). CD covers an extensive field of processes, practices, principles, and actors relating to collective action of communities to address common problems. While there are varying interpretations and definitions of CD as an approach to development, working with communities often involves raising awareness and enhancing capacities of community members to articulate their needs, identify and mobilize their assets and resources, and develop collaborations between communities and other actors who can facilitate and support community empowerment and expression (Kenny, McGrath, & Phillips, 2018, p. xxv). The activities inherent in CD processes aim to raise the capacities of the community in realizing their goals relating to their well-being (Homan, 2016, p. 61).

CD-oriented projects have been shown to create positive impacts on women’s economic, social, and political empowerment even among conservative cultures as their participation has made them more self-assured in their interaction with their families and communities (Independent Evaluation Group, 2017, pp. 29–37).

### **Gender roles in Sitio Sapang Munti before the pandemic**

This portion discusses the existing gender roles of men and women in Sitio Sapang Munti since before the COVID-19 pandemic. It describes the types of work that men and women perform in their households and community: productive, reproductive or care work, and community management work.

*Productive work*

Most men in Sitio Sapang Munti are *Bantay Gubat* (BG) or “forest watchers.” The main function of the BG is to assist the foresters of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in implementing the laws and policies governing the protection, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the Ipo Watershed. Currently this is the main source of regular income inside the watershed. Part of the duty of the BG involves guarding and patrolling the forests for illegal loggers. These operations take several days at a time. Historically, salaries of the BG have almost always been delayed,<sup>1</sup> causing BG families to incur large debts from the Maligaya Grocery, one of the main grocery stores in the barrio where the BG members have a credit line.

There are also male members of the community who are involved in Sining Ipo, a group organized by the water services provider Maynilad to make woodwork and crafts out of driftwood, with the products being pre-ordered by Maynilad. This arrangement provides an additional, but not regular, source of income for the families.

Stick-making (sticks made of bamboo, used for barbecue and other street food) is another income-earning activity engaged in by most women in Sitio Sapang Munti. Although most of the activities in stick-making are done by women, men also help by harvesting the bamboo.

Before the pandemic, stick-making provided a regular source of income for the families since the earnings helped in making ends meet and sustained everyday needs. Women also sold fruits, root crops, and vegetables harvested from their *kalaanan* (ancestral land assigned to the family by the tribe). These crops were bought by middle persons both from inside and outside the community. Since BG salaries were usually delayed for months, the women relied heavily on these other income-earning activities to address their daily needs.

Through the SK3SSM and its partnership with the Community Crafts Association of the Philippines, Inc. (CCAP), the members of the organization have also honed their skills in crafts making. The members of the organization were trained by CCAP on production of crafts made of bamboo. Then, CCAP would pre-order these products from the organization and pay for them at a fair-trade price. The organization’s partnership with CCAP, the UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries

(UP ISSI), and Miriam College has helped them in terms of financial literacy, pricing, and marketing of their products. These engagements also open opportunities for SK3SSM to participate in trade and school fairs to sell their products, as well as extend these income-earning opportunities to other members of the Sitio Sapang Munti community.

### *Reproductive or care work*

Household tasks that are associated with heavy work such as house repairs, fishing for the family's consumption, gathering firewood, and fetching water are performed by male members of the household.

Reproductive work or care work which involves maintaining the household and child-rearing is considered as the primary role of women. Men seldom help in these tasks. Women are also the ones who negotiate for loans in the form of food supplies from Maligaya Grocery and other shops in the barrio. Purchasing food and other household goods in the barrio entails walking one to two kilometers (depending on the season, with drier seasons entailing longer walks), riding a boat (which costs PhP15.00) and a tricycle (PhP25.00). This difficult and expensive trip to the barrio is the reason why the women of Sitio Sapang Munti try to schedule and minimize their trips, often buying in bulk if their resources permit it.

### *Community management work*

The Tribal Council of Sitio Sapang Munti is dominantly male led. The BG, aside from their main task as forest watchers, also perform peace and order functions inside the community.

As an extension of their reproductive or care work at home, women also perform these roles at the community level. They participate in activities that involve accessing services and social protection such as medical missions, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) activities, and school-related activities. Women, through the SK3SSM, are also involved in the management of exposure visits to the community organized by different partner organizations and universities.

## **The COVID-19 pandemic and declaring community quarantines nationwide**

On 12 March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte placed the entire Metro Manila under community quarantine from 15 March to 14 April 2020 (PCOO, 2020). On 16 March 2020, the rest of Luzon Island was placed under ECQ to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Parrocha, 2020). On 25 March 2020, Republic Act 11469: “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act of 2020” was signed into law, giving the President special powers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

ECQ protocols implemented included: work suspension, flexible work arrangements in non-essential sectors, work continuance in essential sectors, enforcement of the rule of law, i.e., strict adherence to safety protocols, travel ban, ban on crowded gatherings, and school closures (NEDA, 2020).

To address the economic impacts that resulted in work suspension among low-income and vulnerable sectors of society, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was tasked to lead the government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP) (Gita-Carlos, 2020). Under the SAP, emergency subsidies were provided to 4Ps beneficiaries, informal economy workers, indigenous peoples (IPs), the elderly, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the underprivileged and homeless.

In the succeeding months of the ECQ, the government received various criticisms over the handling of the lockdown, particularly from the basic sectors, regarding the heavy-handed treatment of violators of the ECQ measures (Billing, 2020; Gonzales, 2020a), selective and preferential treatment (Mendez et al., 2020), and violation of human rights (Movido, 2020).

The SAP was also marred with various controversies such as slow and/or delayed distribution of cash subsidies (dela Cruz, 2020), corruption (Gonzales, 2020b), and inadequacy (Bisenio, 2020).

A week prior to the transition from ECQ to General Community Quarantine (GCQ) of Metro Manila and nearby provinces, the total reported cases of infected patients reached more than 14,000 and the death toll above 900 (Esguerra, 2020), unemployment was at its highest in the last 15 years (Roa & de Vera, 2020), and the total economic losses had reached more than a trillion pesos (de Vera, 2020).



## **Norzagaray, Bulacan under ECQ**

The provincial authorities of Bulacan issued guidelines for local implementation of the ECQ measures through Executive Order No. 14 (Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2020, March 18) and Memorandum DRF-03192020-94 (Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2020, March 19). These included strict implementation of a province-wide curfew, strict home quarantine except for purchasing food and medicines, no travel except for those employed as front liners and essential workers, closure of non-essential establishments, house-to-house distribution of quarantine passes (with only one quarantine pass per family), house to house distribution of relief goods, observance of physical distancing, and no public transportation.

On 20 April 2020, Norzagaray—the town to which the Ipo Watershed belongs—declared its first two COVID-19 cases (Municipality of Norzagaray, 2020, April 20). It was among the last municipalities of Bulacan to have a COVID-19 case. Norzagaray implemented its own ECQ measures, based on the official memos from the national and provincial government (Municipality of Norzagaray, 2020, April 18).

The Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) was implemented in Bulacan on 16 May 2020 (Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2020, May 15). It maintained the same protocols for health, allowed establishments to open at a limited capacity, and allowed operations for tricycles with one passenger only. Home quarantine was still implemented, with movement limited to securing essential needs. Only those involved in essential services were allowed to go out, including employees of establishments given clearance to open.

As of October 2020, Bulacan was placed under a Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) which allowed for more movement, shorter curfew hours, regulated public transportation, limited operations of malls and establishments offering services beyond food and medicine production, and observance of minimum health protocols (Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2020, October 30).

On 10 November 2020, the Municipal Health Office reported that the town of Norzagaray had a total of 186 cases (Municipality of Norzagaray, 2020, November 10); while, as of 16 November 2020, the province of Bulacan as a whole had 8,739 COVID-19 cases (Bulacan Provincial Health Office, 2020, November 16).

### **Sitio Sapang Munti under lockdown<sup>2</sup>**

*“Nabalitaan sa TV at narinig din sa radyo...naku hindi na daw tayo pwedeng lumabas-labas.”*- Nanay Basyon (“We learned about it [COVID-19] from the TV and radio. We are not allowed to go out anymore.”)

As in most of Luzon, residents of Sitio Sapang Munti learned of the ECQ restrictions from television and radio news reports. Although Sitio Sapang Munti has no electricity, some residents had been able to power their appliances with generators, car batteries, or solar panels. Representatives of nearby Brgy. San Mateo also went to Sitio Sapang Munti to inform the residents of the lockdown and to distribute barangay quarantine passes.

From what the residents understood, the lockdown was meant to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, which they compared to *peste* or an epidemic that sometimes befalls livestock. According to them, the news painted COVID-19 as highly contagious. Therefore, the residents of the community understood, and believed necessary, that the lockdown was meant to prevent COVID-19 from reaching the barangay so that people would not get infected.

The Brgy. San Mateo LGU implemented the following lockdown measures with a warning that violators would be charged in accordance with the law:

- Issuance of barangay quarantine passes to limit the number and movement of people in the barangay. Under this measure, only one family member may go out to buy food and other necessities, and only within the barrio or the barangay proper. The quarantine passes also indicate which day of week the holders can use them (e.g., persons with passes indicating Monday and Wednesday may only go out on the said days).
- Strict curfew from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

- No public transport from Bigte (the nearest urban center to Brgy. San Mateo) and back. However, some tricycles were allowed to operate within the barangay provided that they only service one customer per trip.
- Use of face masks in public and strict observance of social distancing protocols.

Specific to Sitio Sapang Munti, the Manila Water Sewerage System (MWSS) also directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) detachment to limit the entry and exit of people at the gate of Ipo Dam to residents with a quarantine pass from various *sitios* inside the dam and MWSS employees; and to implement the barangay curfew. Sitio Sapang Munti, through the BG, also banned the entry of non-residents to ensure safety of the residents.

The Norzagaray Municipal Social Welfare Office (MSWO) facilitated the implementation of the SAP for those economically displaced by the ECQ. The cash grants benefited 4Ps beneficiaries, senior citizens, and PWDs. The SAP recipients list was also expanded to cover families that were not included in the original list. However, there were questions raised by some mothers regarding the transparency and criteria of the SAP.

### **Issues and challenges of the lockdown on women**

The implementation of lockdown measures has been especially hard on the mothers of Sitio Sapang Munti. Women, by default, are the ones managing their households and community. BG operations were still active during the lockdown, requiring the men to be gone for days. Therefore, household concerns such as food, health, education, budgeting, and earning additional income were mostly the responsibilities of the mothers.

#### *Livelihood activities were interrupted*

*“Natakot kami...wala pang sweldo ang Bantay Gubat. Paano na kung hindi na magpautang?”*- Nanay Elsie (“We were worried... the Bantay Gubat have not yet received their salaries. What if we cannot get a loan [from Maligaya Grocery]?”)

The lockdown came at a time when the BG had yet to receive their salaries equivalent to six months' work. Women's incomes, which addressed their family's everyday needs, were affected because they could not sell their barbecue sticks due to the suspension of public transport. Also, many of their contacts in the market stopped taking orders because of low sales due to the reduced public consumption.

Women had to resort to advancing food and essential goods on credit from the various grocery stores in the barrio to be settled during payday. However, this also stopped when they reached their credit limit.

### *Health issues were more challenging*

The timing of the lockdown coincided with the season for coughs and colds in Sitio Sapang Munti. What used to be ordinary symptoms became a source of fear and suspicion because these were similar to COVID-19 symptoms. The common practice of mothers bringing their sick child to the health center resulted in a dilemma—traveling could expose them to people with COVID-19, but the condition of their child could worsen if not given proper medical attention.

Buying medicines was also problematic when these were not available in the barrio. Only private vehicles were allowed through the checkpoint in Bigte, so some mothers resorted to renting private motorcycles which added to their financial burden.

There was also the risk of discrimination from hospitals. A case was reported of one resident who died due to a non-COVID-19 ailment, because the hospitals refused to accept him out of fear that he may be contagious.

### *Home quarantine affected mental well-being*

*"Nahirapan na hindi na makakilos...mas nakakabalisa ng isip... mas nagmamamanman sa mga anak na hindi mapalayo."*- Nanay Ine ("It was hard not to be able to move/ travel... it is worrisome... we watch over our children so that they will not stray far.")

The presence of the pandemic has instilled fear in many Sitio Sapang Munti residents. Some have been very worried about family members getting infected because they do not have money for medical consultation and hospitalization. When the women and their families

started farming to augment their food supply, they would bring the family members along to their *kalaanan* to avoid contact with strangers.

Before the pandemic, going outside of Sitio Sapang Munti and visiting family members and relatives had been a common form of recreation and a source of social support. Because of the lockdown measures, the residents' inability to visit and connect with others has given way to worrying. Home quarantine is compared to being in prison.

*Challenges brought by the lockdown were hard and exhausting*

The women expressed that their multiple responsibilities in reproductive or care work felt heavier during the lockdown. It was up to the mothers to look for or supplement the family's food requirements by going outside of Sitio Sapang Munti either to buy or to borrow from neighbors, while their husbands who are members of the BG had provisions for food during their operations. The women had to manage the meager budget of their family given that BG salaries were delayed and their own sources of income were cut off. When asked why they were the ones who secured food for the family by going to the barrio, negotiated with Maligaya Grocery for a loan on food supplies, and suggested farming to their families, the women of Sapang Munti said that their families depended on them to take care of the household (*"Siya ang inaasahan na kumilos sa bahay."*). As mothers, they were worried about food and health. They knew that it would be difficult if a family member were to get sick and needed to be hospitalized. They also had to exert extra effort in ensuring the safety of their children by constantly monitoring where they were and making sure that they did not interact with strangers. Thus, for the duration of the lockdown, it was the women, as mothers, who took charge of food, relief goods received, and money received as assistance from the government.

The women were likewise the ones who held the quarantine pass for their family because of their availability and capacity to transact outside of their community. Despite the ECQ measures limiting movement of persons below 18 and over 65 years old, senior citizen women had no choice but to do the transactions on behalf of their household because they are more able and capable compared to their other family members. Aside from taking care of the children and the household and doing farming tasks, the women made the physically taxing trips to the barrio to get food supplies. Since the

lockdown happened in the summer when the river was shallow, the previously available boat rides were shorter, so the women had to walk a longer distance while carrying heavy loads of supplies.

With economic activities stalled, mounting debts with no clear way of repaying them also became a major source of concern during the lockdown. The women voiced out that they felt a sense of frustration because they are not able to perform livelihood activities to augment the family income. Overall, they shared that the lockdown was very tiring for them.

### **Responses of women to issues experienced during the lockdown**

#### *1. Securing food for the family*

*“Sinigurado namin na may bigas.”* – Nanay Bingkay (“We made sure that we had rice.”)

When news of the lockdown reached the community, families who had disposable income were able to buy a month’s worth of rice from Maligaya Grocery. Those who had good credit standing were also able to purchase on credit rice and other grocery items they needed to survive the lockdown. Since the salaries of the BG were delayed and the lockdown was impending, Maligaya Grocery announced that it would stop giving out loans until the BG could start paying. This further heightened the women’s insecurity since Maligaya Grocery was their nearest source of food supplies even if they did not have money, and they were the ones who had to transact with the grocery for a loan on food items.

During the lockdown, the diet of the families also changed because they began to rely on their crops for food. The mothers shared that, aside from canned goods and noodles from relief goods, they ate mostly bananas and *kamote* (sweet potato).

Aside from their own crops, other sources of food for the families were the series of relief operations from SK3SSM, the barangay, and churches. Families who were beneficiaries of the SAP and the 4Ps or belonged to the IPs were able to get cash and buy more rice. The women said that it is important to have rice even if the viand consists only of cooking oil and soy sauce.

## 2. Farming

*“Kahit papaano may mabuting dulot ang lockdown sa pamamagitan ng pagtatanim ng mga tao.”* (“The lockdown contributed something good because people went back to farming.”)

The lack of income and food sources from the barrio due to the lockdown made the women decide to return to farming. Historically, the families in Sitio Sapang Munti were already engaged in farming in their *kalaanan* when *kaingin* (slash and burn farming) was still allowed. They relied more on their own produce to sustain their families and to sell for cash. This practice ceased, however, and fewer families engaged in farming when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) put a stop to *kaingin* in its program for watershed rehabilitation. It was also around this time when the families heard the news that those living inside the watershed would eventually be asked to move out.

Before the lockdown, most families already had bananas and root crops planted for extra cash. When the lockdown was implemented, it was the women who first suggested to their husbands that they should plant more crops or start farming (for those who were not engaged in farming as a source of income). As a result, most of the families in Sitio Sapang Munti turned to farming to augment their food supply. They planted bananas, cassava, sweet potato, taro, string beans, corn, spinach, okra, eggplant, ginger, avocado, *guyabano*, *rambutan*, and purple yam for their own consumption and for selling, as well as herbal plants which they used as health remedies for colds, cough, and fever since access to health care was difficult. The seeds were previously given by East West, an NGO for sustainable agriculture that gave trainings to the members of SK3SSM, and the Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (IPMR) who distributed seedlings through the tribal chieftain. The resulting crops sustained the families for the succeeding months of the lockdown since their main sources of income (stick-making and the BG salary) were not reliable. The excess produce was sold to the nearby markets (in the barrio and nearby Sampol) when quarantine measures became more relaxed. Thus, the women expressed that the families’ renewed involvement in farming was one positive result of the lockdown.

The families also engaged in farming to avoid or lessen the possibility of encountering people from outside the Ipo Dam area. Their farms are located in the outskirts of their immediate community and they built huts so that they could stay longer while working on their farms. This also made the mothers less worried about possible exposure of their children to other people, especially those from outside the community.

### 3. *Accessing aid*

The community members of Sitio Sapang Munti also received aid (*ayuda*) from several organizations during the ECQ period: the AFP, Brgy. San Mateo and the Municipality of Norzagaray, the Provincial Government of Bulacan, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya, and three batches of relief distribution from the fund drive initiated by the CSWCD FIP students assigned to the community. The relief goods received from these organizations and the crops that families were able to harvest bridged the food needs of the community during the lockdown.

In terms of financial assistance, some families were recipients of the government's different forms of the SAP: the Emergency Subsidy Program (ESP), the Expanded and Enhanced 4Ps, and assistance for Indigent IPs. The recipients of the SAP shared that they received payouts in April and September 2020. However, the basis for qualifying for the SAP was not clearly explained to the members of the community, and the mothers were further discouraged from going to the barangay to inquire and seek clarifications because they would have to borrow money for the tricycle fare which was expensive.

### **Role of SK3SSM in responding to the issues of the community during lockdown**

During the lockdown, SK3SSM was involved in the planning and distribution of three batches of food packs from the fundraising initiated by the CSWCD FIP students. The partner organizations and institutions of SK3SSM (Ateneo High School, Miriam College, and University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center, Inc.) also made donations for this fundraising initiative. For all the batches, women leaders



identified what kind of goods would be purchased, then coordinated the purchase from Maligaya Grocery, the repacking of the food items, and the distribution of the food packs.

For the last batch of food packs, a separate fundraising for all families inside the Ipo Watershed was done by another organization. The funds raised were not enough to cover the cost of a substantial food pack per recipient-family. So the women leaders of SK3SSM decided to combine the remaining funds raised for families in Sitio Sapang Munti with the funds raised for the families in the whole of Ipo Watershed to purchase goods to complete substantial food packs. SK3SSM also took charge of planning, repacking, and distributing the food packs.

The organization also conducted a census of all families in Sitio Sapang Munti; and for the third batch of relief distribution, they also visited the other *sitios* inside the watershed to get a complete list of families. The census and list were also used as references for the distribution of relief goods from the other organizations.

The members of SK3SSM have come to recognize the importance of being part of an organization and having partners outside of their community. They have gained the recognition and respect of other community members, such that women from other *sitios* asked to be part of the organization, increasing SK3SSM's membership.

SK3SSM members and leaders take pride in their efforts to help their community. They admit that being able to help gives them a good feeling and motivates them to continue working for the organization, despite the challenges they experienced during the lockdown. The leaders expressed that, if the organization can help families in the community, it is their hope that the members will continue to support the organization.

### **On improving government's response to the pandemic**

The members of SK3SSM think that the government could have done better in terms of imposing travel bans earlier and being more prepared for the pandemic. Specifically, the members think that the government should have addressed the pandemic in the following ways:

### 1. *Distribution of relief goods*

The women shared that relief goods from the barangay were not enough and there were stories about the barangay not giving the right allocation of relief goods to the families. Because of this, the members of SK3SSM would rather have the municipal government give the goods directly to the community instead of going through the barangay. In terms of distribution, given the location of Sitio Sapang Munti, the women suggested that goods be dropped off at the Ipo Dam gate and the tribal leaders, SK3SSM members, and BG would take charge of the distribution. Allocation of relief goods should be based on family size and should consist of rice and other items for everyday needs including soap, coffee, sugar, salt, and other food items needed for cooking. The food distributed should also consider the staple food eaten by Dumagats. In the interviews, the mothers asked, “Noodles *at sardinas na lang ba ang alam nilang kinakain ng Dumagat?*” (“Do they think Dumagats only eat noodles and sardines?”)

### 2. *Distribution of financial aid*

Some of the women expressed that receiving financial support during the lockdown was better than getting relief goods. They also realized that it is important to have savings or receive cash support in situations like the lockdown. Not all women in Sitio Sapang Munti qualified for the SAP even though they are eligible based on their identity and context. They said that they are unaware of the qualifications to be a beneficiary, and also that the SAP should be given every month of the lockdown instead of just two payouts.

### 3. *Livelihood and health*

From the perspective of the women, quarantine measures could be implemented without sacrificing the people’s livelihood and other sources of income. Limited movement and the closing of non-essential industries and businesses affected part-time work, selling, and other sources of income of the women and other community members. In terms of accessing health services, the women suggested that markets and drug stores be made more accessible to their community given the quarantine measure on limited movement. Availability of medicines and doctors to check on them and assure them that they do not have COVID-19 could also have been very helpful during the lockdown.

## Analysis and conclusion

Gender roles in Sitio Sapang Munti were already unequal prior to the pandemic, as reflected in the scope of work, responsibilities, and benefits in women's triple role as they bear more responsibilities compared to men.

Men have more access to regular and higher income work such as serving as *Bantay Gubat* (BG), while women only have access to informal work. The community's belief that the woman's domain is at home—caring for children and addressing daily household concerns—has denied women of opportunities for more dependable sources of income. Women remain responsible for ensuring that the family has food, which oftentimes entails borrowing from family, neighbors, and Maligaya Grocery, while community governance and decision-making regarding community concerns are still predominantly male-led. Although the SK3SSM is not officially part of the tribal leadership, the organization has actively worked with the existing leadership in addressing safety and security concerns, accessing resources for the community water system, and exploring alternative sources of livelihood for families such as crafts-making, trainings with different government and non-government organizations, and participation in trade fairs.

The lockdown experiences of women in Sitio Sapang Munti is consistent with existing literature in that disasters (in this case, the pandemic) render poor and marginalized sectors of society more vulnerable (Ciampi et al., 2011). Gender inequalities worsened during the lockdown, with women still expected to perform their gender-based responsibilities which placed them at a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 since they are required to go outside the community for marketing, buying medicines, accessing relief services, etc.

The ECQ measures that limited physical mobility had the most impact on the women of Sitio Sapang Munti, resulting in disruption of their informal forms of work, accessing social services, and socialization. These are resources and networks that the women had heavily relied on pre-pandemic. With these being cut off during the lockdown, more pressure was placed on the women, making their performance of reproductive or care work more difficult.

These outcomes have added to an already high sense of insecurity among the residents of Sitio Sapang Munti by exacerbating long-standing issues of the community—limited economic opportunities, isolation, state neglect, and poor access to social services.

Despite the above, the pandemic presented opportunities for SK3SSM to strengthen women's leadership roles in community management work by having them take part in the decision-making and implementation, especially in relief work. The networks and partnerships established by SK3SSM with the UP CSWCD FIP, WWF, and other organizations proved vital in mobilizing assistance during the lockdown.

The SK3SSM was also recognized by the tribal leadership as a reliable source of information in ensuring that a correct census was conducted and goods from donor organizations were properly and efficiently distributed to the different *sitios* in the Ipo Watershed. It should be noted, though, that this opportunity for participation in decision-making was still geared towards addressing basic needs, therefore fulfilling women's roles in reproductive or care work.

While health protocols need to be observed, the women recommended that government should implement quarantine measures that are sensitive to, and inclusive of, women's needs and interests. They should not impede on their economic activities, access to health services, and right to information.

When women perform their gender roles in productive, reproductive or care work, and then extend these to their roles in community management work, women see themselves as active agents in addressing the needs of the wider community.

Currently, the efforts of the women of Sitio Sapang Munti and SK3SSM are centered on addressing women's existing conditions. There is much to be done in terms of women organizing and gender-inclusive and responsive DRRM to address gender inequalities and improve women's position in the community.

## **Contributions of Community Development (CD) in enhancing the roles of women in responding to the pandemic**

The ECQ measures implemented during the pandemic magnified unequal gender relations and women's multiple burdens. However, the experience of the SK3SSM has shown that, if the processes before, during, and post disaster are inclusive of women, these can build upon their capacities and enable them to contribute to addressing community needs.

The challenges of the pandemic lockdown in Sitio Sapang Munti provided opportunities for the women to take on leadership roles. Through this experience, SK3SSM was able to mobilize resources for the community's needs; and through community organizing, they have learned to be more articulate about their needs, to build networks with partners, and exact accountability from government and other organizations.

The experiences of SK3SSM also proved the importance of recognizing women as partners in resolving community issues. This gives weight to organizing women and building their capacities in disaster risk management, and making organizational processes such as needs assessments, meetings and consultations, and community mobilizations more gender inclusive and responsive.

Furthermore, it can also be inferred that, to genuinely achieve disaster resilience in crises like the pandemic, the fundamental issues of poor and marginalized communities, like Sitio Sapang Munti, must be addressed with the long-term view of arresting the roots of their vulnerabilities. The *sitio's* limited livelihood opportunities, poor health conditions, and lack of basic infrastructure are mainly the consequences of the community's isolation—politically, socially, and economically. Strengthening the community's capacity for self-sufficiency was a common theme among the women interviewed—a robust community economy; access to quality social services such as health, education, and information; and improvement of basic physical infrastructure such as shelter, a viable water system, and electricity. These are concrete areas where external actors can make significant contributions in terms of capacity-building and facilitating access to vital resources needed towards realizing this longed-for self-sufficiency.

## Recommendations

The application of the CD Approach can be seen as having a significant contribution to the women of Sitio Sapang Munti's role in collectively responding to the negative impacts of the ECQ protocols. However, the issues experienced during the lockdown are fundamentally rooted in the isolation of the community and should be addressed with long-term solutions. As articulated by the women of Sapang Munti, their aspirations are areas where CD can be instrumental towards their realization.

### *Broadening the scope of community organizing*

The latest report from UN Women (2019) indicates that families prosper when women have access to independent income, and when women have a greater say within their position in the household. Community Organizing (CO) in Sapang Munti can continue to open opportunities for women to have access to more stable, regular, and sufficient sources of income. A major avenue for this would be to strengthen the social capital of SK3SSM with institutions and organizations that can assist in accessing other forms of assets. CO can also contribute in bolstering the organization's advocacy for representation in decision-making institutions such as the Barangay Development Council.

Expanding the membership of SK3SSM to other women in Sitio Sapang Munti should also be a priority in the short term.

CO should also contribute to engendering men in the community which will lead to improved conditions on care work (traditionally relegated to women), pushing for timely release of BG salaries, and inclusion of SK3SSM in spaces for participation and decision-making.

A major principle of CD is self-reliance. Thus, Community Education (CE) should focus on strengthening SK3SSM's organizational capacities to create and maintain social networks that can lead to the inclusion and recognition of the organization, and to enhanced capacity of women in accessing social services, social protection, and information. Through CE, the organization can enhance the knowledge and skills of women in the areas of sustainable livelihoods, gender rights, and disaster risk management. Together with the men of Sapang Munti, CE should facilitate the discussion, analysis, and addressing of women's immediate needs and long-term interests that can lead to a change in existing gender inequalities.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> At the time this article was being written, the *Bantay Gubat* salaries had been delayed for eight months.

<sup>2</sup> The term “lockdown” was commonly used to refer to the period wherein ECQ measures were implemented, particularly the strict regulation of people’s movement in entering or exiting the Ipo Dam area.

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# SEEDS OF HOPE IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## COLLECTIVE RESPONSES AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY BUILDING OF THE MASIPAG SMALL FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS

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**Maria Corazon Jimenez-Tan**

### **Abstract**

*The COVID-19 pandemic caused a health, food, and socio-economic crisis that impacted most especially the poor sectors in the urban and rural communities. It revealed the deep-seated problems in the public health system and the agriculture and food system, and the absence of adequate and accessible basic social services that have historically rendered millions of Filipinos poor, unhealthy, and food insecure.*

*In the midst of inadequate state support and the government's militarist approach in enforcing health and safety protocols, we witnessed communities responding to the needs of sectors hardest hit by the pandemic including vulnerable frontliners. We witnessed the collective action of basic social sectors and grassroots organizations that forged social solidarities in demanding for government's response to our people's urgent need for food, health, and social protection during the pandemic; stood with the people to resist and struggle against state attacks on human rights; and amplified the people's calls for quality public health, sustainable food systems, and fulfillment of basic human rights.*

*This paper aims to draw lessons from MASIPAG, a network of small farmers' organizations that creatively responded to this health, food, and socio-economic crisis. It seeks to gain insights from how these organizations of small farmers and women farmers nurtured and sustained their families, organizations, and communities through agroecological farming practices, organizing and organizational development work efforts, and networking,*

*alliance and partnership building for the common good. This study hopes to lead to a better appreciation of what social solidarity is, and the critical role of small farmers, including women farmers, in building social solidarity towards the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food systems.*

*This study is significant as it hopes to show how organized farmers, practicing collective/communal, sustainable, and agroecological agriculture serve as one of the foundations of alternative, people-centered, farmer-led rural and agricultural development and sustainable local food systems. It also shows that the basis of the social solidarity that surges during crises, such as this pandemic, actually results from long years of organizing and advocacy work and social movement building of people's organizations and grassroots communities towards radical social transformation.*

Keywords: organizing, organizational development, social solidarity, care work, agroecological farming, farmer-led development

### **Organizing, agroecology, and social solidarity building as a response to the pandemic**

The health issues, massive hunger, poverty, and insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the ineffectiveness of the neoliberal development framework which has compelled states to liberalize, privatize, commercialize, and deprioritize food systems, basic social services, and social protection over economic growth. This is the development paradigm that has rendered millions of Filipinos poor, unhealthy, and food insecure.

Liberalization of the Philippine agriculture and food system led to increased landlessness among farmers, feudal relations between landlords and tenants, backward agricultural technology and infrastructure, and unsustainable farming practices. Past and current government administrations have allowed the conversion of agricultural lands into big plantations and corporate farms producing for export rather than for the local communities, producing for profit rather than for food security. The entire food system has been commodified and commercialized—from state promotion of the use of imported seeds of high-yielding varieties, imported chemical agricultural inputs, and farming machinery produced by big multinational corporations, to the control of marketing and distribution systems by food cartels. International trade agreements have dictated agricultural policies that favor the production of high-value

cash crops rather than staples like rice. A strategic goal of our Department of Agriculture should have been towards achieving rice self-sufficiency. Instead, the Philippines is the biggest importer of rice in the whole world. As such, farmers suffer from low prices of their *palay* while consumers suffer from high prices of rice, vegetables, and other basic food resources. Research studies conducted by Ibon Foundation show that agriculture and agrarian reform were allocated an average of only 3.5% of the national budget from 2017-2020 (Guzman, 2020).

Food self-sufficiency does not even figure in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (Guzman, 2020). The Philippines ranked 70th out of 117 countries in the World Hunger Index (UN World Food Program). This food crisis worsened during the pandemic. The September 2020 Social Weather Station (SWS) survey results showed that, at the height of the coronavirus pandemic in the Philippines in 2020, 7.6 million Filipinos went hungry. This translates to a hunger incidence of 30.7%. For 2.2 million Filipinos, the hunger was even more severe (Rappler, 2020).

For decades, small farmers in the Philippines and other countries have been advocating for a shift to more sustainable agriculture and food systems, which is a growing demand among farmers worldwide. In 2009, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), a three-year international collaboration initiated by the World Bank, concluded that:

...the current approaches that focus on production for export, liberalised trade and technological, input-intensive agriculture are not working. Not only are they creating major environmental damage, but they are incapable of lifting people out of poverty or even ensuring basic food security. (IAASTD 2009, in Bachman, p. 5)

In 2013, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Trade and Environment Review 2013 was entitled “Wake up before it’s too late: Make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate.” It asserted the need for a paradigm shift from the “green revolution” model to an ecological intensification approach to agricultural development (UNCTAD, 2013). It also underscored the critical role of small-scale farmers as managers of agro-ecological systems. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 2 underscores the need for sustainable agriculture as the solution to ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition.

This pandemic exposed and affirmed what grassroots organizations and progressive movements have been saying all along—that the capitalist mode of production has intensified poverty; the chronic health and nutrition crisis; food insecurity; crisis of care for humans, non-humans, and the shared biosphere; a crisis of the reproduction of lives, especially in developing countries (Paulson, 2020, p. 233). It has also brought to the fore the crisis of patriarchy, climate change, racism, and intersectionality of all these crises (Chukunzira, 2020).

At the same time, this global crisis validated the relevance of existing social movements and saw a renewed surge of community/collective responses, of social solidarities, locally and globally. This renewed surge of collective actions and social solidarities during the pandemic is a “historical rupture” wherein we “collectively create alternative modes of living characterized by community and relationship building, by cultures of care for each other and the environment” (Paulson, 2020, p. 233). These social solidarities have been *broadened by vibrant, self-organised and fully bottom-up “networks of care and mutual aid”* (Martinez, 2020, p. 20).

These social solidarities are also responding to the challenge of having to address the immediate survival needs of people while sustaining ongoing multisectoral discourses and broad multi-level advocacies for the ideological change required for systemic transformation (Chukunzira, 2020). We are witnessing progressive civil society organizations (CSOs) and grassroots neighborhood organizations distributing food and medicines, producing PPEs, giving shelter and protection to the homeless and women victims of domestic violence, while protesting against discriminatory, anti-poor policies during this pandemic. And in these acts of solidarity they:

...are challenging a top down conception of charity or humanitarianism, by spreading norms of solidarity that contrast with the extreme individualism of neoliberal capitalism. Through social interventions, they reconstitute social relations that have been broken well before the pandemic but they also politicize claims, shifting them from immediate relief to proposals for radical social change. (Della Porta, 2020, p. 356)

These new forms of social solidarity and social movements are validating and amplifying calls for local and sustainable “people-led” economies. These people-led economies are those that are spearheaded by self-organized communities and sectors that involve local production and



distribution initiatives oriented around basic needs, centered on principles of the commons/common good, promoting local autonomy and collective sufficiency, agroecology, food sovereignty, and the universal social and environmental principles of local and collaborative/networked governance (Liegey & Nelson, cited in Nelson, 2020).

Social movements researchers Fiedlschuster and Reichle explain social solidarity: a) “as (or based on) shared experience for shared identity or collective identification,” b) as “compassion and a moral duty,” and c) as “political practice,” as a relation of a shared struggle against oppression, a struggle for the same goals (Fiedlschuster & Reichle, 2020, p. 318).

Deriving from Marx’s letter to his comrades in England, Aaron Petcoff explains:

Solidarity comes not from an idealistic conception of justice, selflessness or humanitarianism. It’s not about just “being a better person” than others. Solidarity comes from the recognition that you have a real stake in the outcome of this struggle, too. (Petcoff, 2012)

In the Philippines, as soon as the lockdown in Luzon was declared, there were immediate, spontaneous actions of sharing and mutual aid from and across urban and rural communities, NGOs, civil society organizations, schools, churches, professionals, etc. In most cases, the basis and sustenance of the social solidarity that surged during the pandemic stemmed from the long years of organizing and partnership building, and the collective struggles of community organizations, sectoral mass organizations, working class movements, cause-oriented groups, and activists asserting the fulfillment of basic needs and rights of the vulnerable and marginalized sectors. The social solidarity that established community kitchens and community health teams emerged from organized women who have been asserting their right to basic social services and social protection from the state. Those who provided relief operations are CSOs, NGOs, and communities that have been struggling against development aggression causing environmental destruction and disasters. Those who provided legal and paralegal assistance to NGOs and CSOs whose members were red-tagged, arrested, detained, and killed are organized human rights defenders who have long been championing the rights of marginalized and oppressed sectors.



Scholar and social activist Laurence Cox observed that the greatest social movement surges during this pandemic come from countries “...where ‘independent historical action’—bottom-up self-organisation, social movements—have been strongest before and during the crisis” (Cox, 2020, p. 28).

The social solidarity formations from farmers’ organizations providing food to urban poor communities emerged from organized farmers and local producers that have long been asserting their right to land, to sustainable farming and food systems, to agroecology.

Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and anti-globalization author, Vandana Shiva shares that agroecology is “real farming for real food that is a by-product of this economy of care by the farmers”:

Real farming is farming with nature. It leads to the rejuvenation of biodiversity, soils, water; a rejuvenation of small farms, real farms with real farmers who care for the land, who care for life, who care for the future and produce diverse, healthy, fresh, ecological real food for all. Real food is a by-product of this economy of care. It protects the life of all beings on earth and also nourishes our health and wellbeing. (Shiva, 2020, p. 4)

This study is a contribution to the literature on social solidarity building during the pandemic. It is about the social solidarity that is inherent in and emerges from the *bayanihan*, collective action, and social movement building towards the principles and practice of agroecology of the MASIPAG network of small farmers.

A MASIPAG farmer once said, “Even if one is practicing a full organic system with MASIPAG seeds, if he has no concern for other farmers and society, then he cannot be considered a true MASIPAG farmer” (Bachman, 2020, p. 8).

## **Research methodology**

This case study focuses on the experience of the MASIPAG national network of small farmers organizations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, of NGOs, and of scientists advocating and practicing agroecology.

As a resource person for the MASIPAG's Organizational Development (OD) program, and as a member of the MASIPAG Board of Trustees (BOT), I have been able to directly participate in various MASIPAG activities—education and training activities, advocacy campaigns, organizational meetings and discussions of the MASIPAG national and regional secretariats and the BOT, and in the farming and organizational activities of the small farmers' organizations of MASIPAG in various regions, prior to and during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, my engagement with the MASIPAG network was through online platforms. Data gathering for this study was done through autoethnography, ethnography, and participant observation—from my direct participation or as a participant-observer in various network activities, albeit via online platforms. Most of these were undertaken during the last two quarters of 2020, although some additional data were derived from focus group discussions (FGDs) and other people's organizations (POs) activities in the first quarter of 2021. Other secondary data were derived from various social media platforms—the MASIPAG Facebook Page and the social media platforms of international formations and alliances which they are a member of. Sources also included MASIPAG publications and articles sourced from the national and regional secretariats. The results of this study were shared with the members of the MASIPAG network.

### **MASIPAG: Collective responses of small farmers' organizations and social solidarity building during the pandemic**

*"The spirit of community and the respect for the shared world are always present in farming communities."* (MASIPAG Mindanao Facebook Page, 2020)

A few weeks into the lockdown of Metro Manila and other major cities in the country, alarming news of urban and rural communities going hungry and people's protests at the inadequacy and insensitivity of government's response to the pandemic flooded social media. This situation ignited waves of community responses and social solidarity among communities, civil society organizations, school organizations, parishes and churches, and social enterprises that launched fundraising activities to send food packs, medicines, and PPEs to poor communities and the most vulnerable sectors. Even more inspiring were the creative, innovative, and heroic responses of people's organizations in urban and

rural communities putting together their resources to provide food not only for their own families and communities but to also share these with those badly hit by the pandemic. One such organization is the network of small farmers organizations called MASIPAG.

MASIPAG stands for Magsasaka at Siyentista para sa Pagpapaunlad ng Agrikultura (Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Agricultural Development). MASIPAG is “a farmer-led network of people’s organizations, NGOs and scientists working towards the sustainable use and management of biodiversity through farmers’ control of genetic and biological resources, agricultural production and associated knowledge” (MASIPAG website, 2013).

MASIPAG promotes an integrated approach of helping farmers develop and enhance their practices in sustainable agriculture and agroecology, and evolving farmer-led social technologies for organizing, organizational development, and social advocacy. This farmer-led network gives primacy to strengthening small farmers’ organizations towards the promotion of the welfare and rights of small farmers, genuine agrarian reform, agroecology, sustainable rural development, and food security/sovereignty.

*Farmer-led emergency relief activities during the pandemic*

The COVID-19 pandemic caused much fear and uncertainty to small

### **MASIPAG by the numbers**

*As of 2016, MASIPAG has:*

*512 member people’s organizations  
41 NGO partners; 20 church-based development organizations  
15 scientist-partners*

*Around 30,000 farmers reached in 63 provinces  
188 trial farms (maintaining a minimum of 50 traditional rice varieties)*

*Two national back-up farms*

*Eight regional back-up farms*

*More than 2,000 rice varieties collected and maintained:*

- *600 traditional rice varieties*
- *1,299 MASIPAG rice*
- *506 farmer-bred rice*
- *12 flood-tolerant varieties*
- *18 drought-tolerant varieties*
- *20 saline (saltwater) tolerant varieties*
- *24 pest- or disease-resistant varieties*

*70 farmer rice -breeders*

*12 farmer corn -breeders*

*More than 100 volunteer farmer-trainers*

*(MASIPAG website, 2013)*

farmers who, even before the pandemic, were adversely affected by the Rice Liberalization Law, unabated Land Use Conversion of agricultural land, and intensifying militarization in the countryside. When the COVID-19 virus started spreading in the country, MASIPAG farmers' organizations were uncertain how they could continue to farm, market their produce, and sustain their organizing and advocacy work. Still, the need to secure food for their families and to respond to the growing hunger among urban and rural poor communities compelled the farmers to find creative ways to produce and share food.

Many MASIPAG farmers' organizations, through their disaster risk reduction management-climate change adaptation (DRRM-CCA) committees, conducted emergency relief operations. Farmers courageously ventured out of their homes and started their "mobile hot meals," community kitchens, and feeding programs. In the Visayas, MASIPAG farmers launched their "*Kampanya Kontra Gutom*" food relief programs. Some of the organizations were able to work with the local government for food relief operations and feeding programs, using the squash noodles, a healthier alternative, produced through the livelihood projects of several farmers' organizations. Others created mobile mini-stores which brought rice and vegetables to the doorstep of families who were "locked in" their homes. In other areas, farmers' organizations worked with their barangay officials to put up mini-hubs of organic produce in the barangay covered courts, so that people could easily access rice and vegetables at affordable prices. In Capiz and Roxas City, members of the national fisherfolk network, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA), had barter-trades with MASIPAG members, exchanging rice and vegetables for fresh or dried fish during the quarantine period.

Believing that the best way to address this health crisis is to strengthen people's immune system, MASIPAG farmers and organizers conducted health and nutrition seminars where they shared simple recipes for healthy and diversified meals using organic vegetables that can be easily grown in the backyard. Trainings were conducted online or, whenever possible, face-to-face, as a back-to-back activity of their mobile feeding sessions in various communities. They also had webinars on food processing that helped farmers add value and extend the shelf life of their organic produce.



**Figure 1.** MASIPAG Visayas' community feeding back-to-back with short orientation on health and nutrition during the pandemic

The network also intensified its trainings and advocacy for urban agriculture and backyard gardening. In Mindanao, their online trainings on backyard gardening led to the creation of a virtual community of urban gardeners and seed sharers through the MASIPAG Facebook Page. Their community radio program and podcast, *Juan Organiko*, continued during the pandemic and was maximized by many NGOs and CSOs for their education and advocacy work. MASIPAG and other NGOs promoting sustainable agriculture created the *Ecotalk* online video discussion that included various topics on organic farming and backyard gardening. These efforts helped many rural and urban poor communities grow their own vegetables in their backyard. For instance, MASIPAG Luzon farmers helped the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihihirap (KADAMAY), an alliance of urban poor organizations, in setting up the Urban Poor Women Agroecology Garden in a resettlement site in Pandi, Bulacan. Aside from addressing food scarcity during the pandemic, the agroecology garden enabled the women to create programs for sustainable livelihood, resource and waste management programs, and strategies to reverse land degradation (Bulatlat.com, 2020). These agroecology or herbal gardens became their community's source of ingredients for homemade, natural remedies/herbal medicines for the common cold, headaches, body pains, stomach ache, and the like.

## **Nurturing their seeds, diversifying their farms, and other sustainable farming practices during the pandemic**

The MASIPAG farmers remained resolute in their collective efforts to practice sustainable farming that was proving to be the most effective and practical way to provide sustenance to their families and communities during the crisis. Such efforts were captured in the Facebook posts of farmers—among them a woman leader of Katilingbangan Mangunguma kag Mamumugon sa Bongbongan (KAMMABO), a small farmers' organization in Sibalom, Antique:

Even during the lockdown, we were able to go to our farms which are planted to [*sic*] many kinds of food crops. We don't need to buy our food, we are also sure that our food is safe and chemical free. For us farmers, it is important that we have control over our seeds. (Translated from Visayan, MASIPAG Visayas Facebook Page, 2020)

Knowing fully well the importance of securing their rice and vegetable seeds, MASIPAG farmers diligently worked together to sustain their trial farms even during the pandemic. Maintenance of such trial farms is part of MASIPAG's CIMME program—collection, identification, maintenance, multiplication, and evaluation of cultivars of rice, corn, indigenous vegetables, poultry, and livestock.

CIMME ensures that collected species and varieties are maintained in an on-site seedbank for farmers' access. To date, through the CIMME, MASIPAG now has 188 trial farms managed by farmers' organizations. Trial farms have a minimum of 50 TRVs and MASIPAG rice varieties and are living community seedbanks. Farmers study and select adaptive varieties from the trial farms and design cultural management practices suited to their agro-climatic conditions. MASIPAG has two national and eight regional back-up farms where collected and saved seeds are conserved and improved. (MASIPAG website, 2013)

During the pandemic, MASIPAG farmers were able to share indigenous vegetable seeds from their trial farms with their neighbors so they could start their own backyard/communal vegetable or herb garden for an additional food source during the crisis.

Aside from their trial farms, MASIPAG POs also strived to sustain their communal farms and communal vegetable gardens which were the sources of organic and nutritious food and herbal medicines for their families and neighbors, as well as for their feeding programs and mobile hot meals during the pandemic. Some communal farms produced so much that they were able to sell their organic produce and gain some income during this economic crisis.

MASIPAG farmers were already practicing diversified and integrated farming systems (DIFS) in their individual farms as well as in their communal rice farms and communal vegetable gardens. DIFS is a farming system that promotes biodiversity rather than monocropping, nutrient recycling and management, soil and water management, appropriate pest management, among others (Guzman, Zamora, & Bernardo, 2015). Thus even during the pandemic, the practice of DIFS helped the MASIPAG farmers in ensuring a diverse and healthy food source. One of the farmer leaders/farmer trainers of SJONA, a member organization of MASIPAG in Solano, Nueva Ecija, said:

During the pandemic, we continued doing our seed exchange and DIFS, which guarantees that we have diverse crops and diverse sources of food. This is a more effective response to our need for food during this COVID-19 pandemic. We do not need to go out to buy food, our backyard is our “supermarket,” our source of food. We can even share our harvest from our backyard with our neighbors. (Translated from Filipino, MASIPAG Luzon Facebook Page, 2020)

Chemical-based farming and monocropping, promoted during the Green Revolution, had destroyed the practice of DIFS among small farmers. MASIPAG farmers are now reviving and popularizing the practice of DIFS as a more sustainable and healthier form of farming. DIFS enables farmers to plant diverse crops which can be harvested at different times and, therefore, providing them and their families with a steady source of vegetables and fruits all year round. DIFS also ensures a varied and healthier diet as well as diversified sources of income from the sale of organic vegetables and fruits, poultry, and livestock. As one farmer leader and sustainable agriculture practitioner of Sararong Inisyatiba nin Kahinwanmaan sa Wasakon ang Agrokemikals na Lasong-GMO (SIKWAL-GMO), Bicol stated:



We have long asserted that we don't need GMOs which is intertwined with the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides. We have our own traditional rice varieties and sustainable ways of farming. We have also established and developed our diversified and integrated farms which is our source of nutritious food, pride and freedom. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)

In DIFS, the agricultural inputs come from the farm itself. Therefore, it also reduces the cost of production and sustains the health of the soil and the environment.

During the pandemic, what sustained the farmers' hopeful spirits, their sense of community, and their sustainable agricultural practices was their *bayanihan*. *Bayanihan*—or “*dagyaw*” or “*alayon*” as it is called in other parts of the Philippines—is a communal system of labor where people come together to work on each other's farms and/or livelihood projects, either as reciprocal labor or for a portion of the harvest (Bachman, 2009). The trial farms, communal farms, and other organizational undertakings of MASIPAG small farmers' organizations have revived this *bayanihan* spirit of cooperation and solidarity among MASIPAG farmers and their communities.

*Bayanihan* was the theme of MASIPAG's participation in Green Action Week (GAW), a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption. In 2020, the GAW campaign theme was “Sharing Communities,” and featured stories from 50 groups in 30 countries that showed that “sharing” and “community” are not only possible but are the necessary response to crises like this COVID-19 pandemic. MASIPAG featured a film on “*Bayanihan*: A Filipino tradition of community sharing and unity,” and a webinar series “*Bahaginan*” focusing on appropriate seed technology, urban/backyard gardening, organic vegetable production and nursery management, seed rights, and the MASIPAG food security agenda. In the video, *bayanihan* was explained as:

...a spirit of community unity and sharing among Filipino farmers. Through the spirit of *bayanihan*, of community sharing and unity, our communities can be resilient, with safe, abundant and affordable food. We achieved all these through *bayanihan*. From harvesting to processing, we help each other. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)



*Bayanihan* is how these farmers are resisting the threats of climate change and unsustainable corporate controlled agriculture. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)

As the quarantine eased, the farmers slowly resumed their *bayanihan* to help each other in their family farms, in their trial farms and communal gardens, and in their organization's socio-economic projects which usually involved the processing of fruits or herbs into food and medicines that can be stored and sold. Seeing the benefits of this spirit of sharing, especially at this time of crisis when a sense of community and connectedness was much needed, other members of the community joined the MASIPAG farmers in their *bayanihan* practices.

The spirit of *bayanihan* flourished not only within the organizations and communities of the MASIPAG farmers but across the entire network. When a series of storms hit Bicol, Isabela, Rizal, Quezon, and other provinces in Luzon towards the last quarter of 2020, the MASIPAG farmers from various parts of the country expressed their *bayanihan* by sending their support to those badly affected by the typhoons. MASIPAG Luzon posted this in their Facebook Page to express their gratitude to those who helped:

As part of the ongoing support for the rise of farmers affected by the storm, farmers delivered corn, vegetables and rice to farmers in Bicol, Northern Luzon, Southern Tagalog, and Central Luzon. These is [sic] in addition to the wide-open pollinated varieties purchased from

*Seeds are at the centre of MASIPAG's work. For these farmers, seeds are respected as a common good and heritage, not as commodity. With the help of innovative farmer breeders, the MASIPAG network has developed an impressive number of rice varieties well adapted to local conditions which have the potential to adapt to future challenges. The promotion of diversity on farm helps farmers to reduce production risks. Furthermore, the sustainable agriculture promoted by MASIPAG avoids CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since it relies on local resources, avoids the use of fossil energy and prioritises local markets. With such strategies, farmers prepare themselves to challenge the impacts of climate change and give a convincing example of what agriculture should look like in times of climate change. (Bachman, 2020)*

donations from Ambagan sa Sakahan (Contribute to the Farms) fund drive campaign. Every contribution will be a great help to the rising of the farmers hit by the storm. Overwhelming gratitude from MASIPAG Luzon. (MASIPAG Luzon Facebook Page, 2020)

### **Organizational development and consolidation during the pandemic**

Let us not be disheartened during this crisis. Let us strengthen our organizations so that we can help each other in producing healthy food for our communities. Let's start with our own vegetable gardens, our own food processing. We are farmers, we are the ones producing food, we should not go hungry. (Translation from Filipino from a MASIPAG woman farmer leader/farmer trainer of KCFA, Quezon Province; MASIPAG Luzon Facebook, 2020)

The collective life in both the organizations and the communities of its member-farmers is key to MASIPAG's strength as a farmer-led network. The Organizational Development (OD) program of the network is its main strategy for building the capacity of farmers for organizing and for sustaining their collective life. For MASIPAG, OD is a collective and participatory process of developing and enhancing the various elements of each member-organization—their vision-mission-goals, structure and systems, programs and strategies, leadership and management system, membership, organizational culture, resources, and capacities and skills. OD deepens their appreciation and practice of collective and participatory leadership, shared tasks and responsibilities, by helping them internalize and institutionalize cycles of participatory planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and organizational learning. MASIPAG's OD program was evolved through a participatory process and continues to be a farmer-led undertaking (MASIPAG Training Module on Organizational Development).

Continuing the farmer-members' organizational life in the midst of the pandemic was difficult as travel, meetings, and gatherings were restricted by stringent health protocols. In some areas where there were fewer COVID-19 cases, farmers' organizations started meeting face-to-face, while still observing health protocols. However, mobility was still very limited and so the farmers had to learn to use online platforms for communicating and coordinating. The costs of using the internet, limited gadgets, and unstable signals posed a big challenge for the farmers' continuing organizing and organizational development work.

Faced with these challenges, the MASIPAG network found creative and innovative ways to sustain their organizational life. For instance, in MASIPAG Visayas, the “food hubs” previously used mainly for the marketing of organic produce were turned into physical and virtual spaces for the farmers to sustain their organizational meetings, education and training sessions, and social advocacies. During the pandemic, these hubs provided access to PCs, laptops, and internet connection, so that the farmers and community members could come together—for some face-to-face, and for others virtually through online platforms and social media.

During the pandemic, the MASIPAG farmers’ organizations were likewise able to keep their members actively engaged and connected through the committee system. The committee system or “*sistemang komite*” is a way of institutionalizing shared responsibility, participatory leadership, and organizational management. Through this means, all members are actively engaged in organizational activities via the various committees for sustainable agriculture, livelihood, DRRM-CCA, education/OD, membership, etc. The committee system harnesses the collective capacity and wisdom of the network, and promotes a sense of collective ownership and shared responsibility. One of the women leaders shared that it was their organization and *bayanihan* that helped them provide food for their families and sustain their health (even their mental health), as it was during *bayanihan* sessions that they could talk about their fears and anxieties and find collective solutions to their concerns.

MASIPAG also sustained the farmer-members’ community/collective life through intensifying collective aid and partnership-building among the mass organizations and NGOs from the local to the national level. Peasant groups worked together with civil society organizations and mass organizations to promote MASIPAG activities in their locality. The pandemic became an opportunity for MASIPAG to show even more strength as a network of farmers, scientists, and NGOs.

### **Women’s critical role in care work and agroecology**

Recognizing the critical role of women in sustainable agriculture and in providing care work that sustains their families, organizations, and communities, MASIPAG has strengthened its efforts to promote greater participation and leadership of women farmers. The pandemic brought to light just how much this “invisible and undervalued” responsibility of nurturing and caring is shouldered by women, despite limited basic social

services, especially during crises such as this. Women worked harder to sanitize their homes and enforce health and safety protocols, over and above their already multiple reproductive, productive, and community roles. Women prepared the daily meals of the family despite scarce food resources, concocted herbal medicines and home remedies for family members who fell ill, and volunteered as community health workers. In an FGD conducted by the MASIPAG OD staff with women members of farmers' organizations in MASIPAG Visayas, the women shared that:

Aside from our usual daily home chores and farm work, we now have additional responsibilities to our children who are going to school from home. Our children are now going to school via online platforms or through the “modular” approach wherein students study on their own using the modules provided by the school. In this arrangement, we have also become their teachers and tutors at home. This is difficult for those of us who are not familiar with computer programs. Some of the mothers have not been able to go to school themselves, so how can they teach their children? (MASIPAG FGD with women farmers, 2021)

Women also initiated and sustained community kitchens and community feeding programs which became opportunities for them to also conduct health and nutrition sessions. Women farmers worked together on their backyard and communal vegetable gardens which they relied on for their family's food and for their community's feeding programs especially during the pandemic. To earn some additional income, women also engaged in various livelihood projects such as sewing of face masks and PPEs, food processing, and marketing of their surplus backyard produce.



**Figure 2.** *Babaeng MASIPAG, babaeng matatag*

One of the posts in the MASIPAG Facebook Page showcased the network of small women farmers' organizations, Kababaihang Nagtataglay ng Bihirang Lakas (KNBL):

Davao Women farmers under KNBL pack almost 200 to 300 kilos of assorted organic vegetables weekly. This will be delivered to Davao City families under lockdown. Despite the troubling times, one thing is certain—our food security frontliners are always ready. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)

KNBL is a federation of 13 peasant women's organizations affiliated with MASIPAG. With their weekly harvest of organic vegetables from the individual backyards of their members as well as their communal farms, the members are able to provide healthy and nutritious food for urban poor families while generating some income for the peasant women during the crisis. Through the help of MASIPAG and METSA Foundation, Inc., an NGO-partner of MASIPAG based in Davao, KNBL learned virtual marketing of their produce and online networking with schools and universities which became hubs for their organic products.

Even in the midst of the pandemic, the women continued with their backyard organic gardening and food processing. During their celebration of Nutrition Month and the ongoing campaign against GMO and Golden Rice, a woman member of Gabay sa Bagong Pag-asa (GBP) Managos in Bayambang, Pangasinan said:

As much as we value our health, we must also take care of nature/our environment. Healthy, nutritious and accessible food is important for us women. GMO food is not something I would recommend. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)

Our association's livelihood projects should not only look at the earnings, but also the benefits that the buyer can get. Aside from being safe and affordable, (our products) are not made of dangerous GMO. (MASIPAG Facebook Page, 2020)

Women also actively participated in managing their trial farms even in the midst of the pandemic. In commemoration of the 2020 International Day of Rural Women in October 2020, MASIPAG Luzon posted this in their Facebook Page:

Mothers, women and members of the association of farmers in New Pag Asa, Barangay Macayocayo, Bayambang, Pangasinan are waking up early. Their mission is to go to their association's small farm where they record their observations from their Rice Trial Farm with 50 varieties of organic rice using Simplified Evaluation Sheets. Some of these activities are measuring the height or bottom from tree to tree, counting grains per stalk, knowing the speed or duration of ripening and also collecting data on knowing insects around their communal paddy field. Farmers, women and men, are learning to systematize their production and farming systems which will lead them to sustainable farming. It's undeniable that women play a huge role in food production and reforming the corporate-controlled agricultural system. So it's only right to recognize their unique contribution to agroecology and food security! (MASIPAG Luzon Facebook Page, 2020)

In areas with heightened military operations, women are among the victims of military harassment, red-tagging, illegal arrest, and even extrajudicial killings. For March 08, International Women's Day 2021, MASIPAG Visayas released a statement in their Facebook Page entitled "Collaborative action, courage and determination: Women's great advocacy in the midst of crisis and oppression." This statement gave recognition to "the courage, enthusiasm and determination of women in MASIPAG and many others who have been victims of violence and oppression, but continue to fight to achieve a just and humane society" (MASIPAG Visayas Facebook Page, 2021).

The statement also recognized the women leaders of the Women Development Center (WDC), an NGO in Bohol Province who, together with some farmers, are being prosecuted for various crimes to silence them and prevent them from serving and being in solidarity with the struggles of small farmers in the province. It likewise lauded the women who, even in the midst of the pandemic and military attacks, continue their campaign against the use of GM corn and rice in the province (MASIPAG Visayas Facebook Page, 2021).

### **Asserting farmers' rights, food security/sovereignty and agroecology as the response to the food crisis**

Despite and because of the crisis, the advocacy work and protest actions of MASIPAG continued in light of the intensifying militarization and attack on farmers' rights.



In the Visayas, farmers' organizations have continued their protest actions and advocacy campaigns in relation to state attacks on Paghiliusa sang Agricultural Workers kag Small Fishermen nga may Inisyatiba sa Barangay San Juan (PAWIS), a local farmers' organization in Negros affiliated with MASIPAG. In October 2020, 56 members of PAWIS were served warrants of arrest and five were subsequently detained in relation to their collective efforts to assert their rights to the land as agrarian reform beneficiaries. In December 2020, synchronized operations by the police and military led to the massacre of nine members of the Indigenous People (IP) of Panay Tumandok. Seventeen others were arrested, and hundreds of the Tumandoks were displaced due to the heavy militarization in their community. The Tumandoks have long resisted the construction of the Jalaur Mega Dam in Iloilo and the Panay Mega Dam in Capiz, as these would displace many IP communities and destroy their ancestral lands. In Aurora and Nueva Vizcaya, protest actions continued against the open-pit mining of Oceana Gold in Didipio. In Real, Infanta, and General Nakar, farmers and indigenous communities continuously campaigned against the ongoing construction of the Kaliwa Dam that threatens to destroy farming lands and indigenous communities.

Farmers participated in multi-sectoral campaigns, online and face-to-face localized protest actions against the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) and the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) which promoted the importation of rice, despite the pleas of small farmers to their local governments to buy their harvest so that they could earn some income during the pandemic.



**Figure 3.** MASIPAG campaign against the Rice Liberalization Law during the pandemic

Regrouping as an organization and re-engagement with the local and larger community were urgent and critical, given that many farmers and organizers of the MASIPAG network were targets of red-tagging and harassment by the military and police. The network had a series of community, regional, and national educational sessions on human rights and paralegal work, forming of Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs), and formulation of security protocols. They also held community orientations on mental health as the pandemic and the escalating militarization of communities caused anxiety and panic attacks among the staff and farmers.

MASIPAG farmers maximized social media to intensify their local, national, and international advocacy campaigns. But whenever possible, the network undertook face-to-face but localized, small protest actions against policies and programs that violated farmers' rights, destroyed the environment, and threatened food security. For instance, in November 2020, farmers trooped to the national and regional offices of the Department of Agriculture to officially file a petition to stop the Golden Rice experimentation and production. Golden Rice is a genetically modified rice touted by corporations to be the solution to Vitamin A deficiency and malnutrition, and is being promoted by corporations and states in many countries in Asia. The farmers were joined by members of the Stop Golden Rice! Network (SGRN) which initiated a petition by more than 117 consumer groups, church organizations, chefs, members of the academe, entrepreneurs, urban poor, and medical doctors to halt the commercialization of Golden Rice. This protest action is part of an ongoing international campaign against Golden Rice, following the historic uprooting of Golden Rice in Pili, Camarines Sur led by 400 Bicolano farmers, consumers, and food rights advocates in 2013. This ignited similar protest actions and struggles in Asia against Golden Rice and other corporate-controlled GMOs led by the SGRN, a regional campaign network of 30 organizations of small farmers, scientists, and NGOs in Asia.

In September 2020, various farmers organized fora and protest actions against the Anti-Terror Law (ATL). The MASIPAG statement explains why their member-farmers are protesting against the ATL:

To constrict development work is to further deprive an already hungry nation its right to genuine social, economic and cultural development. And this is what the Anti-Terror Law is doing by



legalizing acts of intimidation, terror-tagging and extra-judicial killing against development workers and their organizations. (MASIPAG statement on the Anti-Terror Law, September 18, 2020; MASIPAG Facebook Page)

Media reports have shown that, since the beginning of the Duterte administration in 2016, 277 farmers have been killed, many have been illegally detained, and many leaders of NGOs and farmers' organizations continue to be red-tagged and harassed. Therefore, MASIPAG, along with other NGOs and CSOs that are members of the Council for People's Development and Governance, filed a petition in the Supreme Court to repeal the ATL, one of at least 37 petitions against the said law.

MASIPAG was also active in various international campaigns advocating for sustainable agriculture. The network participated in the 16 Days of Global Action on Agroecology 2020, the annual global campaign initiated by the Pesticide Action Network – Asia Pacific (PAN AP) held every October 01-16 to promote agroecology as an alternative to chemical-based, corporate farming and a sustainable way of achieving food sovereignty. Their online campaign showed a series of photos of MASIPAG farmers wearing facemasks and holding up posters and banners with messages such as: “Food and rights now!,” “Farmers fight for food system change!,” and “Agroecology now!”

A major ongoing social advocacy campaign of MASIPAG is its Six-Point Food Security Agenda with its hashtag: “Adequate, safe, accessible, affordable food, right now!” (English translation). Along with other organizations such as the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), National Federation of Peasant Women in the Philippines (AMIHAN), Bantay Bigas, Gabriela, Philippine Network of Food Security Programmes (PNFSP), and SUKI Network, MASIPAG launched the “*Salu-Salo*: National People's Food System Summit” through an Agro-Eco fair in Quezon City. “*Salu-salo*” is a year-long campaign that is a build up to the People's Summit, a parallel activity to the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

## **Lessons from MASIPAG's practices on sustainable agriculture, organizing, and social solidarity building**

### *On sustainable food production and agroecology during the pandemic and beyond*

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of our food systems and the urgent need to shift to a sustainable, farmer-led agriculture and food system that addresses the food and nutrition needs of people and not markets. Worldwide, farmers, people's organizations, even international bodies such as the UNCTAD have extensively talked about the destructiveness of industrial/commercial farming/chemical-based farming (UNCTAD, 2013). In the midst of this crisis, small farmers have found creative ways to sustain their organizing work and sustainable agriculture practices such as their *bayanihan*, preservation and exchange of indigenous seeds, communal farming, and DIFS—which enabled them to also creatively respond to the food and health needs of people badly affected by the pandemic, as well as help build the social solidarities and social movements asserting people's right to food. Their contribution was through their daily practices and advocacy for agroecology.

Worldwide as well, agroecology is now seen as a contraposition to industrial/chemical-based farming that has destroyed the environment and food systems. It is a scientific approach and a socio-political movement creating new ways of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption that is based on harmonious relationships with nature and within peoples in society (CIDSE, 2017). Agroecology is now recognized as the only way to produce socially and environmentally healthy food that respects the cultures of indigenous peoples, traditional populations, and peasants (Navdanya International, 2020).

Farmers' organizations, social development practitioners, and social activists assert that agroecology can only be actualized collectively by peasants (Navdanya International, 2020). And so, local food producers—small farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous communities, rural women—should be the decisive frontliners of agroecology. While the rights and critical role of small farmers are enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas, farmers and advocates of sustainable food systems need to assert farmers' rights to and decisive role in sustainable agricultural development. There should be concerted, multisectoral efforts to help strengthen the organizations and networks

of small farmers, to help build their capacities and their indigenous knowledge and practices in organizing, organizational development, networking, and advocacy work, as well as in community development and collective governance.

MASIPAG's statement during Earth Day in April 2020 asserted the following:

Agroecology goes hand-in-hand with the people's call for food sovereignty; it gives priority to local economies to be able to respond to local needs and (it) puts farmers first in the agenda. Agroecology places farmers and the people's right to food at the center of policies, and the people as active participants in the attainment of their right to food. (MASIPAG statement for Earth Day, April 2020)

*On valuing women's care work and contribution to agroecology*

This global public health crisis, food crisis, and socioeconomic crisis is actually a "crisis of care"—a crisis of caring for people, for the environment, and for the public good. This crisis validated what farmers, environmentalists, social development activists, and women's rights activists have long been telling us:

- The profound global crisis in social services/social development/care work (health, education, and social protection) has the most devastating impacts on women—health workers, public school teachers, mostly women; mothers and daughters who simultaneously take care of the home, small children, the elderly, sick members of the family, their vegetable gardens, their farms, and their income generating projects. It is especially difficult for women in urban and rural communities who do not have access to basic social services;
- "...the nexus between social and ecological reproduction" (di Meno-Roma, 2020, p. 112): Women have always been dependent on the environment for their reproductive work/care work—caring for the family, managing homes, family/community health care, food production but industrial capitalism has reduced the environment AND WOMEN/WOMEN'S LABOR into a free resource which it has exploited for profit (di Meno-Roma, 2020). Today, the collapse of the

ecosystems has had dire impacts on the health of people (hence, the COVID-19 pandemic). And this health crisis, which could not be effectively addressed by the fragile and unsustainable global healthcare systems, has had a devastating impact on women;

- *“The centrality of reproductive work/care work in the private and public sphere, in social and economic development”* (di Meno-Roma, 2020, p. 110): During this pandemic, millions fell ill and starved to death, mostly those from the poor sectors and communities. Industries, businesses, and economies shut down. But organized sectors and communities have been able to sustain themselves and help provide for the health and food needs of others because of the care work of women—as volunteer health workers, as managers of community kitchens and community alternative schools, and as human rights defenders.

As a woman leader of Kiday Community Farmers Association (KCFA), an organization of peasant women in General Nakar, Quezon, said: “I am proud to be a peasant woman, because I produce food not only for my family, I produce food for our people” (FGD, March 2021).

In light of these, social development practitioners and social activists must further amplify the call for development processes, programs, and policies that recognize and value the critical role of women in reproductive, productive, and community work. We need to support efforts in strengthening the organizing of women, in asserting their active and decisive roles in their organizations and communities, at all levels of development planning and processes of governance, in social development, and economic development.

Economic development must serve, must work hand in hand, with social development—the care and development of people which, historically, has been a responsibility relegated to women. And while we recognize and support the critical roles and contributions of women in reproductive work/care work, ultimately the calls for accessible, adequate, effective infrastructures for care work—quality public healthcare systems, community clinics, public hospitals; quality education in public schools; quality childcare services; support and care for the most vulnerable—must be the development agenda of all.

*On small farmers' organizing, social solidarity, and social movement building*

Central to the MASIPAG farmer' beliefs and practices is the importance of *bayanihan*, sharing, community building, collective action, and social solidarity building which have helped sustain many farmers and rural and urban poor communities during the pandemic. Witnessing the inspiring practices of the small farmers' organizations of MASIPAG, I come to the following lessons and recommendations:

1. As we—social development practitioners and social activists engaged in social solidarities with grassroots organizations and communities—try to address the needs of those hardest hit by the pandemic, we need to transform and sustain these social solidarities into social movements. These social solidarities and social movements must demand from the state/government its responsibility, as the primary duty bearer, to fulfill people's basic human right to health, food, social protection, and education, especially during this pandemic and beyond.
2. Now, more than ever, these social solidarities must be forged as a refuge and source of strength for people whose rights have been violated and as a movement of human rights defenders frontlining the struggle for justice. Thus, for instance, the MASIPAG network is currently forging local, regional, national, and international alliances that expose the human rights violations and injustices perpetrated by state mechanisms on the farmers, development workers, and activists of Negros, and on the IP leaders of Panay Tumandok. MASIPAG is forging solidarity formations with churches, schools and universities, sympathetic government officials and progressive legislators, even international solidarity groups to undertake investigations into these illegal arrests and killings and bring justice to these victims of state violence.
3. The challenge for our social solidarity formations and social movements is being able to balance addressing immediate urgent needs and still anchor these social movements to the strategic agenda of radical social transformation. Seasoned organizers and social movement activists know that our daily praxis of organizing and advocacy works on all fronts contributes to the radical and long-term social transformation process. Social revolution is born out of this daily praxis—action, reflection, action on all fronts and all levels. Looking at the experience of the MASIPAG farmers, their daily praxis is addressing the immediate needs of their families, organization and communities; their daily

praxis is transforming relationships into more principled relationships, into mutuality, working for the common/collective good, building communities. Their continued organizing, education, advocacy, and networking activities are planting the seeds of human needs-centered, healthier, sustainable agriculture and food systems.

The MASIPAG farmers, even as they continue to respond to the urgent needs of small farmers arising from this pandemic, have remained resolute and persistent in their strategic struggles for land, for seed control, and for farmers' rights. This is what the woman leader of Alay Bayan-Luzon of San Fernando, Pampanga province said in the Facebook post in commemoration of Nutrition Month in August 2020 and as part of their online protest actions against GMOs like Golden Rice: "We in Alay Bayan-Luzon Inc. believe that our call for Sustainable Agriculture must be connected to our call for Genuine Agrarian Reform. Small farmers like us promote this and we can achieve this" (MASIPAG Luzon Facebook Page, 2020).

And this is echoed by other farmer leaders of MASIPAG:

"By taking control of our seeds, we begin to liberate ourselves from corporate control." (Farmer Leader from Alegria, Surigao del Sur; PowerPoint presentation, Mindagat Sustainable Farmers' Organization Bigas Conference, 2009)

"We must rely on the organized and collective strength of small farmers. If we want genuine social transformation, we must create this process of genuine social transformation." (Farmer Leader, Mindagat Sustainable Farmers' Organization; PowerPoint presentation, Mindagat Sustainable Farmers' Organization Bigas Conference, 2009)

In the midst of the pandemic, the small farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous people, and rural women sustained their families and communities with their care work and local and sustainable food production. In so doing, they are living the kind of communities we envision. And so, we continue to link arms with them and all basic sectors and communities in building social solidarities that continue to resist the neoliberal framework of commodifying food systems and infrastructures of care, and assert healthier, sustainable, people-centered food systems, and structures of care.

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# NETWORK FORMATION IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

## *THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CITIZEN'S URGENT RESPONSE TO END COVID-19 (CURE COVID)*

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### Abstract

*The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines and the imposition of various levels of lockdowns since 16 March 2020 resulted in the loss of already limited income of many Filipinos and an exponential increase in the number of communities and people needing assistance.*

*The pandemic, the prolonged lockdown and health protocols limiting people's mobility and gathering, and the ensuing economic and health problems required new forms of community engagement and mobilization. Using exploratory case study as research methodology, this paper focuses on the experience of the Citizen's Urgent Response to End COVID-19 (CURE COVID) in creating and sustaining a network of community organizations, groups, and individuals aimed at building social solidarity in the time of the pandemic.*

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, network building, militarized response, social solidarity, social media

### Introduction

From 15 March 2020 up to this writing (February 2021), the National Capital Region has been under varying degrees of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown under such names as Enhanced Community Quarantine, General Community Quarantine, and their modified versions limited people's mobility, required the

observance of health protocols such as the use of face masks, frequent handwashing, physical distancing, and set limits on people getting together. Police and military personnel were mobilized to make sure that these prohibitions and safety protocols were observed. Under these circumstances, organizing and mobilizing communities to respond to the pandemic created new challenges.

This paper aims principally to document the experience of CURE COVID as a network of community and development organizations, groups, and individuals to address concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic under conditions of lockdown, limited government assistance, and state repression; and to draw lessons from network-building in the time of the pandemic. More specifically, it will:

1. relate the network's formation;
2. share the relief activities of the CURE COVID network and its campaigns against repression and harassment that accompanied the lockdown protocols;
3. describe the media/public briefings of the network as a means to pursue a participatory response to COVID-19 and discuss, through grassroots perspectives, the health, economic, and education crises brought about by the pandemic; and
4. draw insights from the experiences of CURE COVID in network building in the time of a pandemic.

The paper adopts an exploratory case study methodology as it provides an initial documentation and analysis of the case of CURE COVID as a network established in response to the challenges of the pandemic.

The framework of networking as a strategy for broadening the reach and impact of organizations and individuals is used in analyzing the experience of the CURE COVID network. Networking is defined as “a matter of creating useful linkages, both within and among communities, organizations, and societies, in order to mobilize resources and achieve various goals” (Maiese, 2005). It is...

an important component of community organizing. This requires that diverse members of the population build relationships, share resources, and work together in an organized way for social change... It is a matter of forging connections with other individuals or groups who face similar problems and issues and want to work together toward solutions. These social connections allow individuals, groups, and organizations to find allies, access tools, share practical wisdom, and build collaborative strategies. Networking thus helps those working for social change to share resources and information, devise an agenda, and engage in collective action within their society. (Maiese, 2005)

The idea of networking is made particularly potent by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prescribed home quarantine, physical distancing, and the wearing of masks as the main strategies for managing the transmission of the virus. The isolation that these health protocols imposed on individuals intensified further the need for a sense of community and togetherness, consequently activating social media networks as the primary means of communication and network-building among Filipino citizens.

Certainly, an important impetus for CURE COVID's networking strategy was the democratic and democratizing potential of social media. While hotly debated and critiqued as it opens up the public sphere to a multiplicity of voices at the same time that it fosters social fragmentation and a "networked individualism" (Wellman, cited in Loader & Mercea, 2011, p. 762), social media networking remains a potent avenue for vibrant critical discourse. This is especially true in the Philippines where, less than two months into an ill-managed and severely militarized pandemic response, ABS-CBN, one of only two of the biggest media corporations in the country lost its media franchise in what is widely perceived as an orchestrated shutdown by the Philippine Congress on a network that has sustained a famously critical stance against the Duterte administration. This crackdown on press freedom necessitated further the activation of alternative media outfits and the harnessing of social media networks as a mobilization strategy to reach and to consolidate communities fragmented by quarantine protocols. Such a strategy "foreground[s] the empowerment of prospective participants by harnessing the collaborative capacity of social media" toward "a more participatory political culture" (Loader & Mercea, 2011, pp. 762, 764) amid an increasingly repressive and intolerant state.

Indeed, despite the limits of social media democracy, it remains clear that...

the most obvious impact of social media upon democratic politics has been its disruptive capacity for traditional political practices and institutions. Divisions have become blurred, for example, between mainstream news media increasingly reliant upon political blogs and citizens-user content. (Loader & Mercea 2011, p. 762)

In order to unpack how the CURE COVID network capitalized on “user-generated democracy” enabled by the social media platform, this paper gathers data primarily from document review, participant observation, and data analytics. The authors form part of the CURE COVID network and are volunteer members of its Public Briefing Team, the group in charge of organizing the network’s online briefings. The writers’ participation in the network enabled their engagement with grassroots communities even in the time of the pandemic.

As Law (2020) discusses in his article, “Doing community engagement differently in the time of the pandemic,” universities and academics have had to “think outside the box” in order to teach, research, and engage with their students and other communities because of the restrictions imposed by the health crisis. For the writers, who collaborated in this network and the writing of this paper from each one’s own disciplinary strengths—Development Studies, Literary and Media Studies, and Business Administration—the engagement has been a multifold practice: ethical, political, intellectual, and academic. Law writes, “Through engagement...academics and researchers will be able to produce relevant knowledge and resources the world needs in response to the uncertain time” (p. 1).

In this spirit, the network’s public media briefings were conducted through Zoom and Facebook—the social media website of choice in the Philippines because it can be accessed for free in the region. Using the Facebook Insights tool, data from 16 March 2020 (the creation of the CURE COVID Facebook Page) to 07 October 2020 (the date of the last regular online briefing before a brief hiatus) was extracted from the page insights on 06 February 2021. The paper examines this data using Pearson’s correlation coefficient to determine trends and draw insights from them to substantiate a descriptive and diagnostic analysis.

## The formation of the network

Prior to the formation of the CURE COVID network, civil society organizations, people's organizations, labor unions, student organizations, churches, and many other civic groups and individuals had banded together initially to extend direct help in the form of relief goods to people and communities most vulnerable to the pandemic and the resulting economic hardships brought by the lockdown.<sup>1</sup> Picking up quickly on these broadening efforts, as early as 17 March 2020, the Citizen's Urgent Response to End COVID-19 (CURE COVID) acted as a coordinating platform to bring together various groups and individuals.

The CURE COVID Facebook Page describes the network in Filipino:

*isang people's initiative ng iba't ibang komunidad at sektor bilang tugon sa pandemyang COVID-19 at sa epekto nito sa kalusugan at kabuhayan ng mga nasabing komunidad at sektor. Isinasabuhay ng CURE COVID ang panawagang batayang serbisyong panlipunan para sa lahat at walang dapat maiiwan na di protektado mula sa sakit at sa mga hakbang para arestuhin ang pagkalat nito. Naglulunsad ang CURE COVID ng information drive, mga community-based initiatives para mapalakas ang kapasidad pangkalusugan, at adbokasiya para sa mga interes at kagalingan ng mamamayan.*

a people's initiative by various communities and sectors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the health and livelihood of these communities and sectors. CURE COVID translates into practice its calls for basic social services for all, for no one to be left without protection from the virus, and for steps to be taken to arrest its spread. It launches information drives, community-based initiatives to strengthen health capacity, and advocacies for the interest and welfare of the people.

The first online network meeting was held on 30 April 2020. Attended by 61 individuals representing 14 organizations, and including people across multiple sectors—development workers, artists, teachers, educators, legal professionals, health care workers, and public personalities—the meeting adopted the framework of a comprehensive, effective, humane, and participatory approach to COVID-19 and a seven-point agenda comprising of demands for free mass testing, assiduous

contact tracing, free quarantine facilities, full support to frontline health workers, assured free or subsidized treatment for COVID-19 patients, increased and timely social protection and amelioration programs, a comprehensive and calibrated post-lockdown plan, and respect for and protection of civil liberties and human rights at all times (see Appendix).

It was during this meeting that the suggestion for holding media/public briefings was made and adopted. However, true to its commitment to pursuing a “comprehensive” and “participatory” approach to COVID-19, formations in CURE COVID network still persisted with various on-ground relief operations and multi-platform information dissemination and campaigning. The public briefings became a means to present these grassroots efforts as counter-narratives to the state’s dominant discourse about the pandemic—a matter to be discussed further in this paper.

### **Relief assistance to communities and groups<sup>2</sup>**

After the first COVID case in the Philippines was confirmed on 30 January 2020, it was not until March 12, almost two weeks and 51 more cases later, that President Rodrigo Duterte announced a partial lockdown in Metro Manila starting midnight of 15 March 2020. This announcement gave communities less than three days to prepare for the hard restrictions on mobility, including almost total work stoppage and the disallowance of public commute. Mass panic spread as people struggled to find means to stockpile food, to secure money and resources, or to return home to their provinces or travel where they would be more likely to survive the lockdown.

During this time, churches, people’s organizations, and private groups and individuals immediately acted to provide relief to vulnerable communities and sectors. In NCR, with its dense population of almost 13 million people congested in massive urban communities that made viral transmission especially dangerous, it was not until 01 June 2020 that a General Community Quarantine (GCQ) was put in place to allow partial resumption of work.

By March 17, the CURE COVID network had begun to operate, consolidating efforts of individual organizations through their social media page and launching a series of information campaigns.

The relief arm of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), *Damayang Simbahan sa Panahon ng Disaster* or DAMBANA, was particularly quick to respond, giving relief and assistance from 15 March 2020, the day before the implementation of the ECQ. They reasoned, from their years of experience as emergency responders, that there were two things the millions of poor and daily wage earners were certain to experience during the quarantine: the uncertainty of food supply and the certainty of hunger. Knowing relief from the government would not be swift and that food packs, when they did arrive, would only last for three to four days, DAMBANA wrote of giving relief in their unpublished report:

What the organizations and individuals gave are not alms, but an apportionment from the resources received and freely given without expecting any return, not even a plaque of appreciation. They generously give because it is their expression of solidarity with no patronage string attached, nor a notion of indebtedness.

The prohibition on travel, the absence of public transportation, and the sudden closure of workplaces and schools resulted in the dislocation and displacement of many people in NCR and even in other urban areas. Hence, displaced workers, drivers, and students were the immediate beneficiaries of relief operations.

On April 16, Public Utility Vehicle (PUV) drivers in Cubao received food and hygiene packs from DAMBANA. Each food pack contained five kilos of rice, one kilo of fish, one kilo of mung beans, one liter of cooking oil, one kilo of sugar, half kilo of salt, and three canned goods, while each of the hygiene kits had two pieces of bath soap (60 grams), one laundry soap bar (300 grams), three sachets of toothpaste, one roll of tissue paper, and one bottle of chlorine (350 ml).

Progressive political groups were also quick to assist vulnerable communities at the onset of the lockdown. *Tulong Anakpawis* of the Anakpawis Party-list provided immediate food assistance of 100 kilos of rice, chicken meat, and *longganisa* to around 90 displaced construction workers in Parañaque who had lost their jobs and had not received any relief from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) or the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Displaced public transportation drivers were helped by the Southern Tagalog Serve the People Corps and by the Gabriela Women's Party



in Marikina. Displaced workers were assisted in accessing government assistance through hotlines set up in NCR by Defend Jobs Philippines and in Region XI by Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). Later in May, the Kontra Gutom arm of KMU also distributed food packs to 200 stranded workers in Turbina, Calamba.

Students who were stranded when the schools suddenly closed were also immediately identified for relief. The University of the Philippines' workers union helped *lumad* children in the *bakwit* school in Diliman, while in Baguio City and Benguet, the Serve the People Brigade Cordillera Disaster Response Network delivered food relief to 628 families and 61 stranded students.

Assistance was also extended to urban and rural poor communities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities (PWDs), senior citizens, solo parents, and political prisoners. Sagip Kanayunan and Tulong Anakpawis, the relief arms of peasant organizations, provided assistance to 2,689 families from 25 March to 23 April 2020. The total amount of PhP306,400.00 solicited during this period was used to distribute 2,094 relief packs and serve 595 hot meals in rural communities in Isabela, Cagayan, Bulacan, Bataan, Cavite, Rizal, Sorsogon, and Camarines Sur.

NCCP also provided food packs for the Community Kitchen of Sitio San Roque in Quezon City: several cavans of rice, trays of eggs, dried fish, mung beans, salt, sugar, canned food, and cooking oil. Hygiene kits containing bath soap, detergent, rubbing alcohol, disinfectant cleaning solutions, and face masks were also distributed. In addition, cash donations were given to families whose homes had been demolished and were living along the railroad tracks in Sampaloc, Manila through Bayang Matulungin volunteers.

Fisherfolk organization PAMALAKAYA and environment network Kalikasan collaborated to provide 250 food packs to members of the Alyansa ng mga Mandaragat sa Bacoar in Cavite. Each pack contained eight kilos of rice, half a kilo of eggplant, a piece of *puso ng saging* (banana heart), two pieces of bitter melon, a fourth of squash, five pieces of banana, and a bundle of string beans.

The relief arm of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), Tulong Guro, gathered sufficient donations from its members to provide assistance of cooked food or vegetable packs to over 350 urban poor families

in Quezon City and Tondo. It also extended assistance to the *bakwit* school of *lumad* students, stranded construction workers in the Ateneo de Manila University, and street dwellers in Quezon City.

Assistance to frontline workers in hospitals, checkpoints, and barangays was also another area of relief work. Tulong Guro distributed to 16 hospitals in five Metro Manila cities personal protection equipment or PPEs (1,306), N95 masks (1,172), surgical face masks (2,040), face shields (1,316), surgical gloves (2,700 pairs), ten gallons of alcohol, 192 bottles of mineral water, and 120 rolls of tissue paper. They also donated to six barangay checkpoints face shields, face masks, bottles of water, and supplies of alcohol. Tulong Guro also donated seven units of pulse oxymeters to San Lazaro Hospital. Meanwhile, Tulong Kabataan of the Kabataan Party-list donated face shields to barangay health workers in four barangays in Manila. In Central Luzon, the Central Luzon Disaster Response Network (CLDRN) extended food assistance to vulnerable communities and PPEs to frontline workers in all provinces of the region.

In Baguio, the Health for the People Brigade distributed at least 195 sets of PPEs to personnel of two police checkpoints, and to health workers, volunteers, and other frontline workers in seven barangays. Packs of Vitamin C were also distributed to 17 families and 63 packs of multivitamins to high-risk individuals such as the elderly, children, and persons with medical conditions.

Striving to provide not only economic assistance but also informational campaigns to keep communities clean and safe, COURAGE, the organization of government workers, apart from setting up a community kitchen in Brgy. Batasan Hills in Quezon City, distributed 1,000 bars of soap and launched a Bayanihang Paglilinis in a barangay in Navotas on 11 and 15 May 2020.

Damayang Migrante also held several missions from 01 to 10 May 2020 to distribute hygiene kits and pocket wifi to stranded Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Manila and Pasay.

### **Campaigns against repression and harassment**

The response of the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Duterte, and his administration to the COVID-19 pandemic can be described as akin to his infamous “Drug

War”: treating a health issue as a peace and order issue. Curato (2021) describes this succinctly:

The police were among the most visible front-liners enforcing curfew and social distancing policies with punitive measures. Protesters were dispersed and arrested with the police wearing full battle gear. Military tanks were deployed in Cebu City to communicate strict lockdown policies. A little over a month since Manila went on lockdown, over 30,000 people were arrested for breaking quarantine restrictions. Cases of police brutality surfaced. Some violators were locked in dog cages while others were made to sit under the sun. The tone from the top guarantees impunity for the state’s security forces. “Shoot them dead” was the president’s order for violators, just like the “permission to kill” in the drug war.

People’s organizations, churches, groups, and individuals providing relief and economic assistance during the pandemic were not spared from harassment and attacks. Some members of the Serve the People Brigade and Health for the People Brigade who were at the forefront of relief work in Baguio and Benguet were attacked through social media, because affiliate groups such as the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) and Anakbayan Cordillera had been vocal in critiquing and recommending alternative grassroots strategies to the government’s pandemic response, particularly emphasizing the call for medical solutions and economic aid in lieu of militaristic approaches to the crisis.

Harassment was not limited to online red-tagging of critical groups and relief efforts. On 30 April 2020, Jory Porquia, a long-time activist and coordinator for the progressive mass organization Bayan Muna, who was in the midst of setting up feeding programs for vulnerable communities in Iloilo City during the pandemic, was shot to death inside his house (Bajo, 2020).

The crackdown on critical and dissenting voices furthermore resulted in systematic efforts to stifle or discredit media organizations and the free press. As previously mentioned, on 04 May 2020, the congressional franchise of one of the largest television networks in the country, ABS-CBN, expired and was subsequently denied renewal on 10 July 2020. On social media, troll farms plagued citizens’ campaigns for mass testing, government transparency in the use of funds, government accountability

in the delivery of economic aid, and accuracy in the monitoring and reporting of COVID-19 statistics. By 03 July 2020, the President had signed the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (Republic Act No. 11479), which had been vigorously protested against by citizens, lawmakers, lawyers, and even some of its own authors for its too-broad definition of “terrorism” and unconstitutional authorization of illegal detention of suspected “terrorists.”

CURE COVID participated in online protests to demand an end to the militaristic solutions being implemented to manage the transmission of the virus and called on the government to treat the COVID-19 pandemic as a primarily health and social crisis rather than a peace and order problem. The hashtags #SolusyongMedikalHindiMilitar and #TulongHindiKulong were some of the messages used online. Network members also joined the first large physical protest action since the March 2020 lockdown: the Independence Day mobilization on 12 June 2020 held in the University of the Philippines Diliman. Renamed as a Grand Mañanita, this was a protest against the railroading of the severely problematic and unconstitutional Anti-Terrorism Bill and the blatant disregard of lockdown protocols by then Philippine National Police-National Capital Region Chief Maj. Gen. Debold Sinas (Gonzales, 2020). Petitioners to the Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of the Anti-Terrorism Act when it was adopted and came into law also included members of the network. Members also joined the motorcade on July 18 from Makati to Sgt. Esguerra St. in Quezon City to protest the closure of ABS-CBN (ANC 24/7, 2020).

### **Public briefings for information dissemination**

To address the escalating disinformation and misinformation online, from 08 May until 07 October 2020, the CURE COVID network conducted weekly public briefings to disseminate timely and relevant information regarding issues at the time of the COVID pandemic. These public briefings were conducted via online platforms, such as Zoom and Facebook livestream, to enable a wider audience to view and access the briefings.

The briefings featured marginalized voices from the grassroots and frontlines to provide counter-narratives to the predominant state discourse on the pandemic. It also focused on topics that covered the range of medical, economic, political, and sociocultural issues that needed to be addressed in the pandemic response, including health concerns, economic questions, statistical nuancing, school policies, social discrimination, and so forth.

After the 07 October 2020 briefing, the network decided to discontinue the regular schedule and instead hold public briefings as the need arose.

To evaluate the extent to which the public briefings had served their purpose to provide timely and relevant information on COVID-19 issues, the CURE COVID page's metrics on video views, reach, and engagements, as well as the coverage of major news outlets on the public briefings, were gathered and analyzed.

From May until October, a total of 27 public briefings were conducted. All were livestreamed on Facebook except for the public briefing on 27 May 2020 titled "*Anyare sa ayuda?*" This briefing was livestreamed on the personal Facebook Page of one of CURE COVID-19 network's members. Since the Facebook Page Insights data for the said briefing cannot be obtained, the said briefing was not included in the data analysis. A complete list of the public briefings, together with the details and a short description for each, may be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Complete List of CURE COVID Public Briefings from 08 May to 07 October 2020*

Topic	Date	Panelists
<b>Are we really flattening the curve?</b> Description: A discussion on the projected continuous increase of COVID-19 cases.	08 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Julie Caguiat, MD (Coalition for People's Right to Health)</li> <li>Felix P. Muga III, PhD (Ateneo de Manila Math Department)</li> <li>Judy M. Taguiwalo, PhD (Former DSWD Secretary)</li> </ul>
<b>Are we ready to lift the ECQ?</b> Description: A discussion of the risks of easing quarantine protocols.	12 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joshua Danac (Scientists Unite Against COVID-19)</li> <li>Paul Quintos (UP NCPAG)</li> <li>Thadz Ifurung (DEFEND Jobs PH)</li> </ul>
<b>Will our "new normal" be a better normal?</b> Description: A discussion on the state of the economy at the time of the pandemic.	15 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prof. Joseph Lim (Department of Economics, Ateneo de Manila University)</li> <li>Rosario Guzman (Head Researcher, IBON Foundation)</li> <li>Atty. Terry Ridon (Former Chairperson, Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor)</li> </ul>

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<b><i>Balik trabaho blues</i></b>	20 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atty. Sonny Matula (Federation of Free Workers)</li> <li>• Debbie Faigmani (Drug, Food and Allied Workers Federation)</li> <li>• Nadia de Leon (Institute for Occupational Health and Safety)</li> <li>• Sandy Hachasco (Malayang Alyansa ng Bus Employees at Laborers)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the risks brought by COVID-19 on health and job security for workers.		
<b><i>Balik eskwela: Handa na ba tayo?</i></b>	22 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rep. Sarah Elago (Kabataan Partylist)</li> <li>• Prof. Michael Tan (Former Chancellor, UP Diliman)</li> <li>• Raymond Basilio (Secretary General, Alliance of Concerned Teachers)</li> <li>• Dr. Cynthia Cuayo-Juico (Pediatrician, Manila Doctors Hospital)</li> </ul>
Description: An evaluation of how unprepared the education sector was for the reopening of classes due to lack of government assistance.		
<b><i>Anyare sa ayuda?</i></b>	27 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JC Punongbayan (UP School of Economics)</li> <li>• Malou Turalde (Former DSWD Undersecretary)</li> <li>• Sonny Africa (Executive Director, IBON Foundation)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the lack of relief and financial assistance from the government.		
<b>GCQ: <i>Bahala na, kanya-kanya na ba?</i></b>	29 May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brgy. Kagawad Libby Dipon (Brgy. Kagawad, Brgy. IVC, Marikina)</li> <li>• Ricky Indicio (Kadamay San Roque)</li> <li>• Brgy. Kagawad Phil Tiozon (Brgy. Kagawad, Tondo, Manila)</li> <li>• Katrina Stuart Santiago (People for Accountable Governance &amp; Sustainable Action)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion of the experiences of different barangays on the government's dismal relief efforts.		
<b>Online blended learning: <i>Kaya na ba?</i></b>	03 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Mercedes Arzadon (UP College of Education)</li> <li>• Roel Mape (Grade 5 Science teacher in QC)</li> <li>• Ninay Festin-Tan (Parent)</li> <li>• KJ Catequista (Parent)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the issues of remote learning setups necessitated by the health policies on community quarantines and physical distancing.		

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<b>Are we helping our MSMEs enough?</b>	05 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alex Aquino (Responsible Investment for Solidarity and Empowerment)</li> <li>Waya Araos-Wijangco (Restaurant and school owner)</li> <li>Jose Lapira (Lily Pad Digital Solutions)</li> <li>Raia dela Peña (Sinag Publishing and Printing Services)</li> </ul>
<i>Paano na ang ibang pasyente?</i>	10 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Paulyn Jean B. Rosell-Ubia (Former DOH Secretary)</li> <li>Prof. Edward V. Deveza (Chair, Tahanan ng Pag-asa)</li> <li>Patricia Santos (Researcher, mother of six-month old son)</li> <li>Victoria Lavado (Relative of a patient with heart and renal illness)</li> </ul>
<b>Explaining COVID-19's confusing numbers</b>	17 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prof. Lex Muga (Math Department, Ateneo de Manila University)</li> <li>Joshua Miguel Danac (Science Research Specialist, University of the Philippines)</li> <li>Dr. Joshua San Pedro (Coalition for the People's Right to Health)</li> </ul>
<b>Where are we 100 days into the lockdown?</b>	24 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Giovanni Tapang (Dean, UP College of Science)</li> <li>Dr. Gene Nisperos (UP College of Medicine)</li> <li>Sonny Africa (Executive Director, IBON Foundation)</li> </ul>
<i>Balik-Pasada</i>	01 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Emmanuel Luna (Social Scientist, UP National Center for Transportation Studies)</li> <li>Mody Floranda (Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide - PISTON)</li> <li>Sandy Hachasco (Head Convenor, Malayang Alyansa ng Bus Employees at Laborers)</li> </ul>

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<b>The case for mass testing</b> Description: A discussion on what mass testing is and how it would help in containing the spread of COVID-19.	08 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Joshua San Pedro (Co-convenor, Coalition for the People's Right to Health)</li> <li>• Joanna Concepcion (Chairperson, Migrante International)</li> <li>• Jang Monte Hernandez (Secretary General, Gabriela Women's Party)</li> <li>• Debbie Faigmani (Secretary General, Drug and Food Alliance-Kilusang Mayo Uno)</li> <li>• Atty. Melanie Pinlac (Vice Chairperson, NUPL-NCR)</li> </ul>
<b><i>Kumusta ang mga bagong bayani?</i></b> Description: A discussion on how overseas workers were dealing with the pandemic away from their families.	15 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dolores Balladares Pelaez (Migrante-Hong Kong)</li> <li>• Marlon Gatdula (Migrante-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)</li> <li>• Alex Aquino (Chairperson, CARD HK Foundation)</li> <li>• Atty. Edwin dela Cruz (President, International Seafarers Action Center)</li> </ul>
<b>#SONApanoNA COVID response?</b> Description: A discussion on the ineffectiveness of the government's militaristic approach toward handling COVID-19.	22 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Joshua San Pedro (Coalition for People's Right to Health)</li> <li>• Prof. Michael Tan (Former Chancellor, UP Diliman)</li> <li>• Dr. Edeline dela Paz, MD (Health Alliance for Democracy)</li> <li>• Assoc. Prof. Ma. Corazon Jimenez-Tan (CSWCD, UP Diliman)</li> </ul>
<b>#SONAkinig tayo. Anong napala natin?</b> Description: An assessment of the president's report in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA).	29 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Carl Ramota (UP Manila Social Science Department)</li> <li>• Dr. Lopao Medina (UP College of Medicine)</li> <li>• Aling Marie Dinglasan (Aling Marie FB Page)</li> <li>• Prof. Judy Taguiwalo (CURE COVID Spokesperson)</li> </ul>

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<b>Do we need a timeout or a game change?</b>	05 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maristela Abenojar, RN (Filipino Nurses United)</li> <li>• Rep. Carlos Zarate (Bayan Muna Partylist)</li> <li>• Dr. Oliver Gimenez, MD (Community Medicine Practitioners &amp; Advocates Assoc.)</li> <li>• Julie Caguiat, MD (CURE COVID Spokesperson)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on how hospitals were being overwhelmed by the continuous increase in COVID-19 cases.		
<b><i>Dapang-dapang ekonomiya: Paano tayong makakabangon?</i></b>	12 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noel Leyco (President, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila)</li> <li>• Kenneth Abante (Citizens' Budget Tracker)</li> <li>• Liza Maza (Former Lead Convenor, National Anti-Poverty Commission)</li> <li>• Eleanor de Guzman (Human Rights Secretary, Kilusang Mayo Uno)</li> </ul>
Description: An evaluation of how the government was spending its budget towards COVID-19 response.		
<b>Preparing for the Oct. 5 School Opening</b>	19 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raymond Basilio (Secretary General, Alliance of Concerned Teachers)</li> <li>• Joel Pablo Salud (Journalist, Author, Parent)</li> <li>• Dr. Cynthia Cuayo-Juico (Pediatrician, Manila Doctors Hospital)</li> <li>• Wilfredo Rodriguez (President, National Parent-Teachers' Association)</li> <li>• Rep. France Castro (ACT Teachers Party-list)</li> <li>• Cong. Alfred Vargas (Reactor)</li> <li>• Cong. Precious Hipolito-Castelo (Reactor)</li> <li>• Coun. Winnie Castelo (Reactor)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on calls for a safe, quality, and accessible education for everyone in the time of pandemic.		

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<b>Overcoming stigma and discrimination in the time of COVID-19</b>	26 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bibeth Orteza (Actor, Writer, Director)</li> <li>• Lita Malundras (Community daycare teacher)</li> <li>• Dr. Reggie Pamugas (Vice-Chairperson, Health Action for Human Rights)</li> <li>• Kristine Tomanan, RN (Asst. Prof., UP Manila College of Nursing)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on how COVID-19 patients, frontline workers, and their families cope with stigma and discrimination.		
<b>Coping with COVID from private lives to public concerns</b>	02 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iza Calzado (Actor, COVID-19 survivor)</li> <li>• Ron Magbuhos (Development worker, documentary filmmaker, COVID-19 survivor)</li> <li>• Casey Cruz (Spokesperson, Bayan-ST, daughter of frontliner who died of COVID-19)</li> <li>• Dr. Joshua San Pedro (Coalition for People's Right to Health)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the struggles and experiences of COVID-19 survivors from being infected with the virus.		
<b>Quo Vadis, PhilHealth?: Exploring alternatives to the failing health insurance system</b>	09 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Michael Tan (Medical anthropologist, Former UP Diliman Chancellor)</li> <li>• Prof. Reginald Vallejos (SUKI spokesperson, Coordinator/Head, Development Studies Program, UP Manila)</li> <li>• Ramon Paterno, MD (Member, Universal Health Care Study Group, UP Manila)</li> <li>• Albert Pascual (Secretary-General, Health Alliance for Democracy)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the inefficiencies of the current Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).		
<b>2021 health budget at COVID-19 stimulus package: <i>Sapat na ba para sa new normal?</i></b>	16 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonny Africa (Executive Director, IBON Foundation)</li> <li>• Rep. Stella Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City)</li> <li>• Robert Mendoza (National President, Alliance of Health Workers)</li> </ul>
Description: An evaluation of the pending proposals on the health budget and the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act, or Bayanihan 2, stimulus package.		

<b>Dissecting the SC decision denying the mandamus petition for mass testing</b>	23 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atty. Theodore Te (Free Legal Assistance Group)</li> <li>• Dr. Joshua San Pedro (Coalition for People's Right to Health)</li> <li>• Atty. Melanie Pinlac (National Union of People's Lawyers - NCR)</li> <li>• Rey Valmores-Salinas (Bahaghari spokesperson, Molecular biologist and petitioner)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion of the implications of the denial of the mandamus petition for mass testing.		
<b>COVID-19 in our jails</b>	30 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atty. Tony La Viña (Human rights lawyer)</li> <li>• Atty. Ephraim B. Cortez (Secretary General, National Union of People's Lawyers)</li> <li>• Fides Lim (Spokesperson, KAPATID-Families and Friends of Political Prisoners)</li> <li>• Dr. Reggie Pamugas (Vice-Chairperson, Health Action for Human Rights)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion on the mishandling of COVID cases in jails that quarantine arrests have been steadily filling up.		
<b>State of pandemic denial in the 2021 budget</b>	07 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teddy Casiño (People's Budget Campaign)</li> <li>• Rep. Sarah Elago (Kabataan Partylist)</li> <li>• Kenneth Abante (Move as One Coalition)</li> <li>• Maristela Abenojar, RN (Filipino Nurses United)</li> </ul>
Description: A discussion of how the government did not prioritize COVID-19 responses on health, education, and the economy in the 2021 proposed budget.		

The topic for each public briefing was conceptualized, deliberated, and decided upon by the members of the CURE COVID network based on pressing issues and concerns on health, education, the economy, and public administration at the time of the pandemic. The network then invited panelists from different sectors and organizations to narrate their experiences regarding the issues brought by the pandemic. Experts and professionals were also invited to present data and insights on the experiences shared by other panelists.

To show how effective the public briefings were in engaging the viewers, a Pearson correlation coefficient test was done between the metrics of lifetime engaged users (i.e., the number of unique users who engaged with the post in certain ways, such as commenting, liking, sharing, or clicking the post) and the lifetime unique video views solely from the network's page. From this test, a correlation coefficient value of 79.66% was determined. This suggests that an increase in the number of unique video views on the briefing is coupled with an increase in the number of likes, shares, comments, and other engagements, affirming that the briefings had a significant impact on people's level of engagement with the page itself.

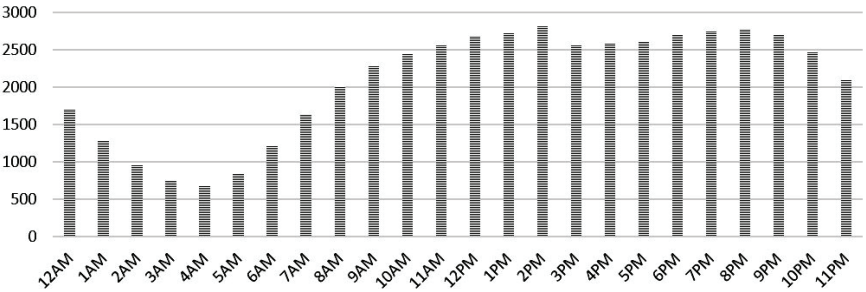
Once a topic for the public briefing had been finalized by the network and the availability of the invited panelists had been confirmed, a poster announcement and media invitation was posted on the network's Facebook Page. There was no strict schedule observed by the network in posting these announcements since some topics that were deemed urgent were scheduled as soon as possible. As noted from the CURE COVID's Facebook Page historical data, the time interval between the announcement and the livestream of the public briefing ranged from approximately two hours to over three days before the start of the briefing.

Nonetheless, an observation from the collected data suggests that there is no significant linear relationship between the number of peak live viewers (i.e., the maximum number of live viewers on a public briefing video) and how early the public briefing's announcement was made. A Pearson correlation coefficient test was done between the number of peak live views and the earliness of the announcement of the briefing. From this, a correlation coefficient value of 10.05% was found. This value suggests that the peak live views of each public briefing video on Facebook were not significantly affected by how early the public briefing announcement was made. Despite this, it may still have been better if a fixed time for posting public briefing announcements was observed for the CURE COVID page, especially if the fixed time set for posting was within the hours when most of the network's followers are online and active.

Based on the data collected, the time when most of the followers of the page are online on Facebook is around 2:00 p.m. (see Table 2). Hence, all public briefings of the CURE COVID network were scheduled to start at 2:00 p.m. and each had a 90-minute running time. However, there were some instances where the briefings were extended for at most 30 minutes to accommodate questions from participants.

**Table 2**

*Average Daily Liked and Online (i.e., the number of people who liked the CURE COVID Facebook Page and when they were online) from 16 March to 07 October 2020*



To further increase reach, the CURE COVID network invited different media outfits to every public briefing for coverage. In at least four instances, the briefings were quoted in major newspapers. The first was the public briefing, “Are we really flattening the curve?” where Dr. Felix P. Muga, a mathematics professor from Ateneo de Manila University, debunked the claims of the DOH that the country had already succeeded in flattening the COVID-19 curve in May 2020 (Sabillo, 2020a). In this public briefing, Dr. Muga pointed out that what was evident from the data reported by DOH was that there was still a slow increase in the number of active cases in the country and further increase was still expected once the backlog of test results had been processed.

Another briefing featured by a major news outlet was the “#SONApanoNA COVID response?” where panelists from the health sciences and other disciplines explained why the government deserves a failing grade for its COVID-19 response (Maru, 2020). This public briefing even elicited an invitation from Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque for the experts of the network to join the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF). The network replied that what the IATF needed was not to add more advisers, but to change their militaristic approach to the COVID response. The network reiterated its call for a comprehensive, effective, humane, and participatory response toward the pandemic which it had advocated since its formation in March 2020.

“#SONAkinig tayo. Anong napala natin?” was also featured in a major newspaper. In this briefing, the panelists criticized how Duterte had failed to provide a concrete plan or roadmap that would address the COVID-19 pandemic in his 5th State of the Nation Address (Cheng, 2020).

Aside from public briefings, the network also released and continues to release press statements to address urgent issues. These press statements are published on the network’s Facebook Page with a photo meme or social media card that summarizes the gist of the statement. Since the formation of the network, there has been one instance where a press statement was featured by a major news outlet. This instance was the press statement released on 29 June 2020 regarding the Department of Health’s (DOH) temporary deployment of Doctors to the Barrios volunteers to private hospitals in Cebu (Sabillo, 2020b). In this statement, the network suggested that the DOH should have hired more doctors instead of re-assigning those already serving in areas that also need health professionals.

However, although major news outlets picked up mostly on controversial political statements, citizens were much more interested in other topics more directly addressing the issues they were facing.

To further analyze what factors helped increase the reach of the network’s public briefings, some of the most-viewed briefings of the network were observed. Based on the CURE COVID page’s historical data, the top three most-viewed public briefings, in decreasing order, were as follows: “Preparing for the Oct. 5 School Opening,” “*Balik eskwela: Handa na ba tayo?*” and “#SONApanoNA COVID response?”

The topic “Preparing for the Oct. 5 School Opening” was the most-viewed public briefing video of the CURE COVID network. In this briefing, issues related to the resumption of classes on October 05 via remote learning methods were discussed. One of the panelists, Mr. Raymond Basilio, the Secretary General of ACT-Philippines, discussed the consequences of pushing through with the October 05 school opening without first ensuring a safe, accessible, and quality education for all given the pandemic situation, and why we should consider postponing the proposed school opening. The rest of the panelists discussed the requisites for the delivery of safe, accessible, and quality education for the different sectors affected, such as health workers, students, teachers, and parents.

The video for the “Preparing for the Oct. 5 School Opening” briefing was able to gather 12,258 unique user views out of which 4,560 views (37.20% of the total unique user views) were generated solely by the CURE COVID page while 7,698 views (62.80% of the total unique user views) were generated by the cross-posting done on Facebook Pages of several organizations with higher follower counts, such as the Alliance for Concerned Teachers (ACT), Now You Know, Altermidya, and Pinoy Weekly. Out of all these organizations who cross-posted the briefing, ACT contributed the largest unique user view count of 5,673 (46.28% of the total unique user views).

The cross-posting done for this briefing also helped in significantly increasing the reach of the video as it was able to add 18,223 more unique users to the original 22,959 unique users reached solely by the CURE COVID page. Moreover, this briefing also had the highest peak live viewers count out of all the public briefings, reaching a maximum of 326 viewers when it was livestreamed on Facebook. This was more than thrice the average number of peak live viewers for all public briefing videos, which was 96 viewers. The reason as to why this briefing garnered the greatest number of views, reach, and peak live viewers out of all the network’s briefings may be explained by the cross-posting done by ACT, as well as their wide mobilization of teachers and students to view the public briefing.

The cross-posting of the live videos of the network to the Facebook Page of other organizations was proven to increase the views and reach of the briefing by up to twice the amount had it not been cross-posted. Based on the data collected from the Facebook Page Insights tool, the average additional views contributed by cross-postings on public briefing videos were 82.47% of the total views solely generated by the network’s page. Moreover, the average additional reach contributed by cross-postings on public briefing videos was 103.30% of the total reach solely generated by the network’s page. These numbers suggest that the cross-posting of public briefings may be effective in increasing the number of views and reach.

The topic “*Balik eskwela: Handa na ba tayo?*” was the second most-viewed public briefing video on the network’s Facebook Page. This briefing was able to gather 9,445 unique user views without the aid of cross-posting, thus, making it the most viewed out of all the public briefing videos that were not cross-posted. The briefing was also able to achieve 271 peak live viewers and 14,960 unique user reach.

The topic “#SONApanoNA COVID Response?” was the third most-viewed public briefing video by CURE COVID. The response elicited from the government may have helped this briefing to gather a total of 8,874 unique user views, 144 peak live viewers, and 24,877 unique user reach.

Notably, the most-viewed public briefings were those that mobilized organizations who were stakeholders on relevant topics, for example, ACT for education-related topics. The public briefing that sought to illuminate information on the government’s COVID response also drew big audiences. The participation of celebrities and government officials likewise attracted viewers for the briefing.

## **Conclusion**

### *Factors in network-building in the time of the pandemic*

As previously stated, network-building as a component of community organizing is important in broadening the reach of individual organizations and in bringing in various expertise and competencies. The significance of networking under normal circumstances cannot be underestimated.

Networking is grounded in the notion that people who pool their resources have a greater ability to advance their interests. Connections formed through networking can be useful in broadening the research and knowledge base of social campaigns and generating new resources and backing for their efforts. Establishing alliances also makes it easier for organizations to gain help from support groups and allies who support their goals. (Maiese, 2005)

Prior to the pandemic, network-building would be facilitated by face-to-face meetings, joint activities on the ground, and team building among others. But given the lockdown, the formation and continued existence of CURE COVID were made possible by a combination of the use of social media and online platforms and limited on-the-ground activities of members.



**Social media and other online platforms helped immensely in the formation and further development of the CURE COVID network.**

In the first month and a half of the pandemic, the need was for providing immediate relief assistance to vulnerable and affected communities in the country. Many of the organizations who comprised the initial members of the network had already been doing relief work as recent as the Taal Volcano eruption in January 2020. Through the support from donors and the determination of the members of the network, various forms of assistance such as food packs, hygiene kits, PPEs, and face masks were extended to rural and urban communities, stranded construction workers, OFWs, and students, health workers, and even police and barangay *tanod* managing the checkpoints.

Given the restrictions in mobility, the network utilized to the fullest the various social media platforms to generate support for its relief operations, to share the various relief initiatives conducted by its members in the communities, to forward its analyses of issues related to the COVID pandemic, and to harness the expertise of various groups and individuals in relation to addressing the pandemic. A Facebook Page and the public/media briefings were the main platforms for these efforts. Also, the cross-posting of these public/media briefings on the Facebook Page of other progressive organizations helped in increasing the reach of the network.

**The network brought together diverse communities such as organizers, unionists, jeepney drivers, health experts, legislators, economists, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and academics through its online public briefing.** Women leaders of urban poor organizations shared their stories of setting up community kitchens and monitoring the health of community members. Medical doctors and microbiologists discussed the importance of free mass testing and extensive contact tracing to control the pandemic. Hospital workers talked about the need to increase the budget of government hospitals and to increase workers' salaries. These discussions and many others provided a range of testimonies on the inadequacy of the national government's response and the heroic efforts of communities and groups to extend help especially to those most vulnerable. This bringing together of diverse groups and individuals was made possible by the online platform used by CURE COVID.

**Online meetings of the network to agree on its thrust, discuss plans, and report on activities and assess them were important in updating members and in eliciting their views and suggestions.** Four network meetings were held in 2020: the April 24 meeting to formalize the network with the adoption of its thrust; the May 15 meeting to report on activities, the August 4 meeting for updates, and the December 19 meeting to assess the work of the network in the previous months and to make adjustments on its plans.

**Online platforms were not enough to highlight the urgent needs of communities under lockdown or to call the government's attention to the inadequacy of its response.** The network participated in protests initiated by multisectoral groups to call for mass testing, to end the militaristic approach to the pandemic, to demand immediate provision of PPEs for frontline workers, to demand a higher budget for health and social services, among others. These actions strictly followed health protocols such as physical distancing and the use of face masks, as well as regular disinfection of the microphones used during the rallies. The network also participated in legal challenges through individual members and organizations who were signatories to the Supreme Court petitions, such as those against the Anti-Terror Law and for government to implement free mass testing.

Finally, and most importantly, while social distancing is cited as one means of preventing the spread of the virus, the CURE COVID experience shows that such social distancing should not translate to the loss of social solidarity, much less the loss of basic rights to organize, to speak truth to power, and to hold demonstrations. Network-building utilizing social media and other online platforms and participation in protest actions which follow health protocols enabled CURE COVID to coordinate and amplify the activities of its members even under pandemic conditions.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Many of these groups and individuals had already been doing relief work for decades and, prior to March 2020, were in the midst of assisting victims of the Taal Volcano eruption in January 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Based on reports submitted by the organizations to the CURE COVID Secretariat as well as Facebook posts of relief efforts.

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*Reports of Network Members on Their Relief Assistance*

ACT for People's Health: Tulong Guro, April 27, 2020

Central Luzon Disaster Response Network (CLDRN)

Cordillera People's Alliance Relief Operations Report, April 24, 2020

CURE COVID Polyeto: Sama-samang Biguin ang COVID-19 used by Tulong Kabataan

Damayang Simbahan sa Panahon ng Disaser- An Ecumenical Response: Power Point Presentation - March-April 2020

Sagip Kanayunan at Tulong AnakPawis Relief Operations: Summary of Relief Delivery Operations as of April 25, 2020

Southern Tagalog Serve the People Brigade Tulong Drivers

**Appendix: CURE COVID Orientation**

*Pursue a comprehensive, effective, humane and participatory response to the COVID-19 crisis!*

Citizens' Urgent Response to End COVID-19 (CURE COVID)

Adopted April 24, 2020

As the end of the extended lockdown period nears without a clear decline in the number of COVID-19 infections, a comprehensive plan needs to be put in place to control the spread of the virus, treat the sick, and allow a safe and reasonable easing of restrictions to allow our people to earn a living.

It is becoming clear that COVID-19 is going to be a prolonged health crisis. It will likely trigger an unprecedented economic slowdown and heightening of social tensions. The pandemic has become so destructive not only because of the government's inadequate, haphazard and delayed response but due to the long-running neglect of the health care system coupled with glaring socio-economic inequalities.

There is also growing evidence that the emergence of coronaviruses in the last few years is linked to environmental degradation. Sadly, too, we see how the pandemic is used to justify more repressive measures against our people.

In this light, CURE COVID calls for a different kind of response to the crisis: one that is COMPREHENSIVE, EFFECTIVE, HUMANE and PARTICIPATORY.

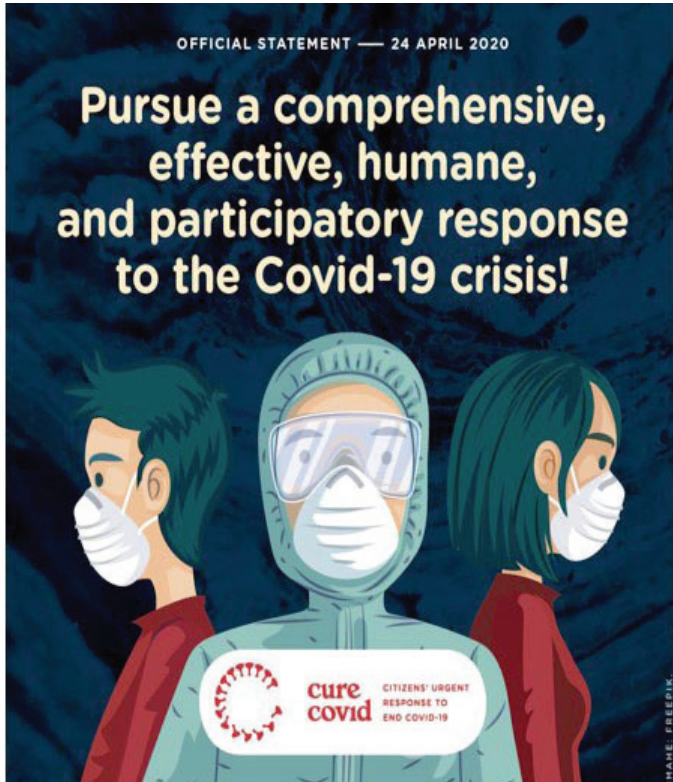
- **Comprehensive** - COVID-19 is a global health emergency with wide-ranging socio-economic implications. Any plan to address the pandemic should prioritize the necessary measures to identify, treat and care for patients and their families; to prevent the spread of the disease through primary health alongside quarantine measures; and to mitigate consequent adverse socio-economic and more so political impacts resulting from the needed health measures. The plan should include other measures: psychosocial counseling for the vulnerable sections of the population; public information drives to counter the epidemic of fake news; community organization and empowerment to build social solidarity; and, most importantly, channels for early identification and mitigation of socio-economic dislocation. Ecological aspects like community sanitation, preventing urban decay and pollution, and waste management particularly of medical waste must be addressed. Over the medium term, the plan should work towards reducing the economic and social inequities that render our people highly vulnerable to public health crises such as pandemics.
- **Effective** - The health and related measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic should be adequately funded, science-based and complemented by non-bureaucratic mechanisms for widespread and proper implementation down to the grassroots.
- **Humane** - The impacts of the pandemic, quarantine and social distancing measures differ widely based on existing socio-economic inequalities. Thus the government's response should involve humane policies such as prioritizing vulnerable groups like the poor and unemployed, those who have lost their livelihood, those in prison, among others. It requires utmost cultural sensitivity, maximum tolerance and compassion for those in difficult or precarious situations.

- **Participatory** - To be effective, measures to address COVID-19 should obtain the trust and participation of a well-informed and empowered citizenry. This requires maximum transparency and accountability on the part of authorities while continuing to respect human rights as well as providing our people with enough information and leeway to be creative and innovative in dealing with the pandemic and related challenges.

The following measures are particularly urgent and require much more effort and resources from the government, with the help of the private sector:

1. Free COVID-19 mass testing with priority to all suspected and probable cases, frontline health workers, residents in highly infected areas and communities (including surveillance testing), and essential workers;
2. Assiduous contact tracing to identify, test, monitor and quarantine all those who came in contact with suspected, probable and confirmed cases of COVID-19;
3. Adequate, properly equipped, accessible and free quarantine facilities at the city, municipal and district levels;
4. Full support to frontline health workers in terms of PPEs, food, transportation, accommodation and hazard pay, as well as adequate facilities, supplies and equipment for hospitals; similarly, adequate protection and support for other essential workers.
5. Assured free treatment for all COVID-19 patients in public hospitals and subsidized treatment in private hospitals;
6. Increased, expanded and expedited social protection and amelioration programs and other forms of assistance to those adversely affected by COVID-19 and the enhanced community quarantine. This should include regular and contractual workers, farmers, fisherfolk, informal sector workers such as street vendors, jeepney and tricycle drivers, as well as middle class families dislocated by the lockdown together with small and medium enterprises. Special focus must be given vulnerable groups like the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and persons deprived of liberty;

7. Uphold civilian supremacy, respect and protect civil liberties and human rights at all times.
8. Let us build on the social solidarity and generosity of spirit that has emerged due to this crisis. Together, we shall overcome COVID-19. #



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# THE FAMILY FARM SCHOOL APPROACH TO HUMAN CAPABILITIES BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Jiza Mari S. Jimenez

## Abstract

*This study examines several Individual and Collective Capabilities that were observed among rural community members of Roxas, Oriental Mindoro in School Year 2018-2019. These capabilities relate to notions of self-awareness, personal transformation, self-determination, community solidarity, meaningful participation, socioeconomic well-being, leadership development, health promotion, and sustainable environmental practices. In exploring human capabilities building, this qualitative research likewise reveals the unique features and characteristics of the Family Farm School (FFS) approach and how it contributes to both individual and collective strengthening and transformation.<sup>1</sup>*

Keywords: Family Farm School, Individual and Group Capabilities Building, Community Development

## Introduction

Individual Capabilities are “not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms and opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20). They refer to what a person is “actually able to do and be” (p. 14) through the interplay of internal abilities and external opportunities.

Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) focused on individual capabilities development. While Sen (2002, in Rosignoli, 2018) maintained that social interactions ultimately resulted in the formation of individual capabilities, Nussbaum (2006, in Rosignoli, 2018, p. 814) theorized that

“the person, not the group, is the primary subject of political justice, and policies that improve the lot of a group are to be rejected unless they deliver the central capabilities to each and every person.”

Collective Capabilities later emerged to capture the experiences of groups. More than just the sum of all individual capacities possessed by members of a group, Collective Capabilities refer to internal resources that develop into capabilities that are formed specifically from people’s membership and interaction with groups, collectives, or associations, which they could otherwise not achieve solely from individual effort (Comim & Carey, 2001; Ibrahim, 2006; Robeyns, 2017 in Rosignoli, 2018).

Philippine studies on the concept of capabilities include examining the capabilities of public school teachers (Polita, 2001), children of migrant parent(s) (Abenir, 2014), female kin-caregivers in transnational families (Feria, 2015), and people with disabilities in their experience of disability and well-being (Geronimo, 2015). Building on these researches, this particular study aimed to examine the Family Farm School (FFS) approach to human capabilities building in pursuit of Community Development goals.

Community Development involves “recognizing and building up the people’s innate potentials and capabilities, enabling them to define their direction and participate in the process of change through collective actions that will ensure the well-being or welfare of the people” (Luna, 2009, pp. 4-5). This requires both personal and societal change where education is valued as “a potent force for social transformation” (Tungpalan & Hernando, 1990 in Tungpalan, 1991a, p. 2). While enhancements to educational policies, programs, and outcomes contribute to overall societal gains, the underlying socioeconomic and political structures must likewise improve to enhance what people can do and become (Tungpalan, 1991b).

As such, this research aimed to determine context-based terms that members of the Gelacio I. Yason Foundation-Family Farm School (hereinafter referred to as the Roxas FFS) use and associate with their perceptions and experiences of human capabilities development. Likewise, the study hoped to recognize the components that create capabilities, the changes they can foster among individuals and groups, and the conditions that enable or disable them, which are drawn from and shaped by the community members’ respective involvement in the Roxas FFS as learners,

educators, and rural development partners. Thus, this inquiry into the FFS experience of human capabilities building aimed to help enhance, expand, and extend development efforts in the community.

## Methods

The research was conducted in partnership with the Roxas FFS—a private, non-profit, alternative secondary school in Barangay San Mariano, Roxas, Oriental Mindoro (Figure 1). The Roxas FFS is one of the 13 family farm schools in the Philippines and was selected because of its rich and meaningful experiences in integrated rural development for almost 20 years. The researcher learned about the Roxas FFS when she served as a community volunteer for 10 months in 2009-2010.



**Figure 1.** The Roxas FFS Compound, SY 2018-2019

The study applied a qualitative research design in examining the context, perceptions, and experiences of 164 research participants comprising of various community members including Roxas FFS students, parents, tutors,<sup>2</sup> school administrators, and partners. Non-probability purposive sampling—with the aid of database and the use of fishbowl and snowball methods—was applied in selecting the research participants. Considering that perceptions, interpretations, and experiences vary at different stages of the FFS engagement, students from all grade levels (i.e., Grades 7 to 12) who were enrolled in SY 2018-2019 were included as samples. To enhance the representation of results, the research captured the responses of former tutors and students representing various batches and barangays, including alumni and students who had decided to disengage.

Research participants were 12 to 67 years old consisting of 66% female respondents. Table 1 provides the distribution of research participants by sex and type of respondent.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1***Distribution of Research Participants by Sex and Type of Respondent*

Type	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
Students	64	39%	32	20%	96	59%
Parents	37	23%	9	5%	46	28%
Current Tutors	4	2%	4	2%	8	5%
Former Tutors	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
Staff	2	1%	0	0%	2	1%
Alumni	2	1%	5	3%	7	4%
Former Students	0	0%	3	2%	3	2%
Partners	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data gathering ran from August 2018 to February 2019 and consisted of the following: 1) observation of various school and community activities; 2) focus group discussions (FGDs) with structured learning exercises (SLEs) for students; 3) key informant interviews (KIIs) with alumni, parents, tutors, school administrators, and partners; and 4) review of secondary data drawn from various articles and research. Content Analysis was used in organizing, analyzing, and presenting the data.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, an audio recorder was used during the various FGDs and KIIs. Data encoding was done in a verbatim manner to capture nuances and increase the validity of analysis. Questions that captured both positive and negative perceptions and experiences were included and were treated with the same attention and consideration. Data triangulation was done through cross-validation of reported information through secondary sources and responses of other participants.

Moreover, the researcher took deliberate efforts in implementing ethical research practices and adhering to the Data Privacy Act of 2012. First, the researcher obtained clearance to conduct the study with full disclosure of the objectives and methods involved without pre-empting the research or overselling the potential benefits that could be derived from the study. Second, the data gathering process was carefully prepared and carried out to minimize any potential threats to the physical, psychological,

and financial well-being of research participants. Third, confidentiality was assured and communicated to the research participants through the informed consent forms and secured at the start and end of every data gathering activity. Pseudonyms were also assigned to protect the personal information of research participants. Fourth, the research data were used only for the legitimate and specified purposes of the study and were stored in a safe environment that was secured either by lock and key or by password encryption. Finally, the research participants were given access to the final manuscript through copies distributed to the Roxas FFS.

## Results

### *A. Background on the Roxas FFS*

A convergence of clergy and lay leaders and volunteers established the Roxas FFS on 02 May 2001, following the results of a diocese-wide Participatory Action Research (PAR), which identified the widespread “poverty, inadequacies in human formation, and deficiencies in existing social structures” as the most urgent concerns in the region (Ballesteros, 2009, p. 2). For years, these conditions had left the town economically poor. In response, a series of meetings was launched to help address these emerging needs.

One of the volunteers who participated in these meetings was former Mayor Gelacio I. Yason who realized that the Roxas youth had limited education and employment opportunities. After graduating from high school, some were not able to find work, and those who graduated from college tended to relocate to the cities. This propelled him to rally both people and resources to support the cause of the Family Farm School, after having learned more about it through a series of immersion visits to Dagatan FFS in Batangas, which was inaugurated as the very first FFS in the Philippines and in Asia on 08 August 1988 (Gayo, 2013). These visits revealed the potential of the FFS model in poverty alleviation, integral human formation, health promotion, environmental protection, and spiritual growth, which in turn strengthened the resolve to bring this model of education to the Municipality of Roxas (Ballesteros, personal communication, February 1, 2019).

The Roxas FFS was envisioned to “create sustainable communities through holistic education” (GIYF-FFS, n.d.). As such, it aimed to deliver an agriculture- and entrepreneurship-based curriculum to engage the youth

in meaningful and productive work. The intention was to seek out students who were among the “poorest of the poor” (Anna, School Administrator) because doing so was viewed as the most viable path to rural development. The recruitment of students was across parishes in the municipalities of Bongabong, Bulalacao, Mansalay, and Roxas.

In the FFS model, varied and alternative methods of formation are used to enhance lesson delivery and learning outcomes. These include: 1) the *Alternancia* System (i.e., alternating school and home cycles), 2) Contextual Teaching (i.e., theoretical and practical approach to teaching), 3) Personalized Formation (i.e., chats, counseling, and mentoring sessions between tutors and students), 4) Family Visits, 5) Parents’ Participation and Formation, 6) *Convivencia* (i.e., “living together as a community of persons” [Sibonga, 2006, p. 5]), 7) the Small Group (i.e., a maximum class size of 50 [Zarate, 2000]), and 8) Spiritual Formation.

These teaching methods are supplemented by four School Advocacies: 1) Organic Agriculture, 2) Care for the Environment, 3) Social Enterprise Development, and 4) Natural Health; accompanied by seven Core Values: 1) Compassion, 2) Respect and Honor, 3) Bridging and Linking, 4) Reflectiveness and Mindfulness, 5) Three Acts of Goodness (i.e., “Do good deeds. Speak good words. Think good thoughts” [Ko, n.d. p.5]), 6) Love for Learning, and 7) Creativity and Resourcefulness.

### *B. Examining human capabilities building in the Roxas FFS*

#### *Folk terms on human capabilities*

The Roxas FFS community members used the following terms in referring to human capabilities: “*kakayanan*,” “*kakayanin*,” “*kaya*,” “talent,” “skills,” “*halaga*,” and “*lakas ng loob*” (i.e., capabilities, talents, skills, value, self-worth, and courage). These relate to the abilities that people possess, which are associated with the notions of value, self-worth, and resilience in themselves and in others.

These findings converge with the terms identified by Polita (2001) such as “*kakayahan*,” “*sariling sikap*,” “*may K*” (with ‘k’ referring to “*kakayahan*” or “*kaya*”), “*may dating*,” “*may sinasabi*,” and “*may boses*” (i.e., capability, self-reliance, ability, has presence, has something to say, has a voice), which pertain to individual experiences. Whereas the expression “(*nakiki-isa sa*) *sama-samang pagtulong at sama-samang*

*pagsuporta*” (i.e., [engages in] cooperation and collective support) convey group or collective experiences of capabilities and empowerment (Polita, 2001, p. viii).

### *Individual Capabilities*

This section presents seven individual capabilities of Roxas FFS members, which pertain to notions of self-awareness, personal transformation, self-determination, household and community solidarity, socioeconomic well-being, health promotion, and sustainable environmental practices.

1. **The capability to deepen their self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence, which help cultivate meaningful relationships with themselves and others.** Students at the Roxas FFS admitted to having inferior perceptions of themselves, which translated to their interaction with their peers. With continued Roxas FFS engagement, changes in their self-concept, social interaction, and school performance were cultivated. “*Noong dito po ako pumasok sa Farm School, naramdaman ko na...may halaga din pala ako. Iyong mga bagay na kaya nila, kaya ko rin pala gawin. Tapos..., may mga tao rin pala na nabilib sa kakayahan ko*” (FGD-2, Female Students). (“When I studied in the Farm School, I realized my self-worth. I learned that I could do the same things others could do. And, that there were people who were even impressed with what I could do.”) These changes likewise facilitated improvements in parent-child relationships. “*Nag-iba siya. As a whole, nag-iba siya. At saka ako mismo, nag-iba na rin ako sa kanya*” (Jenny, Parent). (“He changed. He completely changed. I also changed the way I interacted with him.”)
2. **The capability to overcome and transform personal challenges and deficiencies in order to grow and flourish.** Symptoms of poor school motivation such as frequent tardiness, absenteeism, and substandard schoolwork were sometimes observed among the students. Changes were later noted as students attended their classes regularly, exerted greater diligence in their schoolwork, and paid more attention to their lessons in class. The psycho-emotional support, positive influence, and guidance of their peers, tutors, and families, alongside the FFS Advocacies and Core Values, were instrumental in bringing about these changes. The students also acknowledged feeling free to discover their interests without being confined to academics.



In describing his time in the Roxas FFS, an alumnus—Lloyd—recalled a deep, healing, and humanizing experience because of the way tutors treat students with dignity and respect:

*(Batid nila) ang halaga mo bilang tao...Noong dito ako sa Farm School, kahit ganoon iyong ugali ko...naramdaman ko iyong pagiging tao ko dahil tinanggap nila ako...Doon ko naramdaman na tao nga pala ako. Marunong din pala akong magmahal. Marunong din pala akong magdasal. Marunong din pala akong sumunod...As in...hindi ako walang kwentang tao...Tao nga pala ako. May puso pala ako.*

(They perceive) your value and dignity because you are a human being. When I came to the Farm School, I felt like I was a human being because they accepted me even if I didn't have the best behavior. That's where I remembered that I was a human being. I realized I had the capacity to love, to pray, and to obey. I realized I was not unworthy. I am a person who has a heart.

**3. The capability to become a productive member of the family.**

Students shared how they struggled with domestic duties, which sometimes caused conflict in the family. By becoming productive members, the students learned to take initiative, practice responsibility, and manage time efficiently. *“Inuuna niyan iyong mga gawain namin sa bahay bago...mag-aral...Palibhasa’y pagod kaming mag-asawa (sa pagsasaka), nakahiga na kami...Talagang inaasahan namin sila dito sa bahay. Hindi na iyan nagpapa-utos. Sila na ang nagkukusa”* (James, Parent). (“Before doing his school assignments, he does household chores since very often, his mother and I are very tired [from doing farm work]. When we get home, we rest. We really rely on them. They no longer wait for our instructions. Instead, they take the initiative.”)

**4. The capability to be helpful toward their peers and community.**

Students said that their experiences in the Roxas FFS helped them become more perceptive and responsive to the needs of others. *“Noong pumasok ako ng FFS, natutunan ko po tumulong sa kapwa. Doon ko rin nalaman na mas maganda pala na ikaw ang magbigay kaysa ikaw ang binibigyan”* (FGD-6, Male Students). (“When I studied in the FFS, I learned how to be helpful to others. I realized it is better to give than to receive.”) They also shared how they help maintain cleanliness in their surroundings through monthly clean-up drives.



5. **The capability to discern and aspire for a life one has reason to value.** When asked about their dreams, the students expressed their desire to complete their education, participate in meaningful work, be gainfully employed, and be able to support their family. “(*Pangarap ko*) *iyang simpleng buhay na tahimik. Walang problema...Magkaroon ng magandang buhay, iyong may magandang trabaho...Gusto ko po matupad iyong pangarap namin ng pamilya...yumaman [at] maging successful*” (FGD-9, Male Students). (“[I dream of] a simple and peaceful life. I want to have a good life, and a good job. I want to fulfill our family’s dream of being rich [and] successful.”) Similarly, parents emphasized the value of education, which they believe is their path out of poverty and the only inheritance they could leave their children.
  
6. **The capability to make efficient use of resources.** The students applied the following learned behaviors: budgeting, keeping a coin bank, living a simple lifestyle, spending within one’s means, cultivating organic backyard gardens, opting for a more plant-based diet to minimize food costs, making personal contributions to household expenses, and practicing self-control. “*Masinop (siya). Gusto niya pag may pera, doon sa may kabuluhan ang kalalagyan. Kaya pinangangaralan niya iyong mga nakababatang kapatid: ‘Huwag kayong magastos ha. Kung bibili...iyong mapapakinabangan. Huwag iyong kung anu-ano lang*” (Vicky, Parent). (“She is prudent when it comes to managing her money. She only spends this on meaningful items and not on just anything. She often reminds her younger siblings: ‘Save your money. Make sure you only buy useful things.’”)
  
7. **The capability to live a long and healthy life.** Students and alumni shared that, prior to their Roxas FFS engagement, they did not know how to cultivate plants let alone organic gardens, and that their diet largely consisted of unhealthy food. With continued FFS engagement, changes to the household diet, health practices, and mindsets started to take root. These included maximizing the consumption of organic fruits and vegetables and minimizing the use of Monosodium Glutamate (MSG). They also cultivated organic backyard gardens and became more mindful and resourceful of the ingredients they consumed. To facilitate these changes, the Roxas FFS conducted awareness and advocacy campaigns on Organic Agriculture, Natural Health, and healthy food preparation to help students and their families make simple yet deliberate choices in their lives. “(*Mayroong*) *paniniwala na mas mabubuhay tayo...kapag mataas ang kakayahan*

*natin sa pag-po-produce ng mga pagkain natin*" (John, Alumnus). ("We believe that we could live better with the capability to produce our own food.")

### *Group Capabilities*

This section provides seven group capabilities of Roxas FFS members, which pertain to notions of community solidarity, meaningful participation, socioeconomic well-being, leadership development, health promotion, and sustainable environmental practices.

1. **The capability to build unity and solidarity.** *Convivencia* pertains to the culture of family and community in the Roxas FFS. It is grounded on the experience of "*malasakit*" and "*pakikisama*" [i.e., caring for and relating well with others]. "*Dito, sabay-sabay kayong kakain... Sabay-sabay kayong magdadasal. Iisang bubong ang hihigaan ninyo... Iyong mga teachers... Tatay talaga... Iyon iyong pamilya... Hindi ko man kadugo iyan, kapatid ko pa rin iyan... Oo, naging kaklase ko lang yan. Pero iyong pinagsamahan namin... ay hindi niyo kayang palitan*" (Lloyd, Alumnus). ("Here, we do things together. We eat together, we pray together. We live under one roof. The teachers are not just teachers, they are parents. We may not be related by blood, but I consider them my family. Even if they were only former classmates, the friendship we shared cannot be replaced.") This facilitates greater cooperation in accomplishing farm and school activities among the students, tutors, and parents.
2. **The capability to be active partners in the students' education and formation.** The atmosphere of unity and solidarity in the Roxas FFS translates to greater participation among parents who express their support through their presence, care, and encouragement. They also provide their time, energy, financial and material resources to help the students excel in school. This extends beyond filial relations as some parents act as surrogate caregivers to other students by providing them with food, school requirements, shelter, livelihood, money, and most of all, parental guidance and support. On other occasions, the parents assist through school recruitment, participate in various school maintenance activities, help sew costumes for school events, and operate a first aid station during various school and community activities, among others (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Roxas FFS parents volunteer in various school activities  
*Note:* (GIYF-FFS, 2019)

3. **The capability to organize effectively.** Initially, the tutors and school administrators spearheaded various campaigns on Proper Waste Management. However, they soon realized they were spread too thinly. This presented an opportunity to enlist greater support from the parents so, together, they could work toward promoting the school advocacies and core values to the wider community.

As a result, the Roxas FFS offered free training sessions to build the parents' awareness and skills in diverse topics including: 1) Organic Agriculture (i.e., carbonized rice hull production, preparation of organic fertilizer, system of rice intensification, and organic mushroom production), 2) Care for the Environment (i.e., proper waste management), 3) Social Enterprise Development (i.e., cookies, soymilk, organic mushroom cultivation, herbal soap making, assembly of eco stoves, and training in massage), and 4) Natural Health (i.e., cooking demonstrations).

Figure 3 shows different products made by the Roxas FFS parents including organic rice, herbal soap, citronella insect repellent, coconut oil, and ginger tea.



**Figure 3.** Products made by the Roxas FFS parents under the Farm School's income generating projects  
*Note:* (Ballesteros, 2016a; Ballesteros, 2016b)

4. **The capability to promote the value of Organic Agriculture.** Students acknowledged how farming enables them to become more self-sufficient and cope with the challenges of rising food prices. The value of agriculture was also affirmed by tutors who expressed: *"Iyong mission (ng Roxas FFS)...ay...matulungan...iyong mga taong nasa komunidad na maiangat iyong antas ng pamumuhay. Kaya unang-unang itinuturo ng Farm School ang Organic Agriculture para matulungan tayo na maangat iyong buhay. Hindi iyong naka-steady lang tayo sa laylayan"* (Erica, Tutor). ("Our mission is to help community members raise their standard of living. That is why Organic Agriculture is one of the first lessons taught by the Roxas FFS to help people improve their quality of life and not just remain in the margins of society.")
5. **The capability to uplift their socioeconomic well-being.** The Roxas FFS also advocates Social Enterprise Development through the Family Enterprise Project (FEP). The FEP takes the form of a research project in which students and their families work together to conduct an initial assessment of their existing farm enterprise and/or conduct the necessary feasibility studies to set up and manage one. Some examples of FEP projects include swine, cattle, and poultry raising; cultivation of crops, fruits, and vegetables; and upholstery making. Students and their families perceive the FEP as a means to: expand access to nutritious food; augment family income; cover allowances, tuition fees and costs related to board, lodging, and review classes; increase the family's access to productive assets; contribute to environmental care; enhance the knowledge and skills of community members; support the development of the local economy; and strengthen food security, among others.

6. **The capability to harness and develop leadership potentials.** The Roxas FFS also aims to provide spaces and opportunities for leadership development. According to students, leadership is determined not by name nor position, but by active engagement and actual contribution. They also shared that they value the trust they receive from their peers, tutors, and school administrators, who motivate them to serve as leaders in the Student Body Organization (SBO)—the official student government of the Roxas FFS (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** SBO aspirants campaign before the Roxas FFS General Assembly  
*Note:* (GIYF-FFS, 2018)

Likewise, the Roxas FFS continues to build leadership capabilities among the parents through the Parent School Association (PSA). “*Ngayon, umaasa kami kung ano iyong nag-e-evolve sa mga parents...Pero ine-encourage mo rin sila*” (Anna, School Administrator). (“Now, we rely on what evolves from the parents. Yet, we continue to encourage them.”) Efforts to engage and empower the students and parents have not been in vain as many are stepping up in their families and communities to help in spreading the Roxas FFS advocacies and core values.

7. **The capability to initiate and implement sustainable environmental practices and projects.** By internalizing the school advocacies and core values, the students become more committed to sustainable ecological practices, and also enjoin others to do the same. Like the students, parents realized the encompassing benefits of the school advocacies to people’s well-being, family income, and the environment. They also emphasized the Roxas FFS’s approach in helping the students and their



families understand the impact of their actions on the environment. “*Tatak talaga iyon ng Farm School...holistic...mula doon sa pinaka maliit na halimbawa—iyong simpleng basura—‘Ano ba iyong epekto niyan?’ Kinikintal iyan ng Farm School...sa mga bata*” (Michael, Parent). (“Holistic education is a key feature of the Roxas FFS. Using the most basic example—garbage—‘How does that affect us?’ The Farm School impresses these lessons on the students’ consciousness.”)

This is a critical matter in reference to the proposed construction of a landfill in Barangay San Mariano. Community members are distressed over this matter due to its potential threats to the community’s health, livelihood, and environment. As a response, the PSA mobilized the parents to initiate and implement two community projects: 1) organizing to advocate against the proposed landfill, and 2) implementing an eco-bag project to reduce the use of non-recyclable materials.

For these community projects, the parents adopted practices like attending barangay assemblies on environmental issues, sharing knowledge on environmental care, lobbying for and monitoring the implementation of local ordinances related to environmental protection, and enjoining local vendors and residents to adopt ecologically-friendly practices. The parents viewed these as necessary and meaningful endeavors, which they believed can have synergistic outcomes. “*Pwede namin imulat iyong iba o maging example na iyong ginawa mo dito, pwedeng sundin ng kapit-bahay mo...Magkakaroon iyan ng domino effect*” (Jenny, Parent). (“Parents can help raise awareness and model behaviors to encourage others to apply the Roxas FFS practices, which could lead to a domino effect.”)

The tutors and school administrators also recognized how these community projects signify a deeper sense of empowerment and participation among the parents. “*Sila...iyong nag-ma-market. Sila rin iyong gumawa. Sila iyong nag-po-promote*. So, it’s really inspiring to think na ‘O, *pwede palang ganoon iyong level ng involvement nila*” (Jasmine, School Administrator). (“They were the ones who handled production, marketing, and promotion of the product. It’s really inspiring to think that their involvement can be on that level.”)

### *C. Key factors that influenced human capabilities building*

Enabling factors either enhance people’s internal resources (i.e., self-esteem, creativity, resilience, etc.) and/or reinforce the external context

(i.e., safety, equity, inclusiveness, etc.) to make conditions more conducive for capabilities to flourish. Conversely, disabling factors either reduce the quantity, quality, or efficacy of internal resources and/or render the environment unfavorable for capabilities to develop.

Table 2 presents the enabling and disabling factors identified in the Roxas FFS context.

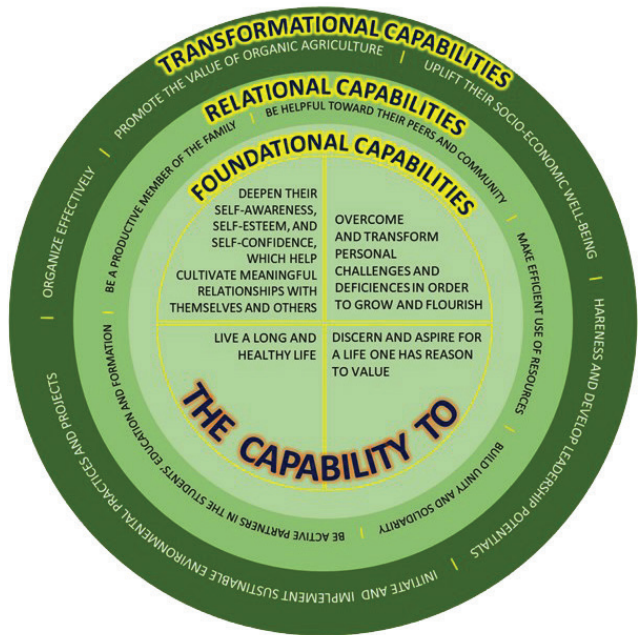
**Table 2**

*Enabling and Disabling Factors of Human Capabilities Development in the Roxas FFS*

Category	Enabling Factors	Disabling Factors
Psycho-emotional Attributes and Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Resolve and Resilience</li> <li>• Deepening Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor Self-Concepts</li> <li>• Low Motivation</li> </ul>
Family Socio-economic Context and Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy, Harmonious, and Secure Family Relations</li> <li>• Engaged and Wholehearted Parenting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate Access to Basic Needs</li> <li>• Disengaged Parenting</li> </ul>
School Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integral Human Formation</li> <li>• Inclusive Education</li> <li>• Dynamic and Responsive Approach in Achieving Education and Community Development Goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in Balancing Competing Values</li> <li>• Mismatched and/or Heavy Teaching Load</li> <li>• Quick Turnover Rate of Tutors</li> <li>• Perceptions of Gender Bias</li> </ul>

#### *D. An evolving framework on human capabilities building based on practice*

In synthesizing the Roxas FFS community members' perceptions and experiences of human capabilities development, three categories of human capabilities emerged including: 1) Foundational Capabilities, 2) Relational Capabilities, and 3) Transformational Capabilities. These could be used to classify the 14 human capabilities observed among the community members (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Fourteen (14) human capabilities observed among community members

- 1. Foundational Capabilities.** Foundational Capabilities are basic, personal, and individual capabilities that are instrumental for other capabilities to evolve. The main actor, agent, and subject responsible for developing Foundational Capabilities are individuals since the corresponding capabilities that develop are deeply rooted in their core or inner selves. This includes people’s values, perceptions, feelings, motivations, habits, and behaviors, which—although these can be influenced by external conditions and social interactions—are primarily shaped and determined by individuals.
- 2. Relational Capabilities.** Relational Capabilities (i.e., social or empathic capabilities) refer to the capabilities that develop largely from the intentions and actions of individuals. Yet, they are considered as Relational Capabilities because both the individuals and their community can reap the benefits. Although the efforts of the actor, agent, and subject do not necessarily guarantee that the community at large would develop the same capabilities, exposure to other people’s Relational Capabilities can influence people’s perceptions,



motivations, and actions enabling them to follow suit, and rendering the environment more conducive to capabilities development.

3. **Transformational Capabilities.** Transformational Capabilities are essential in achieving personal and collective strengthening through the intentions and actions of groups. Transformational Capabilities consist of the advanced and higher order capabilities that require greater inputs (i.e., assets, stocks, and resources paired with conducive and enabling conditions), yet produce greater outcomes (i.e., impact on individuals, groups, and the environment).

This model aims to provide a simple yet strategic method for community members and development partners to identify, assess, and enhance the human capabilities that are available to individuals and groups. This entails recognizing the capabilities that are present and reinforcing areas that need to develop, whether these relate to their Foundational, Relational, or Transformational Capabilities.

## Conclusion

The Roxas FFS approach to human capabilities building reveals its potential as an agent of Community Development through its contributions to personal and collective strengthening and transformation. Its implications to Community Development efforts include:

1. **The cultivation of critical consciousness among community members.** The Roxas FFS was created, developed, and propagated through the process of collective consciousness-raising, problem/issue identification, consultation, dialogue, and action-planning by farmer-parent leaders and volunteers. Together, they decided that the best way to address the scarcity of resources, opportunities, and social structures was through an inclusive, holistic, and integrated approach to education and development. This practice of continuous personal and collective reflection and action is still very much ingrained and institutionalized in the education and development strategies of the Roxas FFS. In this context, community members not only perceive how they potentially contribute to prevailing problems, but they also realize that they possess the freedom, capability, and responsibility to effect change.

2. **The strengthening of social cohesion and cooperation through *Convivencia*.** This principle reinforces the community's sense of group identity and feelings of affinity, rapport, and trust. This helps community members recognize their common values and priorities despite individual differences and unique circumstances, thereby enabling them to take greater ownership of their shared aspirations.
  
3. **The enhancement of local knowledge, capabilities, and resources.** Through the Roxas FFS' agriculture- and entrepreneurship-based curriculum, alongside its free training sessions grounded on the school advocacies, community members not only acquire new knowledge and technologies or engage in mutual learning and support, but also increase their access to food, livelihood, and income. These opportunities confront poverty beyond its economic terms as they contribute to greater consciousness-raising and cultivate deeper unity, cooperation, and empowerment in the community. The intention is not to confine the community members to farming and limit their opportunities in exploring other professions. Rather, the goal is to expand their options by helping them realize that they need not leave their families and rural communities in search of education or employment elsewhere. Yet if they choose to do so, it should not be out of necessity, but out of their free choice.
  
4. **The transformation of power dynamics and relations among community members.** The Roxas FFS has taken steps toward shifting greater responsibility and power to the students and their parents by providing spaces for participation and leadership (i.e., the SBO and the PSA). At home, students are exercising greater cooperation in accomplishing both domestic and livelihood duties, while in school, they are considered as co-learners, collaborators, and co-owners of the school advocacies and core values. Parents are likewise practicing greater initiative, participation, and leadership in domestic, school, and community affairs.
  
5. **The promotion of a deeper sense of empowerment and participation in the wider community.** The Roxas FFS' approach to human capabilities building and Community Development initiatives is not only inclusive and responsive to individual and collective needs, but is also humanizing, empowering, and life-enhancing. This is evident in the community members' contributions to the promotion of various

school advocacies and community projects, which demonstrate their propensity for leadership and collective action.

May their example inspire, enable, and embolden others to recognize and utilize what they could do and become to achieve their personal and collective goals and aspirations.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is an abridged version of the author's thesis entitled "Development Education in Human Capabilities Building among Rural Youth in the Philippines: The Case of the Family Farm School in Roxas, Oriental Mindoro," in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Community Development, submitted to the College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines Diliman in August 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Family Farm School tutors are referred to as such because they perform various obligations beyond classroom instruction, such as values formation, vocational training, enterprise development, and community organizing.

<sup>3</sup> As a preliminary study on human capabilities building among Filipino rural youth, ethnicity was beyond the scope of the research. Nevertheless, the author recognizes the significance of identifying the nuances in the perceptions and experiences of various ethnic groups when it comes to human capabilities building as a learning opportunity for future research endeavors.

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# DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DCD) - MODIFIED FIELD INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

## AN ADAPTIVE INITIATIVE TO SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIP IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

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DCD-FIP Committee<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The Field Instruction Program or FIP is the “heart and soul” of Community Development as an academic program. The FIP cannot be substituted by any other activity and student participation in the program is essential and non-negotiable. The continuing and emergent realities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing global, regional, and national response, particularly its impact on poor and marginalized communities, have compelled the FIP to facilitate opportunities for students and faculty to continue to live, work, and learn with them, in creative and multifaceted ways—through the Modified Field Instruction Program. The feature article provides a description of the Modified FIP bubble and remote modes, narrates initial experiences from the ground (and digital cloud), and shares preliminary learning from reflecting on these experiences. The article aims to provide a take-off point for continuing reflection and discussions to inform decisions of CD educators on the choice of methods and technologies that are appropriate to the context while remaining fully rooted on the twin imperatives of learning and service.*

Keywords: field instruction, blended learning, service learning

## Introduction

The Department of Community Development-Field Instruction Program (DCD-FIP) under the University of the Philippines' College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) has discerned and resolved how it is going to emerge out of the dystopia brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic. This was necessitated by the abrupt shift to virtual, online, and remote modes of teaching and learning in the whole UP System in March 2020 (and extended further as of this writing) "in light of the enhanced community quarantine over the entire Luzon (and) in other regions of the country" (OVPA<sup>2</sup> Memo No. 2020-38). The FIP (also called Fieldwork Program), an academic requirement in the undergraduate and graduate Community Development (CD) curricula, had to be temporarily suspended and deferred for two terms (Midyear 2020 up to the First Semester, AY 2020-2021) due to the continuing lockdowns. Moreover, the CD faculty also recognized the lack of appropriate internal processes for ensuring safety and well-being of students, community members, faculty, and staff that is commensurate to the massive scale of a health pandemic. Hence, the DCD embarked on redesigning the program in search of more adaptive modes of social solidarity engagement and partnership, thus paving the way to the Modified Field Instruction Program.

Meanwhile, the global reset epiphany borne by the world health crisis, compounded by stringent mobility restrictions and health authoritarianism imposed by State authorities, has ushered in an entirely different manner of fostering social interaction, connection, and solidarity. Such a historical threshold has posed a critical interregnum in our development endeavors, especially for communities and their members. This posed great challenges to existing ways of working and impelled care and service providers to explore new and innovative methods that did not rely heavily on face-to-face social interaction, integration, and real time and space immersion into the lives of communities, and pushed the transition into the online, virtual, digital cloud platform.

### FIP: "heart and soul" of the CD academic program

The FIP has always been regarded as the "heart and soul" of the CD academic program. As a practice-based discipline, the CD curricula "promote praxis-oriented education that is anchored on the inextricable connection of theoretical knowledge and social practice" (FIP Manual, 2019, p. 10). This complementation of theory and practice is critical in



fostering the transformative agenda of the CD discipline. For more than five decades, the FIP has served as the bedrock for the formation of competent and socially committed CD professionals. Taken on their senior year prior to graduation, the FIP is an indispensable phase in the preparation for the CD profession as it provides opportunities for students to apply, reflect on, and critically analyze CD concepts, principles, and strategies to real-life situations. For undergraduate students, the FIP is a one-year community engagement requiring a minimum of 750 hours of community-based work per semester. This entails living with, participating, and working together with the community in their daily routines in order to experience and understand the dynamics of their community life. For graduate students, it is a shorter, yet equally intensive immersion for one semester requiring a minimum of 250 hours of integrating, working, and learning with the people in the communities. The FIP experience provides a foretaste of the students' future life careers and is, in truth, a prelude to their life-long commitment as development professionals. Hence, field instruction cannot be substituted by any other learning activity. Participation in this academic endeavor is required and considered non-negotiable in order for students to earn their respective CD degrees.

Poverty and inequality exacerbated by the impacts of the current global and national health crises and by the inept politico-militarist response of State authorities underscore the relevance of continuing engagement with grassroots communities and civil society organizations. The FIP's partner communities, which are mostly located outside UP Diliman, and organizations have continued to carry out emergency response activities since AY 2019-2020 to address pressing COVID-19-related concerns on top of their regular development programs and projects. The continuing and emergent realities in these communities have pushed the FIP to facilitate opportunities for students and faculty to continue to work and learn with them in creative and multifaceted ways.

### **The Modified Field Instruction Program**

The considerations mentioned above served as compelling reasons for the FIP Committee, together with the rest of the DCD Faculty and incoming FIP students, to conceive a limited and interim **Modified Field Instruction Program** to be offered in the Second Semester, AY 2020-2021. The Modified FIP has two modes. The first, the **Modified FIP "Bubble" Mode**, will attempt to work with communities inside the UP Diliman Campus and with the different UPD Task Forces, in cooperation with the

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs (OVCCA), which are working to ensure that the health crisis is managed or mitigated, given the health protocols and restrictions on mobility imposed by the government. As such, the FIP students will be participating in the UPD community programs, essentially serving as community *pahinungods* or volunteers, while concretizing the Program's academic mandate of meaningful learning and public service. This arrangement is taking a cue from former UPD Chancellor, Dr. Michael L. Tan, who espoused the nurturing of our own UP Diliman community, when he stated: "...we always look OUTSIDE of our fence. Why don't we also look INSIDE our own fence?"

The second, the **Modified FIP "Remote" Mode**, was conceived primarily for graduate students who already have experience in fieldwork and in working with communities. While utilizing online and virtual platforms, this mode still means full-time work akin to face-to-face fieldwork.

While these modifications in the mode of the FIP were being conceptualized, the three interrelated objectives of the Program were unanimously affirmed by both CD faculty and students as well as partner communities and organizations. Whether the mode would be that of a modified bubble or remote, the FIP must continue to: a) promote student learning and commitment building, b) extend service to community/partner agencies/organizations and social movements, and c) contribute to the growth and development of CD curricular programs.

Furthermore, while adaptations in the delivery mode of the FIP were put in place, the redesign still endeavored to meet the minimum requirement of 750 hours of community-engaged work for undergraduate students and 250 hours for graduate students (FIP Manual, 2019, p. 27). The Modified FIP still retains its division into three main phases, but with some adjustments. The first is the *preparatory phase* which would include mandatory COVID-19 swab tests, quarantine procedures, and orientations on COVID-19 health and safety protocols and standards, on top of the regular orientations on the FIP, managing stress, and security. Second would be the *integration phase*, the bulk of the FIP period. This would include direct, albeit limited, community engagements subject to existing guidelines of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, the local government unit (LGU), and UP. Last would be the *end-semester phase*. This would include assessments, critical reflections, and generating new knowledge and learning from the

whole experience through the *Paglikom* Faculty-Student Conference on CD Practice. There would be no mid-semester sharing, as previously practiced, but there would be continuing team-level consultations as needed.

***The Modified FIP “Bubble” Mode.*** The objective of this mode is to reduce and manage the risks of students, faculty, and partners getting infected with COVID-19 by reducing, but not eliminating, possible points of contact, such as meetings and interactions during the regular community interface. The FIP “bubble” mode would necessitate the strict observance of standard or minimum health protocols such as, but not limited to, proper wearing of masks and physical distancing. These would be prudently observed to avoid the misperception among community members that they are being avoided.

The decision to focus on the communities within the UP Diliman Campus is both practical and strategic. On the practical side, deploying FIP students inside the campus would be easier to monitor and manage, and would allow for access to existing institutional support such as health services, isolation facilities, and residential facilities. To make this work, the FIP would have to continue to strengthen its coordination with the OVCCA, particularly the Office for Community Relations (OCR); the University Health Service, particularly the Public Health Unit; and the Office for Student Affairs, particularly the dormitory services. Strategically, this would provide opportunities for a more sustained effort in working with these on-campus communities and organizations. It would also open possibilities for longer-term partnerships going beyond the current pandemic.

FIP policies were also adapted to be more responsive to the pandemic context. For example, an integral feature of the pre-pandemic FIP had required students to live with host families in the community. This requirement would be temporarily shelved and students would be housed in a dormitory inside the UPD Campus. Students would also be required to stay in-campus for the duration of the FIP and at no instance would they be allowed to leave the “bubble,” except in cases of emergency. Participation in activities at the household and community levels may still be pursued, although on a limited scale and frequency and duration would be calibrated to ensure safety. Additional health and safety protocols would also be put in place on top of the existing protocols within UP Diliman.

All these, of course, are based on the assumption that the general health situation would turn for the better and that community quarantine restrictions would be eased. These are also contingent on approval being obtained for limited face-to-face interactions or field activities, coursed through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and granted by the IATF.

***The Modified FIP “Remote” Mode.*** In many ways, the transition to a “Remote FIP” would be more challenging and seemingly counterintuitive. With the promotion of physical distancing as one of the key measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as other means such as community quarantines, lockdowns, and travel restrictions, the idea of re-evaluating community integration as-we-know-it came to the fore during the conceptualization process. Some of the questions that the FIP Committee and the CD faculty as a whole considered were: How can community integration be possible if we do not go to the community? Are there “new ways” of integrating with communities? Can the use of virtual or online platforms be deemed as one such “new way”? Can there be a hybrid form of integration, a mix of the old and the new? Can the fundamental orientation, values, and principles of integration-as-we-know-it still be upheld in such “new ways” of doing? How can we say that students have fully integrated with communities in such a scenario? Can “being in solidarity with” be done using remote or virtual means? How can we participate in people’s collective actions without physical face-to-face encounters?

The DCD grappled with these questions and came up with additional policies and interim arrangements for the “Remote FIP.” First, the partner communities would have to express their willingness to host FIP students using a remote mode. Second, the partner communities and organizations would need to have the basic technical and technological capacities and skills to engage in remote learning. Third, due diligence would also be required on the part of the FIP Committee in the interview process to ensure that only students with relatively good/extensive experiences in being engaged in development work with communities would be assigned to this mode. Fourth, the students would need to decide if they would like to be assigned for remote FIP, considering that all of them have been gearing up for fieldwork in various urban and rural communities. Fifth, the remote mode would still be considered and credited as a full-time FIP, i.e., the schedules for synchronous and asynchronous activities would be dependent on the schedules of the

partner communities/organizations and, as such, would be given high priority and be strictly adhered to by the students each day. Sixth, processes and outputs would stem from and be in support of the initiatives of the partner communities and organizations. Lastly, while the main mode would be online or virtual, the students assigned for “Remote FIP” would undergo a minimum of one-day immersion in the field site to be scheduled at an opportune time within the semester. This last element was seen as necessary to ensure better grounding of the students in the community experience.

### **Resuming the FIP for the Second Semester, AY 2020-2021**

The DCD’s resumption of the FIP during the Second Semester of AY 2020-2021 is a categorical attempt to compensate for deferring its offering during the Midyear AY 2019-2020 and the First Semester AY 2020-2021, thereby delaying the graduation of some of our students. Undeniably, the interim arrangements discussed above pose a unique challenge to the FIP—finding the balance in ensuring the health, safety, and security of stakeholders in the FIP while remaining relevant and true to its tradition of praxis-oriented learning and genuine service geared towards transformative development. Nonetheless, the DCD was also cognizant of the fact that it needed to put in place more specific policies, mechanisms, and guidelines for the Program to be sanctioned, including health and safety protocols for strict observance of students undergoing the Modified FIP whether through the “Bubble” or “Remote” modes.

In preparation for the second semester, the OVCAA issued an urgent reminder to all academic units, dated 24 September 2020, reiterating that no face-to-face classes were to be held, and that face-to-face class activities such as field work, field school, internship, OJT, and the like were also inoperative until these are given approval by the UP Board of Regents, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the IATF. Thus, on 23 November 2020, the DCD submitted an official request to the higher bodies, through channels, for approval to offer the Modified FIP Program by the Second Semester, AY 2020-2021. As of the start of the semester in March 2021, the request was allegedly endorsed for favorable action. With this in mind and the urgent need to address the significant delays in the graduation of students in both the undergraduate and graduate CD programs, the DCD offered the Modified FIP.

Twenty-six students were enrolled in the FIP, and majority of them were assigned to the “Bubble FIP” in UP Diliman. Six graduate students were assigned to the “Remote FIP.” With the approval of the official request still pending, the activities of the students in the “Bubble” mode were limited to the completion of the mandatory RT-PCR testing for COVID-19 and the mandatory quarantine period. Orientation sessions and initial planning meetings via Zoom were also done in the confines of the dorms, using the internet connection available there. Everyone was indeed looking forward to the approval of the request, so that the planned limited face-to-face community engagements could already push through. However, the first few weeks of March also saw the start of a steady increase or spike in COVID-19 cases in the National Capital Region. With this, as well as the constant shifting of community quarantine categories, approval of the Modified FIP request became uncertain. As a result, the students assigned in the UP Diliman “Bubble” were sent home to avert any risks from the surge in cases and the spike in infections. Likewise, the limited immersion in partner communities in Floridablanca, Pampanga and in Sta. Rosa, Laguna being planned by students assigned in the Remote FIP was also cancelled. This marked the transition of the Modified FIP towards full remote delivery using online and mobile technology.

### **Modified FIP thriving adaptively in the current social predicament**

The continuing quarantine shifts, however, also served to make the Modified FIP dynamic and adaptive. The resulting creativity and innovation of the FIP provide a glimmer of hope, demonstrating the capacity to adjust and thrive and not succumb to the authoritarian health restrictions.

As of this writing, the FIP students are still well in place with their fieldwork with community partners, enthusiastically continuing what had been initially planned in the early stages of the Modified FIP. The current semester will be ending in June 2021, the highlight of which will be the end-of-semester *Paglikom* where all the FIP teams together with CD faculty members will gather for an online conference on CD Practice. This would be the time to look back, critically reflect on, and draw learnings on Community Organizing and Community Development from the experiences in the Modified FIP over the past months. These lessons, alongside questions that continue to be raised in different conversations, will serve as platforms for further reflection and action towards continually adapting and innovating to keep the FIP relevant as the pandemic situation

remains unstable. In this manner, the FIP will continue to be a wellspring of effective learning and instruction, applying concepts and strategies that nurture the growth of CD as a profession and as a discipline. The succeeding section will present some of the initial achievements in working with community partners in the Modified FIP, as well as some of the challenges faced and learnings drawn from this initial run.

***Modified FIP Bubble in UP Diliman.*** The “Bubble FIP” teams started out well, particularly with the added health and safety protocols (e.g., RT-PCR testing, quarantine periods) and online orientations; and was on track while awaiting the IATF approval of the request to be allowed to engage in limited, face-to-face activities with partner organizations and communities inside the UP Campus. Shortly after the start of the semester, however, the spike in COVID-19 cases and the heightened restrictions that followed forced the FIP to decide to suspend the bubble mode and shift to a full virtual/remote mode. Nevertheless, the nine BSCD FIP students continued working with the six jeepney drivers’ associations plying the UP Diliman route—IKOT, TOKI, Philcoa, Pantranco, SM North, and Katipunan—and continued coordinating with the Pantawid sa mga Naghahatid, an ad hoc group of UP Diliman alumni who had been providing relief assistance to the drivers whose main sources of livelihoods were displaced since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Internet-based applications and mobile phones were utilized for conversations, consultations, coordination, validation of information, planning, and education activities among others, in pursuit of several objectives: 1) distribution of cash assistance to members of the six associations, 2) enhancing and managing association and transport group-level resource mobilization and relief assistance, 3) linking with other groups and organizations for livelihood development, and 4) promoting the peoples’ right to health services, particularly on accessing vaccination for COVID-19.

The nine MCD FIP students, on the other hand, carried on working with the Pook Arboretum community. The initial introduction to the community was done through the UPD Office of Community Relations, which was also looking for additional human resources to help them carry out a census they are planning to undertake in relation to the proposed construction of a UP-PGH Diliman Project in Pook Arboretum. With the cancellation of the planned face-to-face activities, the MCD team focused on its original objective of coming up with a research project to better understand the conditions, issues, and aspirations of the Pook



Arboretum community to serve as a basis for recommending “policy reforms or improvements in project implementation to improve and strengthen the relationship between UP and the community” (Alcantara et al., 2021). They also shifted to the use of mobile technology to get in touch with community leaders and members, develop additional contacts, and to gather data in general as internet connectivity was also a challenge. To date, the objectives of these two teams in the modified FIP bubble mode have already been completed or are on track for completion in the remaining weeks of the semester.

***Modified FIP Remote Mode.*** Two MCD teams were assigned under the “Remote FIP.” Unlike the two teams under the “bubble” scheme, the teams on remote mode were able to immediately start their preparatory activities with the identified partners since they did not need to undergo COVID-19 health and safety protocols. A team of three MCD students was assigned to work with six Ayta students from Sitio Camachile, Brgy. Nabuklod, Floridablanca, Pampanga. The opportunity to work with the Ayta students came about upon the invitation of the St. Vincent School of Theology (SVST) which was already engaged in providing scholarship assistance to the Ayta community in Sitio Camachili. SVST had also set up a learning center in the community, which was recently fitted with an internet connection to support the learning needs of the Ayta students. The FIP team was therefore able to utilize online platforms (e.g., Zoom and FB Messenger) to provide tutorial support to the Ayta students, as well as to provide avenues for the sharing of experiences and the challenges they faced in going to school as an Ayta. Regular consultations and coordination with SVST were also done through online means. All in all, the experience provided the FIP team with a deeper understanding and better appreciation of the situation and struggles of the Ayta students.

Another team of three MCD students was assigned to work with MASIPAG (Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura), an existing and long-time FIP partner network of small-scale farmers. Several teams of undergraduate CD students had already worked with MASIPAG and several communities in Gen. Nakar and Real in Quezon province prior to the 2020 pandemic. MASIPAG expressed willingness to host FIP students on remote mode to help them in organizational development and development of online training modules among others. As in the case of SVST in Floridablanca, Pampanga, MASIPAG had set up a communications hub where online learning sessions could be done for the communities and farmers’ organizations they are working with.



The FIP team eventually focused on working with MASIPAG on their Tumandok online campaign and on an agroecology research with six people's organizations and MASIPAG staff. Initial feedback from the FIP team indicated that the experience provided them a chance to know the community leaders and farmer-scientists within the limits of online interaction sans face-to-face community integration.

***Challenges and initial learnings.*** While the end-of-semester sharing, reflection, and summing-up is yet to be completed, several challenges and learnings from the initial run of the Modified FIP can already be shared. As conceived, Field Instruction “seeks to provide opportunities for students to apply CD concepts, principles, approaches and strategies to real-life situations, making the society and particular rural and urban communities the bigger classroom for weaving theory and practice into one coherent whole” (FIP Manual, 2019, p. 10, emphasis added). Community integration, *pakikiisa at pakikipamuhay*, and being in solidarity with the people is an essential element of the CD discipline. Adhering to this fundamental principle constituted one of the first challenges faced in the Modified FIP. The communities are the “bigger classroom” of the FIP, but current restrictions have rendered these physically inaccessible to the students. Hence, the idea of a Modified FIP Bubble Mode, in this case within the UP Diliman Campus, and short community visits for the Modified FIP Remote Mode to allow for face-to-face interactions with partner communities even in a limited fashion. To ensure health safety and security, guidelines were formulated for the FIP to minimize risks for students, faculty, and support personnel as well as for the people in the community. With all of these in place, the DCD sought official permission from the IATF, through designated channels, for students to be allowed to do fieldwork. While approval had not yet been granted as of the second semester of AY 2020-2021, the necessity of pushing for the Modified FIP remains. Community Development practitioners and social workers are frontline workers both prior to and during this pandemic, engaging with communities and organizations in education, capacity building, resource mobilization, ensuring access to basic services, planning community-level responses, advocacy and the like. Thus, being allowed to do fieldwork subject to additional health safety and security guidelines and protocols will help FIP students achieve key learning outcomes and enable them to extend service to partner communities during this crisis situation.

The precariousness of the situation, compounded by the continuing politico-militarist approach of the government to the pandemic, continues to pose a major challenge in planning for and implementing the Modified FIP. While the added health protocols and guidelines for the Bubble FIP in UP Diliman were implemented at the start of the semester, the sudden spike in COVID-19 cases towards the end of March 2021 and the further tightening of mobility restrictions that came with that meant that the bubble scheme had to shift to virtual and remote modes. Plans made around the assumption that the bubble FIP team would be allowed limited face-to-face community engagement had to be redrawn. An important element in the process of redrawing is addressing the real-life situation—dealing with “what is” rather than dwelling on “what we wish” were in place. In retrospect, agility in planning for different scenarios that may arise to account for the unpredictability of and constantly shifting contexts remains an important ability of the Modified FIP. It must be noted, however, that one of the shifts in context (i.e., the sudden spike in COVID-19 cases), had a comparatively milder impact on the “remote FIP” than it did on the “bubble FIP.” This being said, however, the heightened mobility restrictions did impede movements of community leaders to and from the communication/online learning hubs, e.g., some focus group discussions (FGDs) were cancelled due to localized lockdowns. Furthermore, the pandemic situation also impacted on everyone’s mental health and overall well-being.

The Modified FIP—be it bubble mode or remote mode—also signaled the shift towards a more intensive use of mobile and internet-based applications not only for communication but also for integration and solidarity building with partner communities. This shift highlighted the reality of inequality of access to such technologies, which was manifested in several ways during the Modified FIP. On the part of the FIP students in the UP Diliman “bubble,” for example, they had to contend with the weak internet connection in the dorms which hampered their ability to communicate with community partners and even conduct team meetings and planning. On the part of the community partners, it was not only an issue of weak connectivity, but even not having the necessary hardware, e.g., smartphones, laptops or even desktop computers. Apart from poor internet and hardware issues, relying on mobile and internet technology for communication comes at a high cost. Continued reliance on these technologies in the Modified FIP would mean having to find ways to address these issues. The experience with SVST and MASIPAG, which had both established communication and e-learning hubs in their partner communities, provides an alternative approach that can

be considered in the succeeding runs of the Modified FIP. Perhaps this is something that the DCD, and the CSWCD in general, would have to explore with its partner communities and organizations.

Lastly, the May 2021 pronouncement by CHED Commissioner Prospero de Vera that flexible or blended learning will be the norm in the coming years poses a continuing challenge to the FIP, the Department of Community Development, and the College of Social Work and Community Development in general. Nevertheless, as Bawagan and Tungpalan (2010) noted, the DCD-FIP is poised to take on this challenge as the program has always been in pursuit of appropriate learning theories and methods to improve our instruction and learning outcomes. Drawing on the collective experiences and learning of the DCD-FIP, including those of the past few months under the modified modes, will help the program in deciding on the appropriate balance of theories, methods, and technologies to optimize learning (Cronje, 2021) in the ongoing and shifting context of the pandemic. However, the choice of instructional methods and technologies that are appropriate to the context must remain fully rooted on the twin imperatives of learning and service.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> The FIP Committee is composed of the DCD Chair (as Ex-Officio member), the FIP Coordinator as Head, CD faculty fieldwork supervisors, and instructors of field-based courses. The members of the FIP Committee for AY 2020-2021 are the following:

Oscar P. Ferrer, DCD Chair  
 Paul Edward N. Muego, DCD-FIP Coordinator  
 Lenore Polotan-dela Cruz  
 Leocito S. Gabo  
 Karl Arvin F. Hapal  
 Devralin T. Lagos  
 Angelito G. Manalili  
 Fermin P. Manalo, Jr.  
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 Veronica B. Papa  
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