

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF *TIWALA* IN A RURAL POOR COMMUNITY

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Among the research participants in a farming community, tiwala (roughly, trust) appears to be a mechanism that provides some semblance of stability and predictability in a precarious world. It provides a symbol of dependability and is associated with social support systems which help people cope with the difficulties of daily living. Further, the data suggest that people's organizations become symbols of tiwala when the marginalized interpret them as embodying not only their ideals but also addressing the immediate and concrete concerns in their daily lives.

This paper explores the social construction of tiwala (roughly translated as trust) among rural poor Filipinos in a community which has undergone organizing efforts, its nuances in situations where people have limited access to resources, and the relationship of tiwala to the development of people's organizations for managing or changing their existing realities. It proceeds from an interest in a grounded understanding of Filipino culture which hopefully will contribute to approaches used in development work.

The significance of exploring the Filipino construct of tiwala is bolstered by the literature and the social conditions

that have prevailed in the country since 1986. The salience of the concept in recent years may be attributed to the emphasis on civil society and social capital in contemporary development discourses, the discovery of the benefits of trust in organizational life and economic theorizing, the crises of legitimacy that have plagued Philippine administrations since 1986, and the continuing interest of social scientists in Asia and in the Philippines in the construction or mapping of indigenous worldviews and concepts.

Over the last two decades, there has been growing scholarly interest in the concept of trust (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2005; Buchan, Croson, & Dawes, 2002; Delhey & Newton, 2002; Gambetta, 1988; Kramer, 1999; Strong & Weber, 1998; Weber & Carter, 2002). In the sociology of development literature, for instance, the centrality of trust to human life and people's interaction with their social environment has been articulated. Influenced by discourses on civil society, social capital, and governance that reflect a convergence of structuralist and post-structuralist development theories and practices, social scientists have stressed the pivotal role of trust in managing risks and complexities associated with various levels of social interaction.

Trust is considered an important factor in the organization of civil society groups. As Dahrendorf (2000, p. vii) observes, "civil society is the world of associations in which people rely on each other and pursue freely chosen goals together; it is the world of trust." Further, Tonkiss and Passey (2000) note that voluntary association and civil society see trust in various ways: as providing the basis for voluntary association, as linked with shared values, as representing a moral resource, and as linked with questions of legitimacy.

This discourse resonates with the importance economists have accorded to trust. In differentiating high-trust and low-trust societies, Fukuyama (1995, p. 26) notes that trust is a precondition of social capital which he defines as the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups or organizations. Also, Fukuyama (1995, p. 9) asserts that “in all successful societies, these communities are united by trust.” It is quite likely that the focus on trust may have been influenced by its role in reducing transaction costs or improving organizational productivity (Torskvik, 2000).

Another important trend is the increasing reliance of media and political analysts on polls and opinion surveys to monitor the trust ratings of public officials. In the Philippine context, the political crises that beset the nation have pushed the concept of public trust to prominence in people’s consciousness through the polls conducted by Pulse Asia Inc. and the Social Weather Station.

Fukuyama’s distinction between high-trust and low-trust societies and the regular monitoring of the trust ratings of public figures and institutions by survey outfits seem to share an implicit assumption – that trust lies in some linear continuum. Individuals, groups and even societies are assumed to trust other individuals, groups or societies to a greater or lesser extent. They appear to take for granted the multidimensional nature of trust, how people in particular cultures construct trust and what it means to them to have more or less trust.

As Luhmann (1988, p. 103) states, the development of trust or distrust depends on local milieu and personal experience. Further, Seligman (2000, p. 23) notes that without a shared universe of expectations, histories, memories, or affective commitments, there can be no basis of trust. Thus, attempts to construct the potentially multiple meanings and dimensions of trust need to be done within the culture in which it is embedded.

This paper is an initial exploration of the concept of *tiwala* as constructed from the accounts of research participants in a rural poor community. It addresses the following questions:

- What does *tiwala* mean for selected research participants from a rural poor community which has undergone organizing efforts?
- What role, if any, does *tiwala* play in the development of a people's organization for managing or changing their social realities?

Methodology

Taking a social constructionist position, this paper privileges the local context – how people construct and interpret their realities and what becomes meaningful to them in their interaction with others. As such, it does not assume an external social world of regularities independent of social actors. Rather, it is based on the premise that although reality may be apprehended by people as ordered, already objectified, and structured, it is an intersubjective world where meanings are constructed and negotiated (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

As Gergen (2001, p. 125) notes, social constructionism assumes that “knowledgeable propositions gain their meaning within particular contexts of usage and function as a means of coordinating action within these contexts.” Thus, what people find meaningful and relevant may be understood better if their particular life world were explored. Burr (1995, p. 4) explains further, “all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative; not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen as products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time.”

Furthermore, the site of knowledge generation is the ongoing process of coordinating action among persons and locating meaning within the patterns of interdependency (Gergen, 2001, p. 119). What is therefore important to consider is how people establish, negotiate, act on, and reconstruct commonly understood meanings in their social world.

Following the seminal works of Filipino social scientists who have stressed the importance of understanding the Filipino world view, experience and milieu (Enriquez, 1992), this paper utilizes the methodology of constructionist grounded theory which emphasizes the exploration, analysis, and interpretation of the meanings people attach to their realities. It assumes, as Charmaz (2000, p. 521, 524) notes, that “people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them” and seeks “to define conditional statements that interpret how subjects construct their realities.”

Data Gathering and Analysis

This paper is based on a study conducted over a period of five months in a rural community in Central Luzon. The field research involved immersion in the activities of the community to understand the people's particular life world and the meanings they attach to *tiwala* based on their everyday experiences. It basically utilized participant observation, informal interviews, and group discussions.

In the process of interacting with the residents, observations of the everyday lives of people were noted, together with their views on their life world. As the research progressed, informal interviews and group discussions with the organization's officers and members were done as they went about their normal activities, such as attending to household chores, chatting or *huntahan* with neighbors, or tending *sarisari* stores. Although unstructured,

the conversations covered the following areas: their current conditions and common problems, if any; their ways of managing their problems; the people they approach for help regarding their problems; and, the dynamics of their organization.

The process of social integration in the community uncovered not only the residents' views on their everyday lives and on their organization but also some basic notions of *tiwala*. It helped that the key informants were quite open about problems in their organization; thus probing into their notions of *tiwala* was facilitated.

The ideas of the key informants – 10 officers and 36 members of the people's organization - were recorded. The responses were then open coded (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) to identify key words, phrases, or expressions used. Adapting the method of lexical domain analysis (Cipres-Ortega, 1985), the responses were discussed with a panel who have had experience in social development work and who use the Filipino language in their field and classroom courses. Based on the discussion of the panel, the initial dimensions of *tiwala* were defined. These were then validated with the key informants through further interviews and focus group discussions. Although they felt that the results captured their ideas, they also noted further similarities and differences in the key words they used and rearranged some of the items included in the initial dimensions.

Some Limitations

The study has some limitations. First, it is written in English. Considering the constructionist framework that guided the research, this is a major limitation. From this perspective, language, which is inextricably bound with social practices and development of local knowledge, plays a very critical role; every assertion reflects an interpretation understood and expressed within the nuance of language.

While Filipino was the medium of discussion in the field, the translation of the conversations and observations into English may have resulted in loss of information and insight. As much as possible, however, the translation tried to capture the various nuances of the verbal and the nonverbal language employed by the informants.

Aside from language, the study was also limited by time constraints. It would have been ideal for the researcher to have been immersed fully in the community, being there when situations resulting in breached expectations and the erosion of *tiwala* occurred. Since this was not possible, the researcher relied solely on the accounts of key informants, which might have been affected by their construction of the situation at the point of interview and not while the situation was unfolding.

The Field Site

In the process of field research, some informants disclosed sensitive information about their organization. Although they gave their permission to have their experiences included in the study, their names will be changed to preserve confidentiality and the *pagtitiwala* (trust relationship) established with them. Also, the identity and exact location of the field site and of the people's organization will be disguised.

Barangay M is a farming community in a municipality of Central Luzon. Based on the July 2005 Household Screening Survey recorded by the Barangay Secretary, Barangay M had 343 households and a total population of 1,558 spread across six *puroks*. Purok 3, with 62 households and a population of 290, and Purok 4, with 28 households and a population of 141, are the research sites, since most of the members of the people's organization belong to these contiguous areas.

The municipality is about 100 kilometers from Metro Manila. Within the six puroks of Barangay M, tricycles are the common mode of transportation. Some residents, however, prefer to walk when going from one purok to another to save on tricycle fares, which range from P20 to P50 per trip.

The main roads going to Purok 3 and 4 are cemented and are often used to dry palay during the harvest season, despite notices posted along the routes that the practice is not allowed. Barangay roads in Purok 3 and 4, however, are dirt roads which can be very muddy during the rainy season and dusty during the dry season.

Barangay M has a public elementary school and a Catholic chapel (*kapilya*) which, according to some residents, is the center of activities during the observance of Good Friday and the *fiesta* in May. There is no barangay health center and residents go to the town proper or nearby towns for their medical needs. Traditional healers or *medico* as they are called in the community, however, are usually consulted on common ailments such as fever, colds and cough, and joint pains. Normal deliveries are likewise attended to by the medico.

Electricity is sourced through a power cooperative in the province. While most homes are dimly lit at night, several households have television sets, with soap operas and game shows as favorites among the residents. There are no existing telephone lines but some residents have cellular phones. Domestic water supply comes from manually operated pumps (*poso*). Several families have open pit toilet facilities close to their homes, with bamboo walls and doors to provide some privacy.

Although some of the houses are made of bamboo and light materials, many have rough hollow block foundations, which some residents

say they painstakingly and gradually build when they earn some extra money during the harvest season. Also, some had in the past been able to improve their houses and buy appliances, such as television and stereo sets, with their winnings from *jueteng*, a local gambling game. With the current ban on *jueteng*, however, this source of income is no longer easily available.

Most households use firewood for cooking. Some have gas stoves but these have remained idle because of rising fuel costs. Thus, many have resorted to using firewood which they gather from the fields and stack outside their homes.

The usual meal consists of rice, vegetables like string beans, okra and squash, and fresh or dried fish. Pork, chicken, and processed meat are sometimes included in the diet. Also, the residents trap field mice (*dagang bukid*) which they cook in a variety of ways. Dog and goat meat are usually reserved for special occasions like birthdays.

The rice fields in Barangay M are irrigated. Only a few own land, which are usually small (about two hectares or less). Although many have benefited from the Land Reform Program in the past, some residents say that they had either sold or mortgaged their land because of extreme financial difficulties. Thus, many are now leaseholders or farm workers. Leaseholders usually get 10 cavans of palay for every hectare they cultivate; the daily income of farm workers varies from P90 to P200 during the planting season and from P200 to P300 during harvest time.

Some families supplement their income by growing vegetables like string beans and okra. A few, who have some capital, own *sarisari* stores

or are engaged in small-scale poultry and livestock production, such as raising chickens, ducks, pigs, and goats.

A common alternative source of income, particularly among the women, is growing plants such as the popular euphorbia. Some residents say that before euphorbia became the fad among gardening enthusiasts, many grew orchids.

Most of the residents have had elementary education, with a few finishing college or vocational courses. Some have family members working in a variety of jobs in urban areas such as construction work, driving jeepneys, working in factories, and vending. During the slack season in rice production, farm laborers also go to other areas where there is a demand for their work. A few households have some family members working abroad as seamen, construction or factory workers, and entertainers. Families with OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) are easily identified by residents because of their newly built or remodeled concrete houses and the ownership of utility vehicles.

Most of the families are related, either by blood or marriage. While many are Roman Catholic, some belong to other religious denominations such as *Iglesia ni Cristo*.

DAMAYAN: A People's Organization

Many residents in Purok 3 and Purok 4 used to belong to DAMAYAN, a people's organization which was formally established in 1985 through the help of community organizers affiliated with a nongovernmental organization (NGO). DAMAYAN has been registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission as a farmers' federation.

Some DAMAYAN officers recall that the community organizers did a lot of ground work not only in several barangays of their municipality but also in some barangays of two neighboring towns in the late 1970s. Informal meetings, consciousness-raising and leadership training activities moved residents from the two puroks to become involved in identifying common issues and problems, such as lack of farm support mechanisms and alternative livelihood activities. Through their collective actions, original members of the federation lobbied for the irrigation of non-irrigated farms and for the removal of interest in their Masagana 99 loans.

With the help of the community organizers, the federation was able to secure local and foreign funds for its programs. Among its major activities were a sustainable agriculture project and a multi-purpose cooperative, which included rice milling facilities. It had a carabao dispersal project and also granted loans for livelihood projects such as pig and poultry raising. The organization was able to acquire hand tractors and water pumps for the use of its members. Loans, payable at minimal interest rates to the cooperative, were extended to the farmers for much needed farm inputs such as fertilizers and seedlings.

Residents recall that with its various projects, membership in the federation grew to about 1,000 during the period 1985-1993. Members were active in mass actions to address issues affecting the farming sector; the organization developed linkages with other NGOs, farmers' groups, and lobby groups to support their concerns.

Starting 1994, however, DAMAYAN experienced several setbacks. According to some members and officers, former leaders mismanaged the federation's funds and some members did not repay their loans. Financial transactions were not recorded accurately and meetings became irregular. Membership dwindled and the once active multi-purpose cooperative has now become non-operational.

The national federation tried to help DAMAYAN by assigning field workers. Through formal and informal meetings, leadership training, and training on cooperatives, the remaining members decided on the reorganization of DAMAYAN, with a new set of officers they themselves elected.

As part of its efforts to revitalize DAMAYAN, the officers and members decided to form a credit cooperative. As agreed, contributions of P2,000 each from all the officers and P500 each from the members, payable every harvest time, would go to their capital build-up. When the cooperative is able to generate enough funds, DAMAYAN envisages a time when it can extend loans to members for livelihood activities.

The nine-member Board of Directors is composed of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, auditor, adviser, and three chapter chairpersons. The cooperative also has its own set of officers. The number of members is officially listed as 62, with 53 coming from Purok 3 and Purok 4 of Barangay M and nine coming from a neighboring barangay. The Board of Directors has irregular monthly meetings. Also, the officers of the cooperative have not had any meeting and only a handful have contributed small amounts for the capital build-up they had previously agreed upon.

Exploring *Tiwala* in a Rural Community

In sharing their DAMAYAN experiences, the officers and members often mentioned significant factors which, to them, led to the decline of their organization a decade ago. While some acknowledged that the mismanagement of funds was a major problem, some also said that non-repayment of loans, lack of systematic

reporting of financial transactions, and lack of regular communication contributed to the steady decline of DAMAYAN. However, many singled out the misuse of funds by past officers as the factor which led to the instability of the organization and the growing skepticism of several members.

Inevitably, some mentioned that they have lost their *tiwala* in their organization because of the perceived corruption of past leaders. As an informant stated, “*Ayoko nang sumapi. Nawalan na ako ng tiwala. Ginawa lang tuntungan ang samahan para sa sarili nila. Ginamit lang kami – may benepisyo raw makukuha pag sumapi. Puro salita, wala naman kaming nakita sa sinabi.*” (I do not want to join DAMAYAN anymore. I have lost my *tiwala*. Previous officers just made the organization their stepping stone for their own benefit. They exploited us – they said we would benefit if we joined. It was all talk because we have not seen any concrete results.)

The erosion of *tiwala* in the organization due to unfulfilled expectations appeared to be strongly felt by several members. Initial ideas revolved around this topic, with some saying, “*Paanong magtitiwala kung hindi totoo ang sinasabi? Aasa ka, tapos wala naman palang mangyayari – sila-sila lang ang nakinabang. Kami, ganun pa rin, hindi makaluwag-luwag. Pag nalinlang ka na, mahirap nang magtiwala at baka pangakong mapapako uli.*” (How can you have *tiwala* when they are not true to their word? You expect something but it is not fulfilled. They were the only ones who benefited while we remain in this situation – our hardships have not been alleviated. When you have been deceived, it is difficult to trust – promises may be broken again.) Others stated, “*Mawawala ang tiwala mo pag nakikita mong nagsasamantala ang tao at nanlalamang.*” (One starts losing trust in people who take advantage of and exploit others.)

The members further traced the erosion of *tiwala* to observed lack of responsibility and accountability among past officers. As they related, “*Pananagutan bilang pinuno ang mga miyembro, lalo na umasa kaming mabiyayaan. Papipirmahin kami sa proposal daw, tapos bale wala na kami. Ang nangyari, hindi pa napanagutan ang pondong nawala. Hindi naging tapat sa napagkasunduan. Umasa kaming matutupad, walang nangyari. Tatabangan ka talaga.*” (Leaders are responsible for the well-being of members, particularly in granting benefits. We were asked to endorse proposals but afterwards, we were ignored. As things turned out, they could not even account for missing funds. They were not sincere and had no commitment to agreed upon expectations. We hoped that our expectations would be met. When nothing happens, one will surely lose interest.)

In the context of their past experiences, corruption, lack of responsibility and accountability, and *panlilinlang* or deceit as reflected in broken promises, taking advantage of others, and inequitable distribution of benefits, appear to have eroded *tiwala* not only in their past leaders but also in the organization. While the current president and officers may not be associated with corrupt practices, some have strong reservations about their organization and readily acknowledge that they are losing interest.

With the sharing of initial ideas on *tiwala* in the context of organizational problems, the study then focused on the further exploration of the concept and its dimensions.

The Social Construction of *Tiwala*

Some key informants expressed their views as follows: “*Ibig sabihin ng tiwala – sa ganang akin – natutupad ang inaasahan. Halimbawa,*

pag sinabi kong may tiwala ako sa kapwa ko, alam kong natutupad ang napagkasunduan namin... kung anong sinabi, natutupad, hindi tinatalikuran ang pangako...ibig sabihin, kilala mo ang isang tao... tapat sa iyo, hindi sinungaling, hindi nanloloko...walang agam-agam, panatag ang loob mo.” (For me, *tiwala* means that expectations are met. For example, when I say I have *tiwala sa kapwa*, I know that person will fulfill what we agreed upon...he or she honors his/her word and does not renege on promises...I know the person... the person is honest and sincere, does not lie or deceive others... I have no doubts and am at ease with a person.)

Still others shared, “*Pwede ring tinutukoy ang tiwala sa sarili, ibig ko bang sabihin, may kumpiyansa ka sa sarili mong kakayahan, pag may gustong maabot, siguradong kaya...ginagawa mo ang abot ng makakaya mo...buo ang loob, may paninindigan at desisyon...kaya mong abutin ang inaasahan mo.”* (*Tiwala* can also refer to *tiwala sa sarili*, meaning that one is confident about one’s abilities and attaining what one wants to achieve...one does something to the best of one’s abilities...a person is determined and does not waver, one has convictions and firm decisions...one can fulfill one’s expectations.)

The above statements represent some of the key informants’ basic ideas on *tiwala* and its nuances in their lives. The theme of *natutupad ang inaasahan* (literally, expectations are being met) is apparent and cuts across what they see as different levels of *tiwala*; the informants’ association of *tiwala* with fulfillment of expectations or conformity to one’s word/expected responsible action resonates with the expectations of dependability of people in social interaction.

Moreover, *tiwala* is perceived to be multidimensional. While it relates to the formation and maintenance of expectations for managing social

interaction and uncertainties in daily living, it is constructed and interpreted differently at various levels. Thus, the key informants talk about *tiwala sa kapwa* and *tiwala sa samahan* in terms of relying on and fulfilling agreed upon expectations, such as expecting people not to break their promises and, in the case of *tiwala sa samahan*, expecting the organization to bring about concrete benefits to its members. Further, *tiwala sa sarili* appears to be associated with confidence and reliance on one's capabilities in meeting personal expectations.

- **Levels of *Tiwala***

The themes generated in analyzing the data indicate that the key informants view *tiwala* as operating at various levels: *tiwala sa sarili* (individual); *tiwala ng kapwa* and *tiwala sa kapwa* (group); *tiwala sa samahan* (organizational); and, *tiwala sa Diyos* (transcendental). While some mentioned *tiwala sa sarili* as most salient, several of the informants mentioned *tiwala sa kapwa* as the most salient level of *tiwala*. In other words, *tiwala* is generally associated with social relationships – in particular, with one's *tiwala* in another person or group.

While *tiwala sa Diyos* was initially identified by only three informants, it was acknowledged during the validation as a basic level even by those who did not mention it as a level as salient as *tiwala sa kapwa*. For them, it helps people cope with and manage their difficult situations; *tiwala sa Diyos* is not only a separate and higher level of *tiwala* but is considered transcendental in two ways: because it transcends *tiwala* (i.e., the distinction made between *tiwala* and *pananalig*- trust and faith) and because informants see it as running through or being implicated as well in other levels. Beyond *tiwala sa kapwa*, *tiwala/pananalig sa Diyos* is based on faith on a higher being's unconditional care (*pananalig na hindi pababayaan; bibiyayaan o bibigyan kapag dumaing*).

Tiwala/pananalig sa Diyos and *tiwala sa sarili* appear to serve as personal anchors in helping manage concrete difficulties in everyday life. Both *tiwala sa sarili* and *tiwala sa kapwa* reflect the fact that while trustworthiness (*tiwala ng kapwa*) is also deemed important, the kind of *tiwala* that emanates from a person or that is within one's control seems to be more crucial for one's behavior than how one is perceived.

For the key informants, *tiwala/pananalig sa Diyos* and *tiwala sa sarili* seem to be associated with constancy (e.g., *pananalig*) and confidence (e.g., *kumpiyansa sa sariling kakayahan*) in facing the vagaries of life. At the same time, they underpin *tiwala sa kapwa*. As one informant explained, "*Kung wala kang tiwala sa sarili at sa Diyos, paano ka magtitiwala sa kapwa mo?*" (If one does not have *tiwala sa sarili* or *tiwala sa Diyos*, how can one have *tiwala sa kapwa*?)

On the other hand, *tiwala* at the group level is seen as *tiwala ng kapwa* and *tiwala sa kapwa*. *Tiwala ng kapwa* is viewed as the individual's meeting and maintaining expectations which, in turn, facilitate the formation of *pagtitiwala* or reciprocal trust relations. *Tiwala sa kapwa* is forming expectations of people in the process of social interaction and is related to developing harmonious relationships and forging understanding and unity (*pagkakasundo at pagkakaisa*) with them.

Tiwala ng kapwa is closely linked with perceptions about a person's reliability and dependability, as shown in the concrete situations they share. One explained, "*Kaugnay yan ng pag-iingat nang inilagak sa iyo.*" (*Tiwala ng kapwa* is related to taking good care of what is entrusted to a person.) Or, as another shared, "*Yung nagpapautang dito na pinagtatrabahuhan ko, hindi na lang tinitingnan ang rekord ko ng pautang at bayad pag nagsusulit ako. Ganun kalaki ang tiwala sa akin. Alam naman kasing nakatala lahat yan sa akin at hindi ko*

itatakbo ang pera.” (The money lender I work for does not even bother to look at my records when I turn over the funds I have collected. That is how much he trusts me. It is because he knows that I ensure everything is accounted for, my records are in order, and he will not be defrauded.)

While the above show *tiwala ng kapwa* associated with reliability and dependability in economic transactions, it is also manifested in daily interactions with others, such as not breaking promises or agreements. It is likewise seen in the context of organizational life. Among the DAMAYAN officers, for example, several realize that the members expect to see concrete results from them before they can fully gain their *tiwala*. While electing them into office is seen as a manifestation of their *tiwala*, two officers stated, “*Alam naming kailangang magpakita ng mabuting halimbawa para makuha ang tiwala ng mga kasapi. Oo nga, may tiwala sila dahil inihalal kami pero ang problema, paano pananatilihin yon. Siguro pag hindi nila nakikitang kami ang ‘puno’ o kaya pag may biyaya, miyembro muna at pantay-pantay ang benepisyo, ubrang mapadali ang pagtitiwala sa amin.*” (We know that we have to set good examples to gain the members’ *tiwala*. True, they showed their *tiwala* when they elected us but the problem is how to maintain that. Perhaps when they see that we give priority to members when there are benefits or they see that benefits are equitably distributed, building their *tiwala* will be facilitated.)

While meeting the expectations of people is underscored in *tiwala ng kapwa*, forming expectations of another person is highlighted in *tiwala sa kapwa*. As several explained, “*Pag may tiwala sa kapwa, alam mong tapat sa iyo ang isang tao – hindi siya nagsisinungaling at nanloloko o kaya nanlalamang, nagkakasundo kayo kasi alam mong may malasakit sa yo.*” (*Tiwala sa kapwa* means knowing that a person is honest and sincere –s/he does not lie, deceive or exploit another person. A

harmonious relationship is established because one knows that the person is concerned about one's well-being.)

The above capture the importance placed on expecting people to demonstrate concern and reliability before *tiwala sa kapwa* can be formed. As a female informant explained, "*Kahit ba sa simpleng bagay lang, tulad ng pagsosoli ng gamit na hiniram, makikita mo kung pinahahalagahan ang pagsasama nyo at ang binitiwang salita.*" (Even in simple matters like the prompt return of borrowed things, one can see if a person values the relationship and his/her word.) She then added, "*May maaasahan kang matatakbuhan pag oras ng pangangailangan...pag dumaing ka, hindi ka napapahiya, alam mong may malalapitan ka.*" (One can rely on the help of another person in time of need – one knows the person is dependable and can be easily approached without fear of being rebuffed.)

Thus, *tiwala sa kapwa* is associated with regarding persons whom one knows as part of one's support system, as people one can depend on and turn to, particularly in times of need. Needs which they ask trusted persons to help them with may vary. Some explained, "*Puwede kong ipagkatiwala ang mga bata at ang bahay pag umaalis ako.*" (I can entrust my children and my house when I have to be away.) One mother revealed, "*Pag wala na kaming maisaing, nagsasabi ako, alam kong hindi naman ako mapapahiya.*" (When we have no rice, I tell her. I know my request will not be refused.) Some farmers said, "*Naghihiraman kami ng gamit sa bukid, tulad ng pang-spray ng gamot.*" (We lend each other farm equipment, such as pesticide sprayers.)

The more frequently cited need, however, is financial, with several informants relating *tiwala sa kapwa* to people's willingness to lend money to them. They shared, "*Nagpapautang o nagpapahiram – pero kung*

walang-wala rin sila, nagkukusang samahan kami sa ibang kakilala para matulungan.” (They lend us money, but when they themselves do not have any, they assist us in approaching others so we can be helped.)

Expectations from persons on whom one has bestowed *tiwala* do not only cover support in material needs but also moral and emotional support. “*Hindi ako nangingiming sabihin ang problema kasi alam kong dadamayan ako – iba yung may alam kang magpapalakas ng loob mo pag medyo may agam-agam ka,*” one male member explained. (I do not have qualms sharing my problems with a person I trust because I know s/he will help me. It means a lot when one knows one has somebody to boost one’s morale.)

Although the key informants distinguished between *tiwala ng kapwa* and *tiwala sa kapwa*, they shared that these are interdependent. As two pointed out, “*Magkaugnay yan. Kung tiwala sa amin, may tiwala rin kami. Kung tiwala naman kami, may tiwala rin sa amin. Mahirap kung hindi magkapareho ang pagtingin. Halimbawa, kung tiwala ako sa iyo, tapos nakikita kong wala ka namang tiwala sa akin, walang mangyayari – laging may agam-agam tayo sa isa’t isa at wala tayong patutunguhang ugnayan.*” (*Tiwala ng kapwa* and *tiwala sa kapwa* are closely related. When people trust us, we also develop trust in them. When we trust people, people develop trust in us. It is difficult when two parties do not share the same view. For example, I may trust you but when I see that you do not trust me, nothing will come out of our relationship. We will always have doubts about each other and we will not move towards a harmonious relationship.)

On the other hand, when the key informants explained *tiwala sa samahan* (trust at the organizational level), they inevitably took DAMAYAN as their frame of reference. As they said, “*Pag tiwala sa samahan, ibig*

sabihin alam mong maganda ang takbo, may proyektong totoo, may pruwembang pakinabang na nakikita.” (Tiwala sa samahan means you know the organization is running smoothly, with projects which provide tangible benefits.)

Maganda ang takbo is seen in the participation of members and in the effective management of leaders. Some stated, “*Nakikita yung tiwala sa samahan pag dumadalo sa miting ang maraming kasapi. Pag nanlalamig, paunti nang paunti ang dumadalo.*” (Well-attended meetings indicate that members have *tiwala sa samahan*; dwindling attendance indicates that members are losing their interest and trust.) Aside from attendance and involvement in meetings, active participation is seen in the extent and pace in mobilizing members for collective action. As two leaders explained, “*Madali ang sama-samang pagkilos pag may tiwala ang kasapi. Hindi lang sa pagdalo pag tumawag ng pulong, sama-sama rin pag may proyekto o malawakang pagkilos; madaling manghikayat ng ibang kasapi na lumahok.*” (Collective action is facilitated when members have *tiwala sa samahan*. It is seen not just in mobilizing members to attend meetings but in collective action when there are projects to be implemented or there is a need for mass action on farm-related issues.)

Those who associated *tiwala sa samahan* with the effective management of their leaders singled out two aspects: the honest, transparent, and fair dealings of leaders, and their regular communication and coordination with the members. As some members said, “*Pag nakikita mo ang katapatan sa tungkulin ng namumuno, magkakaroon ka ng tiwala.*” (When one sees the integrity and sincerity of leaders in performing their duties, one will have *tiwala sa samahan*.) They added, “*sabi nga, hindi dapat na ang pinuno ang ‘puno’ – paano ka magtitiwala nyan kung sila-sila lang ang nakikitang nakinabang? Magtitiwala ka pag nakikita mong tapat, kayang panagutan at nag-uulat ng nagawa sa mga kasapi,*

hindi yung may itinatago sa amin.” (As the saying goes, a leader should not be the only one who gains from the organization. How will you develop *tiwala* when you see that they are the only ones who get the benefits? You will have *tiwala* when you see that they are honest, hold themselves accountable for their actions, regularly give reports to and have nothing to conceal from members.)

Maganda ang takbo may account for expectations on how the organization is managed. For some, however, their main consideration in having *tiwala sa samahan* is seeing concrete projects which provide tangible benefits or, as they said, “*May pruwèbang pakinabang.*” They explained, “*Hindi naman pwedeng puro sakripisyo lang, may biyaya namang dapat nakikita.*” (It cannot be all ‘sacrifice’ on our part – we need to see concrete gains for our time and efforts.)

- **Bases of *Tiwala***

As seen from the perspective of the informants, the notion of dependability in the fulfillment of expectations appears to be the common thread among the various levels of *tiwala*. However, what do they take into account in developing *tiwala*? And, what represent symbols of dependability for them?

Their various statements indicate two key concepts that serve as their bases of *tiwala*: *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa*, notions of which get to be formed through observation of personal qualities and ways of relating with people. As several shared, “*tapat sa kasama, hindi binabaliwala ang kasunduan*” (literally, sincere and honest in dealing with people, honors what has been agreed upon). Still another said, “*may malasakit, dumadamay*” (shows concern, extends help).

For most of the informants, *katapatan* (honesty, sincerity) is the important basis of *tiwala*. As several explained, “*May tiwala ako pag nakikita kong tapat ang isang tao.*” (I have *tiwala* when I observe that a person is honest/sincere.) They added, “*Pag sinabing tapat ang isang tao, hindi siya sinungaling, may totoong salita – pagkaharap at pagtalikod, pareho ang sinasabi.*” (When a person is said to be *tapat*, it means that s/he does not lie. S/he is sincere and consistent in what s/he says.)

Katapatan is thus associated with the consistency of people’s words and actions, as well as in the fulfillment of promises. Oft-repeated statements were “*hindi sinisira ang pangako*” or “*hindi tinatalikuran ang salita*” and “*pag may binitiwang salita o pangako, tinutupad.*” (S/he does not break promises and honors her/his word or promise.) For many, giving one’s word is taken seriously since it assumes the nature of a pledge or promise; fulfilling one’s word is a measure of a person’s worth. One member summed this up by saying, “*May isang salita ka lang, tao ka na.*”

Some cited concrete examples of *katapatan*, such as “*pag nangakong sasamahan ka, hindi ka ibibitin, nakapangako kasi*” (you can expect her/him to go with you once s/he gives a promise; s/he will not leave you high and dry) or “*pag nangutang, tumutupad sa kasunduan, hindi mo na kailangang singilin, hindi ka pinagtataguan*” (when one borrows money, one keeps one’s word and repays the amount on the agreed upon date, without being reminded to do so or trying to avoid one’s creditor). In an organization, *katapatan* is seen in people, particularly the leaders, who accomplish what they commit themselves to. “*Pag may sinabing gagawin, ginagawa, hindi yung umaasa kami sa wala.*” (If they say they will do something, we can expect them to do so and not leave us with false hopes.)

Another basis of *tiwala* for the key informants is *pakikipagkapwa*, a concept that hews closely to the views of Sikolohiyang Pilipino proponents

like Enriquez (1992). For many, *pakikipagkapwa* means basic respect for people. As an informant explained, “*Ang taong may pakikipagkapwa, taong marangal ang turing sa kapwa. Yun bang pag may katungkulan, halimbawa, magandang makitungo sa kapwa, hindi ka binabaliwala at nasasangguni mo sa problema mo.*” (A person with *pakikipagkapwa* treats people with dignity and respect. If one holds public office, for instance, one relates well with people, does not ignore them and can be consulted on problems.)

Still others related, “*Alam mong may pakikipagkapwa pag nakikita mong nagkukusang tumulong kahit di mo sabihan.*” (You know a person has *pakikipagkapwa* when s/he demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of others and offers help even without being asked.) A father said, “*makikita mo naman yan sa kilos ng tao. Tulad halimbawa ng pamilya ni ... nung magkasakit ang anak ko, eto na agad ang tricycle nila, hindi na kailangang humingi ng tulong.*” (You can see *pakikipagkapwa* through a person’s actions. When my son got sick, for example, the family of ... readily offered their tricycle; I did not have to ask for their help.)

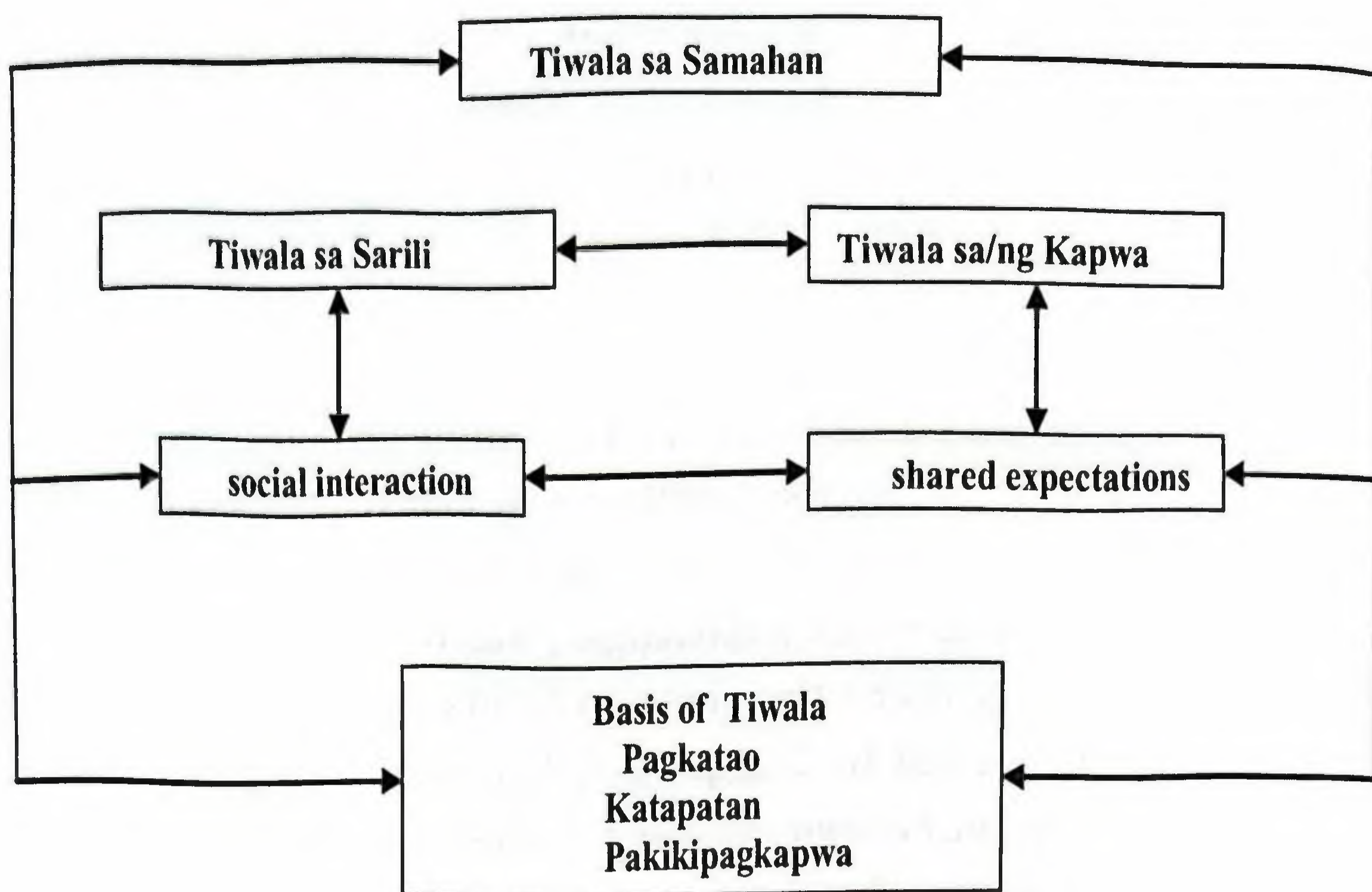
Closely related to *pakikipagkapwa* are solicitude and caring for others (*pagmamalasakit*) and willingness to help, particularly in difficult times (*pagtulong/pagdamay*). The wife of a farm worker related, “*Nung bumaha rito at nasa ibang bayan ang mister ko, tinulungan ako ng kumpare niya para ilikas ang gamit namin. Kung walang nagmalasakit sa amin, hindi ko alam kung anong nangyari. Biro mo, ako lang ang andito at mabilis ang pagtaas ng tubig.*” (When our purok was flooded and my husband was working in another town, his friend helped us evacuate our belongings. If nobody came to our rescue, I do not know what would have happened to us. I was the only one left and the flood waters rose swiftly.)

As noted in *tiwala sa kapwa*, people who are part of one's support system are people one can depend on to sustain oneself in overcoming problems in daily life. Thus, the concrete manifestations of caring for others and of willingness to help are seen as important in gauging *pakikipagkapwa*.

From the discussions with the key informants then, confidence (*kumpiyansa*) or regarding the fulfillment of concrete expectations as likely (*maaasahan*) seem to underlie *tiwala*, based on the interpretation of a person's *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa*. In turn, these qualities are indispensable in constructing views on the integrity of one's *pagkatao* (or personhood as noted by Enriquez, 1992). As some key informants explained, "*Ang mahalaga ay yung nakikita mong malinis ang pagkatao – yun bang ginagawa at pinapanindigan ang tama, hindi gumagawa ng nakasasama sa kapwa.*" (What is important is knowing that one has integrity (literally) –one is committed to and does what is right; one does nothing which harms one's *kapwa*.)

Thus, *pagkatao* subsumes all other characteristics since people with integrity are expected to be above board in their dealings with others, devoid of trickery, and concerned about their *kapwa*.

In summary, *tiwala* symbolizes some measure of stability and predictability in a precarious world. Its distinct basis rooted in *pagkatao*, as shown in the following diagram, provides the ground for understanding why *pagtitiwala* or trust relations entail concrete and face-to-face interaction.



Contributions to a Filipino Concept of *Tiwala*

The ideas shared by the key informants suggest some nuances of *tiwala*. As can be gleaned from the data, the social construction of *tiwala* in Barangay M is grounded on the realities the farmers and their families have to grapple with. While planting and harvesting seasons appear with regularity, their main source of income changes due to factors which may be beyond their control, such as continuous rains and floods, pest infestation of rice crops, and increasing costs of farm inputs. The element of uncertainty as they eke out a living is always present; part of the “taken for granted reality” for most of the residents is the worsening state of their livelihood.

In this context, *tiwala* appears to be a representation of some semblance of stability and predictability in their precarious

world. It provides a symbol of dependability in their everyday lives and is associated with social support systems which help people cope with the difficulties of daily living.

Tiwala is developing and maintaining shared expectations for managing uncertainty and reciprocal action in everyday life (Bonifacio, 1989). This appears to be substantiated by the data which underscore the role of expectations at various levels of *tiwala*. The constant reference to reliance on one's word or promise stresses the importance people give to fulfilling agreed upon expectations; once one gives one's word or promise, it means that one commits oneself to a particular course of action. Thus, the reference to *may isang salita* can be understood further as the need to have a concrete symbol of consistency and predictability in everyday encounters and joint actions.

The levels of *tiwala* reveal its intersubjective nature. *Tiwala* – whether it is *tiwala sa sarili*, *tiwala ng kapwa*, *tiwala sa kapwa*, or *tiwala sa samahan* – is developed or eroded in the process of social interaction and in the socially constructed knowledge about the self and others. As they relate with each other, people get to affirm not only their own capabilities and *pagkatao* but also their expectations for mutually beneficial actions.

While interpersonal interaction is highlighted in this rural community, *tiwala sa samahan* does not automatically ensue, regardless of the kinship ties and close interpersonal relations among several members. This suggests that expectations of formal organizations include not only close fellowship but also dependability in meeting concrete material needs of its members, particularly in a community where people are experiencing scarcity of resources. After all, joining or becoming

active in a people's organization needs some investment, particularly in terms of time which could otherwise be devoted to livelihood activities. Thus, bestowing *tiwala sa samahan* implies acknowledgement of the organization's consistent capability to achieve its goals and its credibility as a social support system for its members.

Since it can be precarious as a social support system, *tiwala* is developed on the basis of the construction and interpretation of the integrity of one's *pagkatao*, as seen concretely in *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa*. *Malinis na pagkatao*, as interpreted in the process of social interaction, appears to be the critical factor in regarding a person as somebody with commitment to *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa* and can therefore be relied on to meet mutually agreed upon expectations. It undergirds the various levels of *tiwala*. *Tiwala sa sarili* is developed as a person becomes aware not only of her/his capabilities, *pananalig/tiwala sa Diyos*, *tiwala ng kapwa*, and the opportunities afforded by others but also, and more importantly, of her/his own *katapatan* and determination to maintain *malinis na pagkatao*. In developing *tiwala sa kapwa* and *tiwala sa samahan*, critical factors include not only meaningful interaction and meeting mutual expectations but also consistency in the behavior of people regarded as having *malinis na pagkatao*.

What are some implications of the above on the dynamics of *tiwala* in a people's organization?

Tiwala, once given through a careful, deliberate process, cannot be treated lightly. It may be a taken for granted reality, but it also carries with it certain responsibilities and reciprocal actions. Once these are breached, *tiwala* is eroded.

Although direct, face-to-face relations are highlighted in the development of *tiwala*, *tiwala sa samahan* is closely linked with expectations of a formal organization. A people's organization formed to address concrete material needs and issues of its members needs to be seen as performing its tasks. Unless it is regarded as a social support system and as a concrete symbol of certainty in their precarious lives, *tiwala* in a people's organization may waver.

Personalistic relations may matter but fulfillment of expectations from a formal support system needs to be seen, such as achievement of stated goals, transparency of operations, responsibility and accountability of elected officers. Furthermore, the eroding *tiwala* of members in their organization due to perceived mismanagement and irregularities in official transactions highlights the fragility of trust relations.

In a rural community where economic survival is viewed as the pervasive problem, it is understandable that most of the concerns which members expect their organization to address revolve around immediate and concrete improvements in their living conditions. For the majority of the members, meaningful changes in their social realities entail having a little capital for livelihood activities such as raising pigs, goats, or chicken, and putting up small *sarisari* stores. For them to identify with and develop *tiwala* in an organization, these desired changes have to be seen. Alone, a person is perceived as being able to do very limited things; with an active people's organization, a person can have more opportunities to fulfill her/his aspirations in life.

Congruence of expectations – that is, members' expectations vis-à-vis organizational goals and objectives; members' and leaders' expectations of desired actions – assumes significance in the development of *tiwala sa samahan*. Some leaders, as observed in the research site, may see the

need to raise the critical awareness of people on wider issues affecting their continuing marginalization, as part of the efforts to revitalize their organization. Unless this is also recognized by the members, however, mobilizing them may be a daunting task.

In organizing viable community groups, the data indicate that building *tiwala* at various levels is a vital component of development work. Empowerment assumes meaning for people when they realize that they themselves have the potentials for bringing about changes in their lives and working collectively toward social transformation. Here the insights on the various levels of *tiwala* in the Philippine context indicate that *tiwala sa sarili*, *tiwala ng kapwa*, *tiwala sa kapwa*, and *tiwala sa samahan* can be the building blocks for empowering processes and structures. In this regard, participation provides the venue for building *tiwala*, focusing as it does on face-to-face relations and affording community residents opportunities to affirm their own *pagkatao* and that of their *kapwa*.

Developing a viable people's organization involves building *pagtitiwala* – among the members themselves, in their leaders, and in their organization. A major challenge in organizing marginalized groups such as the rural poor is the reconstruction of their present realities not as static, despite seemingly oppressive conditions, but as subject to change through collective, concerted transformative actions which the people themselves initiate and follow through.

As suggested by the research methodology, the exploration of the meanings people attach to their realities – how they interpret their situation and what changes are significant to them – facilitates the identification of concerns relevant to them. Privileging their way of constructing and interpreting reality also enhances the awareness of *tiwala ng kapwa*; with

empathic understanding of their world view, people begin to share their ideas and feelings. But this can only be done when researchers/organizers immerse themselves in the culture of a particular community and enter their world of meanings. As the study indicates, sensitivity to the nuances of both verbal and nonverbal language used in a particular area, and willingness to learn from their vast store of knowledge, may enhance the development of *tiwala ng kapwa*.

People who feel marginalized may disparage their own capabilities. However, building initially on their current stock of knowledge – rather than introducing entirely new ideas which may be alien to their culture – may facilitate the further development of *tiwala sa sarili*. In turn, increased recognition of their capabilities and commitment to *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa* can enhance social relations and the formation of mutual support systems in the community. Further, the data indicate that people acknowledge that they have certain responsibilities to make *tiwala* work. Thus, building on their views on responsibility can facilitate the leveling of expectations from mutual support systems.

The people's organization focused in this paper reveals that *tiwala sa samahan* can be a potent force in developing the awareness of people regarding their conditions and in mobilizing them to advocate for needed changes affecting their sector. Whether such *tiwala* can be regained fully and enhanced remains to be seen, as key actors attempt to revitalize the organization and help its members move from their cynicism and renew their *tiwala* in the people who breathe life into their organization.

Finally, this paper underscores the need for further studies on relevant Filipino concepts, such as how people in particular communities see the process of rebuilding *pagtitiwala* in their everyday lives. Without negating the contributions of other perspectives, the social constructionist

perspective, more particularly that of the epistemic community dedicated to understanding Filipino culture and society, has much to offer in exploring the various nuances of Filipino concepts which could in turn lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of how Filipinos, especially the disadvantaged sectors, interpret their realities and manage to rise collectively above their extremely difficult circumstances.

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