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Torture and Organised Violence
Contributions to a Human Rights Response
edited by Peter Berliner, Julio G. Arenas
and Jan Ole Haagenen



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13. Social Trauma in the Philippines

Ernesto Anasarias, Peter Berliner, Pernille Ianev
& Elisabeth Naima Mikkelsen¹

Abstract:

In this article we attempt to define the elements that constitute a community and how it is possible to create community development in communities who have been subjected to social trauma. We wish to present the work of Balay, an organization in the Philippines that provides psychosocial development and rehabilitation services to communities affected by trauma and conflict. Their focus is on the community as a whole and rehabilitation is aimed at the attainment of healing, empowerment and development of the entire community rather than specific individuals. This paper also attempts to present an understanding of social trauma and its manifestations as observed in the conflict-impacted communities that Balay serves.

In the Philippines and in particular the island of Mindanao where Balay currently focuses its attention, several violent conflicts have happened over the past decades that involve disagreements between what is referred to as the Tri-people. The three peoples are the Moros (Moslems), the Settlers (Christians) and the indigenous people. This conflict affects civilians because it triggers mistrust and tension among the peoples. Organized political violence characterized by coercion, deprivation and physical and psychological assaults, such as armed conflict, have produced generations of traumatized communities of displaced peoples.

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The work of Balay focuses on helping people become active participants in the rehabilitation process of their own communities through various intervention strategies that include curative, preventive and proactive elements. The strategies range from community planning, community dialogs, local rituals, peace camps, capability building, psychological processing, education to participation in actions for social change.

In this article we include descriptions of two cases of rehabilitation with communities in Mindanao.

1. Introduction and definitions; methods and how data is collected

Psychological theories focusing on the intra-psychic elements of human life often suggest interventions towards the individual which cause a turn away from broad efforts of prevention, social security and the rebuilding of local communities. Of necessity, a new orientation of psychological intervention needs to incorporate political, cultural and social realities as essential components of its conceptual framework as well as its priorities. Consequently, community psychology views the psychological processes in the context of the actual social and political circumstances and factors, thereby making inequalities, injustices and oppression visible.

The concept of *community* is very complex. There is an ongoing academic discussion about whether a community can be defined as a geographical unit, e.g. a small village (Orford, 1992), or more broadly as a network of people participating in some kind of social interaction. Another definition is that a community is a social entity with some degree of cohesion consisting of different interest groups that are motivated by economic, political and religious motives and by specific values and cultural perspectives. The community includes people who participate in the struggle to protect the interests of the community. The interests of the community participants are to be found within the continuum from exploitation to solidarity (Anckermann et al. 2005).

Despite this, the concept of community is often used to describe multifaceted inter-personal relations in particular contexts, but in contrast to social psychological approaches, community-focused theoretical frameworks go beyond studying inter-personal dynamics by reflecting on practical and participatory solutions to problems in the practice of people. Rather than focusing directly on individual wellness, community-focused approaches strive to enhance the quality of life for the entire community, thereby influencing individual wellness indirectly. In addition, the approach of community psychology focuses on preventive interventions in order to create environments capable of developing skills and thus preventing problems.

This means that a community is constituted and sustained from living in and identifying with a definable location and/or participating in particular activities which are comprehensible and meaningful according to shared – and negotiable – discourses (religious, political, moral, etc.). A community may enclose very differently distributed positions of political and economic power, resources of health, access to education, and freedom of faith and right to express opinions. These differences may be legitimated from social constructs of gender, ethnicity and class. Analytically, these differences may be categorized into a social dimension, a material dimension and a semantic/linguistic dimension. When people perform activities involving one or more of these dimensions, we can call it the *practice* of the community. To understand problems and resources at the community level is to perceive them as embedded in practices which employ and expand the material, communicative, and discursive contexts of the community. When the discourses and activities constitutive of the (sense of a) community is in a process of change, people will debate and negotiate potential practices and meaningful narratives for the community. They will have different potentials for producing mental health, empowerment, and development (Rose 1999, Das et al. 2001, Plummer 2001, Harvey 1996).

Community development, also defined as soft or indirect services, involves communities gradually recognizing that they themselves have the capacity and desire to solve their own community concerns (Hawe, 1994). In this process, the professionals and the citizens share the

power; whereas the professionals are seen as facilitators, i.e., as resources for support, the citizens are seen as the key stakeholders. This way of approaching community development is in stark contrast to the more direct services, such as programs with set agendas and little flexibility where it is primarily the professionals who develop, plan, implement and evaluate the programs for the participants (McComas & Carswell, 1994, Barnes, Rodger, Whyte, 1997). One of the positives of community development is that since community groups are having a direct say in what is happening, it is more likely that their needs will be met. The process in which individuals struggle to reduce personal powerlessness and dependency by obtaining increased control over their lives, is what defines empowerment (Lord & Hutchison 1997; Rappaport, 1987). As mentioned above, empowerment is a crucial outcome of community development (Labonte, 1996) and can be defined as individual empowerment and community empowerment (Barnes et al., 1997). Whereas individual empowerment refers to the benefits, like personal skills, individuals attain from being involved in processes of community development, community empowerment on the other hand refers to the broader benefits gained overall in the community.

As individuals develop a growing sense of community awareness by caring for their community they become more motivated to be involved and to have an impact on their community. This further leads to a greater sense of interdependence, cohesion and co-operation among community members which continuously strengthens community pride and empowerment (Condeluci, 1991; Kerr, 1990; Barnes, et al., 1997). At the core of community development is the premise that many valuable human resources that have yet to be fully realized exist within the community. The empowerment process results in co-operative communities and increased quality of life for those willing to participate in challenging community life (Tindell, 1990, Barnes, et al., 1997).

The notion of social trauma may serve as a theoretical background for a conceptual framework about community-based rehabilitation. The idea behind community based rehabilitation is that psychological problems and psychological processes need to be understood in relation to specific contexts of life, i.e., the specific circumstances of life

experienced by a particular person or group. This means that problems are not understood as something inherent in the person, but rather as something embedded in the person's particular contexts of life which are driven, influenced and shaped by particular social, political, economical, religious and cultural discourses and practices.

One of the main ideas behind the approach of community based rehabilitation is that since people belonging to a particular community have particular living conditions in common, some of the problems experienced by the community members must be inter-linked with their living conditions. This can be applied to war-torn communities where a number of people suffer from the same contextual circumstances. Interventions directed towards such communities can be made through the traditional support systems; however, often these systems have been destroyed and the interventions should then be aimed at re-integrating people into the community, identifying and transforming community networks and forming of a new normality of a supportive social fabric.

In post conflict societies, community based interventions involve making use of resources in the community in order to provide support to affected people in the aftermath of the violence. Community resources of support and care may be used in an active and collaborative way, empowering the individual participating community members and the community as a whole. This may emerge in processes of collaborative decision making, the formation of support groups for people who share the same problems, and including vulnerable groups in the community.

Community based development projects seek to generate changes, in that local groups become capable of gaining power to control decisions, and organize and control their own lives. The key initiative for community-based rehabilitation and development efforts is to create a set of values and practices that are conducive to peaceful coexistence through non-violent conflict resolution, capable of reducing the alarming levels of violence emergent in the communities. Hence, the approach of community based rehabilitation has moved the focus from

diagnosing PTSD, mental trauma and individual health issues to 'real life' problems connected to violence and loss.

It is obvious that when the community approach is linked to a particular lens it is not value free. This is the strength of this approach because it provides sustainability to the programs. However it could be criticized for being imbued with ideological biases. On the other hand one could argue against this criticism by stating that the orientation is within the struggle of the people and in concordance with the narratives produced by the communities themselves. Also, there may be constructive changes in the aftermath of a war or genocide. The social turmoil may open options for new development within the community. This may come about from many other sources as well and it is only with regret one may notice that it may be related to the social uprooting in the wake of war.

Research question and data collection

The research question in this article is as follows: How may the changes brought about by Balay be conceptualised in a theoretical framework of social trauma?

The practical responses to the current problems and the social transformation in the war-torn areas cannot be understood by concepts of individual trauma, because they include interactions and development of livelihoods through shared activities. The question is then how to formulate a theoretical framework that is more able to grasp the practice of Balay and can be of practical value in the future development of the practice.

The data collected consist of interviews conducted with two community leaders in Mindanao, one interview with a NGO worker in Mindanao, field notes on focus group discussions conducted with people in the Mindanaoan villages of Saranay and Gantong, Dalengaoen and Layog evacuation sites, concept papers on community based rehabilitation and documentation of community profiles published in Balay's resource centre, and participatory observations conducted through the development of relationships with communities. All the materials

have been produced as part of Balay's strategy to establish community profiling which has the objective to understand the background of the conflict, establish who the stakeholders and actors are in the conflict, establish what effect the conflict and the violence have had on the people and on community resources, and find out how people can rebuild their lives.

All the data collections have been done by Balay staff in collaboration with community volunteers and with the participation of Mindanaoan communities using participatory data gathering tools, and it was gathered throughout the years 2003 and 2004.

Finally, for our background knowledge about the situation in Mindanao we have used articles written by academic scholars and peace advocates.

Methods of analysis

The analysis is based on reading the texts and performances as they were presented by the participants in the community development programmes. The analysis focuses on the levels of human rights at the level of symbolic interaction (narratives and metaphors), the social interaction and the distribution of material goods. These analytical lenses were developed in dialogue with the partners (the people in the communities) and were further discussed with them during the meetings that also included aspects of the social transformation. The interrelation between knowledge-generation and practical development became very clear in the development of the themes and concepts used in the analyses. The analysis must be linked to practical interventions in order to fulfill the requirements of the participatory action research design.

2. Background and situation in Mindanao

Diversity and Conflict in Mindanao

The post cold-war order is one in which internal conflict far exceeds inter-state war or internal armed conflicts as the leading violent cause of human suffering. Military conflicts between states have gradually declined, but in their place large numbers of civil wars stemming from a common root of violation or denial of a right to freedom or equality, and the non fulfillment of the people's economic, social and cultural rights have arisen.

At the moment an unprecedented worldwide flow of refugees and internally displaced persons are rapidly increasing. Dozens of slumbering internal disputes with far-reaching human rights implications – rooted in ethnicity, identity, religion, conflicts over governance, drive for democratization, relative economic deprivation, territorial delineation and the exploitation of diminishing resources – are being awakened. This tragic reality can be observed practically worldwide – in Burma and Aceh in Southeast Asia; in the Balkan republics in Europe; in Sudan, Rwanda and Sierra Leone in Africa; and in Peru and Colombia in South America, to cite a few.

The war and the militarist response attempting to settle these disputes further stoke human rights violations. Hence, like two sides of the same coin, the issues of peace, healing, rehabilitation and empowerment are inextricably linked to the promotion of human rights. Peace and well-being are not only the fundamental guarantee of everyone's right to life, but also a condition for the progress of any society or any nation.

In the Philippines, the military operations against the communist insurgency and the Muslim separatist movement in the southern island of Mindanao have resulted in the forced movement of a large number of people for many years. The last major displacement of civilians was from February to July 2003 where more than 400,000 people were uprooted by the clashes between government forces and fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The fighting was the fourth major armed confrontation between soldiers and Muslim separatist rebels

since 1997. In 2000, the "total war" declaration of then President Joseph Estrada against the MILF affected more than one million civilians. This earned the Philippines the distinction of producing one of the largest numbers of internally displaced person or IDPs in Southeast Asia since the Second World War. According to records of the World Refugee Survey, the Philippines ranks third with the largest number of IDPs, next to Burma and Indonesia where organized violence and ethnic conflict also are pervasive. Evacuees tired of the war were joined by civil society organizations and religious leaders in calling for a ceasefire. When the guns were finally silenced on July 19th 2003 around 200 civilians were reported to have died, mostly in evacuation centres where food and medical supplies generally are scarce.

Arena of Conflict

The armed conflict in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao has been going on for more than thirty years. The most affected places are found in Central Mindanao and in the islands of Basilan and Sulu where many Muslims live. In 1996, a peace agreement was signed by the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Many of the former rebels who started the armed struggle for a separate Bangsamoro state in the 1970s laid down their arms. Many of their leaders joined the government as officials of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). But despite the peace accord, the communities of Muslims and indigenous peoples remain in dire poverty. Discrimination and militarization are some of their constant complaints. The Moro rebellion persisted under the leadership of the MILF. The military operations against communist New Peoples Army (NPA) guerrillas in some areas populated by indigenous peoples in Southern and Northern Mindanao add to the climate of violence. The lives of villagers in conflict-affected areas hang on a balance, as there is no assurance when a just and lasting peace will finally dawn.

Social Context of Violence

Mindanao is the second largest among the 7,100 islands of the Philippine archipelago. With a land area of approximately 10.2 million hec-

tares, it is three times larger than Belgium, twice as large as Switzerland, and fifteen times bigger than Singapore. Of-times called the *Land of Promise*, it is endowed with natural resources. Half of the total corn production, fish catch and supply of chicken of the country come from Mindanao. Its fertile soil grows 25 per cent of the rice consumed by Filipinos. It accounts for all pineapples, rubber, and bananas exported to other countries. It also produces an abundance of nickel, minerals and gold (Layson, 2002).

Fr. Eliseo Mercado, OMI, former president of the Notre Dame University in Cotabato City who used to head the Independent Fact Finding Committee that monitored the cease-fire between the government and the MNLF, traced the factors that breed organized political violence in Mindanao to the following (Casiple, 2002):

Poverty – Out of 20 poorest provinces in the country, 14 are found in Mindanao, in areas mostly populated by the Moro people. The National Anti Poverty Commission, in 1995, had cited Mindanao as having recorded the highest poverty incident in the country (44.6%). The highest rate of poverty is registered in Central Mindanao Region (55%) and in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao – ARMM (57%). It is no coincidence that these two regions have been noted for being the hotbed of Moro rebellion. Mindanao also scores low in terms of health, education, and economic and other social developments.

The politics of exclusion – Muslims and the indigenous peoples or Lumads are hardly genuinely included in governing their own affairs, in charting their own economic paradigms or cultural destiny. Observers cite that the many so-called development projects in Mindanao are imposed without consulting the affected communities. Too often, it is the "imperial Manila" who decides on the projects which results in the implementation of projects that do not benefit the stakeholders. With little say in running the affairs of their communities, their right to development are hardly observed, stoking unrest in the process.

Inequality and exploitation of natural resources that do not benefit them – For many years, outsiders, both foreign and Filipinos, have

been raking in profits from the logging concessions, agro-industrial and commercial businesses in Mindanao, encroaching at the ancestral homelands and territories of the Moros and Lumads in the process. This can be gleaned, for instance, in the struggles of the Subanens against the Canadian-owned TVI Mining Company in Sibutad, Zamboanga del Norte, the B'laans who lost their land over Dole plantation in Polomolok, and the Higaonons and the Manobos who are fighting to reclaim their homelands in Bukidnon.

The Stakeholders

While an overwhelming majority of the present-day inhabitants of Mindanao are Christians, there was a time when the Muslims and the indigenous peoples were predominant. When the Spaniards arrived in the Archipelago in 16th century and discovered that some of the inhabitants were Muslims, they called them Moros, in the same manner that they called those Muslims from North Africa who had conquered and occupied Spain for nearly eight centuries. Now, Moros refers to the 13 ethno-linguistic groups of the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Sama, Sangil, Iranun, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Yakan, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog and Badjao. They are mostly Muslims except for the Kalagan and Palawani who are partly Muslim and partly not; the Badjaos are generally non-Muslims (Rodil 1999).

Because of the colonization of the Christian farmers, to whom the Government promised the lands of the Moros and the indigenous peoples completely free of charge, the Muslims became a minority within their own homeland. Today they represent only 25 per cent out of 20 million inhabitants of Mindanao. They are mostly found in the five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi and in eleven other towns, namely, one in Cotabato, seven in Lanao del Norte, two in Zamboanga del Norte and one in Palawan. Since 1980, more than 10 million Christians settled on the island of Mindanao. Thousands of Moslem families have lost their land. Now, the Moros occupy just 17% of the land.

The exploitation of mineral resources, caused by immigrants from

other Philippine islands and foreign investors, as well as the loss of their land, have strengthened the feeling among the Moros, that they have become a minority without rights in their own homeland. Since the end of the sixties the increasing tensions led the Moros to rise up in arms against the Philippine Central Government and to demand the establishment of an independent State.

The various tribes of Lumads, on the other hand, which count around 1.5 million people, are also a very significant stakeholder in any peace, rehabilitation and development issue in southern Philippines. The name Lumad is a Cebuano Bisaya term referring to 18 ethno-linguistic groups of indigenous peoples in Mindanao. Although most of them are Christians, usually belonging to various Protestant denominations, depending on which arrived at their place first, they seldom refer to themselves by their religious identities.

The main protagonists in the conflict are the Moro and the Settlers. But to a great extent, a comfortable zone of dialogue, unity and toleration has been established in both sides, leading to possibilities for peace and common development. However, extremism on both sides has led to genocidal tendencies targeted at civilian population, both Christians and Muslims. These extremisms are represented by the various quasi-religious or secular vigilante armed groups among the Settlers and by the Abu Sayyaf ("Sword of God") with its out call against the Christians. The failure of the government to grasp the dynamics of this peculiarity leads to decisions, programs and policies for Mindanao that are not conducive to the advancement of peace, rehabilitation, development and human rights.

Many scholars and partisans from all sides have stressed that the Mindanao conflict is not a religious conflict, although in the 1970s, this dimension was highlighted by the rise of Muslims and Christian vigilante groups (the Baracuda and the Ilaga respectively) engaged in terrorist activities against the other's communities and houses of religious worship. The economic and political dimensions of marginalization in political processes are more often identified as the underlying causes of the current conflict. More recent discourses meanwhile emphasize the cultural

dimension, looking into how difference in worldviews could lead to mutual respect, and acceptance of different ways of life and value pertaining to land ownership, governance and justice (Casiple, 2002).

3. Social trauma

In the context of conflict-affected civilians in Mindanao, experiences of organized political violence and forced displacement may bring about collective suffering. As such it affects not only individuals and families but also entire peoples and communities. When traumatic events such as *armed conflict strikes*, it does not only bring fear, anxiety, and loss to survivors; it also causes damage to the livelihood and environment of affected populations. Moreover, it tears away socio-cultural institutions and threatens the community protective factor anchoring group solidarity and collective security. The crack in the protective factor may trigger mistrust, social tension and discord which may ultimately lead to community distress and trauma.

Victims of war endure multiple traumas and there are similarities between emerging psychological symptoms in survivors of torture and organised violence and the main constellation of symptoms corresponding to those collected in the syndrome labelled as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1997). According to DSM IV, the diagnosis of PTSD is thought to be a universal response to events threatening the life or integrity of the person, and it is increasingly used to describe the psychological response following exposure to extreme and unusual traumatic events, such as wars and other catastrophes. However, labelling survivors of torture and organised violence as having PTSD is much too inadequate a description of the complexity and magnitude of the effects of torture and organised violence (Reeler, 1994; Becker, 1995; Lira, 1998).

Originally the concept of PTSD was developed as a diagnostic category for returning Vietnam soldiers, who were suffering from traumas of war. Over the years, the discourse of PTSD concerning trauma and its psychological sequelae has been developed as a way of understanding and approaching otherwise unexplained areas of human psychologi-

cal functioning. However, the PTSD diagnosis has subsequently been used widely to explain, understand and intervene in non-western societies recovering from war. A focal question is whether the PTSD-based assumptions about suffering and recovering from trauma are valid in such diverse situations and contexts in which they have been applied. When Balay was established in 1985 in response to the widespread practice of torture during martial law, its curative response was highly inspired by a psychological clinical perspective, although there was also the acknowledgement that psychological impact of torture has a social and political dimension. The suffering that the torture survivors represented was used by state authorities to strike fear in individuals and communities. The focus of intervention was to address the mental health and social needs of survivors using psychological processing of individuals, and later on, families as well. Diagnostic tools to assess psychosocial health conditions of "clients" were largely influenced by psychological checklists based on the DSM IV. The objective of psychosocial intervention was to enable the torture survivors to manage the effects of their ordeal in prison and increase their coping resources so that they would be able to reintegrate into their families and society.

However, while this practice may have made some differences in the lives of the partners that Balay serves, the premium given to clinical and psychological response to affected individuals was observed to be inadequate, if not inappropriate, when applied in a community setting. This became notable in the context of the armed conflict, state oppression and forced displacement where the resulting traumatic stress is beyond the issue of individual mental health alone. The manifestations of trauma develop a very notable social dimension, thereby rendering the clinical definition of PTSD and the notion of mental health inadequate in this context. Organized political violence and war, political realities and social realities often result in dispersed families and social networks, destroyed local economies and productions, and destroyed social values such as inter-human trust and faith. Furthermore it is important to note that economic discrimination and poverty also may serve as causes of distress (Summerfield, 1991).

The multidimensional implications of social trauma may be described as the damage done on the community resources categorized into the following components: *human capacity* consisting of resources such as the health and well-being (mentally, emotionally, physically) of community members, the skills and knowledge of people, their households and livelihoods; *social ecology* involving social relations within families, peer group, religious and cultural institutions, links with civic and political authorities; and *culture and values* which cover human rights and cultural values, beliefs, practices and self-determination.

The domains of community resources are interrelated and interconnected. Hence, any impact on for example the economic and social resources, would subsequently take its toll on the relationships and well-being of community members, and vice versa. For instance, the burning of crops and destruction of farms due to military air strikes and shelling may be seen as affecting populations not only as an attack on their physical resources, but also on the symbols and way of life that gives meaning to them. For indigenous peoples, the destruction of land, vegetation and animals is a desecration of the spiritual domain that is connected to their humanity. The destruction of land and religious shrines and places of worships may leave a gaping wound in the "collective consciousness" of an affected community. As military offensives put strains on the ability of civilians to go on with their productive existence and practice their rituals and customs it may also bring about certain feelings of resentment, rancour and hostility. This may be aggravated if the fighting and displacement has caused deaths or separation among families and groups.

Recalling some images of the 2000 war in Pikit, Fr. Bert Layson, head of the Disaster Response Team and inter-religious dialogue in Pikit, North Cotabato, commented:

Terrified children, young boys carrying small children on their backs, women clutching their babies, teenage boys on top of carabaos that pulled sledges which carried elderly humans, chickens, and belongings in plastic sacks all together. It was like in the movie 'The Ten Commandments' except that they were not going to the Promised

Land to live in abundance "with milk and honey," but to evacuation centres where they would suffer in deprivation and misery.

Fr. Layson continued:

At the height of the war, a young Moro couple left their two children to the care of their relatives in the evacuation center. They managed to return home to their village to harvest some farm crops to augment their meager ration. They never returned to see their two children again. Three days later, their bloated bodies were found floating in their farm lot. The father bore a gunshot wound in the head and the mother in the belly. The mother was seven months pregnant.

Such situations take a heavy toll on the psychological, emotional, behavioural and social well-being of the people involved most of whom live in impoverished and conflict-affected communities, where the capacity to take care of these problems is extremely limited. This state of dispossession, deprivation, and human rights violations often leads to a psychosocial trauma which, when left unchecked, results in a more profoundly distressful condition. In places stroked by ethnic violence, repeated displacement perpetuates a climate of hostility among peoples which in turn feeds on the denial of justice and respect for human dignity.

The use of psychological tools in evaluating the prevalence of social trauma in a conflict-affected community may lead to a "clinical" interpretation of the survivors' responses to the traumatic events. The reference to and reliance on psychiatric diagnosis checklists may also contribute to the promotion of "psychologization" of a community in distress, thereby running the risk of disregarding the material and social factors that contribute to community suffering. Also, this puts emphasis on the "curative" intervention among individuals and families, rather than encouraging an integrated psychosocial response among groups and communities that entails the empowerment of stakeholders working for their own rehabilitation, conflict resolution and social transformation.

Observations made by Balay through years of working among IDPs have shown that affected populations may demonstrate adjustment difficulties at the time of their forced exodus that does not necessarily indicate clinically-defined trauma or other kinds of "mental illness." For survivors of war, systematic violence and oppression many of their psychological problems are *common* problems, i.e., problems related to the person-in-context such as family trauma, group trauma or intergenerational trauma, rather than individual problems. Hence, symptoms at such levels cannot be recognised or treated at the individual level. However, this does not ignore the fact that there are individuals that may be afflicted by PTSD or other related psychological or behavioural condition as a result of their exposure to a traumatic incident. In these cases, psychological process intervention, professional psychiatric attention and other therapeutic activities will be most appropriate.

However, these observations require another perspective of psychological intervention that will incorporate political, cultural and social realities as essential components of its perspective as well as its priorities, viewing the psychological processes in a context of the actual social and political circumstances and factors, thereby making inequalities and oppressions visible. In most situations, IDPs who survive harrowing experiences may demonstrate intense anger, grief, mourning, anxiety or hostility due to the damage done to their domain and their separation from their community resources. This may require not only psychological intervention, but also programs that restore and develop the "protective factors", providing them a collective meaning to their existence and a sense of social security, healing and empowerment. In this context, the psychosocial development response should be at the population level, wherein community participation or social mobilization is considered a method, a process and an indicator of the level of psychosocial well-being of stakeholders.

This understanding tends to draw attention to the limitation of applying the PTSD diagnosis in cases of social trauma brought about by organised political violence. For one, the PTSD diagnosis fails to recognise the importance of contextual factors in terms of social, political and cultural realities, which are central in shaping the experiences and re-

sponses to trauma in non-western societies and in refugee populations from such societies (Bracken, 1998). Moreover, this kind of diagnosis is based on a strong individualistic approach to human life, where much emphasis is put on the intra-psychic world with specific notions of the self, and where society is understood as the collection of separate individuals. Studies have pointed out that these assumptions do not make sense in many developing countries where different notions about the self and interpersonal relations exist (Bracken, Giller and Summerfield, 1995).

Unfortunately, the PTSD diagnosis' focus on the intra-psychic and its proposal for recovery in terms of individual therapy and counselling has signified a turn away from broad efforts of prevention, rebuilding of local communities, and social security. But even though physical and psychological distress is experienced individually, it often arises from and is resolved in a social context.

Another problem with the PTSD diagnosis is, as its name implies, that it presupposes that the trauma or traumas are finite events completed and receding in the past. In Mindanao, a huge number of people living in many conflict-affected areas continue to be exposed to unending oppression, 'low intensity warfare' or down right open warfare. For these people the traumas are not finite but rather on-going as they are forced to endure living in sustained states of grief and fear with continued threats for their existence.

According to the Salvadoran Jesuit priest and psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994) war-related post-traumatic reactions cannot be understood solely at the individual level, because they are embedded in a historical, social context. Rather than applying the medical model of PTSD in order to understand the traumas of war, Martín-Baró argued that recognition must be given to this trauma in terms of a pervasive and collective experience rooted in the distortion of social relations and the disruption of community life. To conceptualise this, focus may be on three essential aspects of psychosocial trauma:

- a) That trauma has a dialectic character, which means that trauma is produced in actual social relationships of which the individual is just one part;
- b) that since psychosocial trauma is socially produced, intervention aiming at alleviating the suffering should be addressing the social fabric of the community;
- c) and that social relationship may multiply and sustain the traumatic stress on the community level, leading to individual experience of suffering.

Mental health and illness are both part of, and a result of, social relationship. Accordingly, psychosocial trauma pertains to the individual's social relationship with others and should be understood as a problem between people and between groups. This emphasises a need to change the lens and see psychological problems not from the inside out, i.e., as the result of an individual's internal functioning, but from the outside in, which leads us to analyse the specific character of people's most common and significant interpersonal and inter-group relationships. From this perspective, we are allowed to fully understand the impact of events, such as war and natural catastrophes which have substantially effected human relations and the mental health of people. When resorting to violence is the principal means of resolving differences between persons and groups, the root of social coexistence becomes seriously damaged.

In this lays a task for psychologists to go beyond treating PTSD as an individual mental health problem and pursue adequate resolutions to problems of identity development, thereby restoring stable and trusting social relationships and strengthening communities' capacity for collective action. Hence this task for progressive change is not focused on the individual psychological functioning; rather it is a collective task requiring the restoration to the community of a "historical memory" and the development of shared forms of political action and organisation in the community (Martín-Baró, 1994).

Indicators of social trauma

In the Philippines, years of organised political violence and terror have left profound traces in the population. In Mindanao, organized political violence has resulted in serious psychosocial effects that can be seen at the community level, where many communities experience social dysfunction due to the destruction of the domains of community resources and dynamics, aggravating social tensions and climates of mistrust and fear, prejudice, animosity towards the other group as well as among people. Systematic violence deployed to terrorise whole populations, has seriously affected large numbers of people psychosocially, as whole communities have experienced assaults. Similarly, in the Philippines as in many developing countries, structural conditions like unfair distribution of land and income, poverty, impunity, and discrimination against particular ethnic groups still exist after the violent conflict has officially ended.

In Mindanao, Balay has observed a number of characteristics of community distress and shared suffering which can be understood in accordance with Martín-Baró's definition of social trauma. More specifically, in many Mindanaoan communities the prevalence of social trauma is manifested by the extent to which Muslims and Christians treat each other with distrust and stay away from each other in separate community organizations. This polarisation within communities results in the fact that in many communities neighbours do not engage in communal farming anymore (emotional effect) and the separate community organizations have become a source of misunderstanding, competition, and conflict (relational).

In an interview with Datu Al Saliling, a community leader of a Lumad people in Mindanao, the Arumanon Manobos, indicators of communities suffering from social trauma were clearly illustrated. Datu Al recounts a situation where misunderstandings and tensions, which had been piled up in years between the Lumads and the Maguindanaoan, i.e., one of the groups of Moro people in Mindanao, were intensified. In a clash between government soldiers and the MILF in Carmen, North Cotabato, many civilians, Lumads as well as Moros, lost their lives. Animosity between the two peoples was increased when a number of

Lumads, fearful for their lives, were recruited to the CAFGU, a paramilitary group organised by the government to fight against the Moro rebels. The Arumanon Manobos and the Maguindanaoans started to avoid each other and their elders taught the children not to trust the people from the other group. Fighting between civilians became frequent and the respective communities were gripped with fear.

After some time, government soldiers attacked both Lumad and Moro communities accusing both groups of being supporters of the MILF, and the two peoples had no other option than to go to evacuation centres. Even at the evacuation centres, where the two peoples were living side by side, suffering the same hardships and deprivations, the animosity between them was evident: They did not want to come near each other and in the distributions of relief goods they accused each other of taking the bigger share of the support.

An additional characteristic of community distress and social trauma, observed by Balay in Mindanao, is the loss of social participation, interaction and the rupture of the development of the family life. A high number of households has lost interest in their work since they can no longer engage in farming as their land has been damaged by bombings (economic despair) and many community members are unable to work together to repair their houses and places of worship. Instead they blame the government and NGOs for their fate (spiritual retreat; resentment of authorities; and inclination towards rebellion).

The impairment of domains of community resources in the category of human capacity is shown by the fact that a large number of households is afflicted with sickness due to traumatic stress and lack of subsistence means. The effects of organised political violence have appeared as health problems as many children are showing signs of extreme fear and anxiety due to death in the family and loss of valued possessions in the aftermath of the war (physical and psychological). Similarly, the militarization of individual minds and communities is shown by wars being a common theme in children's play as indicated by proliferation of toy guns and war games (attitudinal), and a high percentage of youth are not in school, some are engaged in coercive gang activities and in gambling (social).

4. Interventions; how to promote social transformation: cases

Balay's response to social trauma and behavioral change is community-centered. Its programs and services are focused on helping partners regain control of their lives. The ultimate aim of the empowerment process is the promotion of healing, development as well as a social change that can improve the lives of IDPs and reduce, if not prevent, organized violence and displacement. It therefore embraces the concepts of partnership, participation, capability-enhancement, human rights, and the promotion of the community's assets. Balay sees psychosocial change as an individual and a group process and is part of the larger process of social change. Prominent behavior change theories of social and clinical psychology are individual-focused linear models that often have limited use because these models do not sufficiently take into account the cultural and social contexts in which individuals make decisions and take action. While individual change is important, an individual's behavior is affected and prompted by group or other social influences. Recognizing these important factors, Balay tends to focus on theories and programs that are concerned with community psychology and social transformation.

The direct psychosocial practice of Balay in communities of civilians displaced by fighting in Mindanao has evolved into the repositioning of "target beneficiaries" and "beneficiaries" as "partners" who are the agents of their own change and not objects of change. The consideration that there are "clients" and/or "beneficiaries" in programs places an emphasis on the outside "expert" who knows what will work best. Balay maintains that community stakeholders are "partners" who are rational and capable beings and who can, with the right tools, identify their own problems, find solutions, and mobilize needed resources. Rather than trying to persuade partners to do something, Balay aims at promoting critical thinking and community solidarity and negotiate the best way forward in a partnership process.

This healing alliance between Balay as a service-provider and the community stakeholders aims at bringing about a new understanding and practice of a therapeutic paradigm of co-operation towards solidarity

and development. It is predicated on the notion that sound knowledge of relationships and psychological intervention alone is not sufficient in bringing about psychosocial change. Social, economic and political factors are also important in influencing people's behaviour that affect their present situation and future perspectives.

Using the community's own resources, its knowledge and its assets, increases the likelihood that psycho-social change will be sustained. Bringing needed resources from outside the community to address their needs may not be sustained for a long time because of program limitations (e.g. funds). Balay will look within the partner communities for answers recognizing the fact that the community's knowledge, strengths and assets can be used as solutions to improve their current situation (dela Paz, 2003).

Balay's intervention has three integrated components, namely the curative, the preventive and the proactive forms of interventions. The proactive and preventive components are demonstrated in advocacy actions that aim at raising the human rights awareness of community members and influence policy makers and stakeholders in the conflict to work towards a favourable climate conducive to peace-building, rehabilitation and development. The curative component refers to the direct service interventions at individual, family and community levels that aims at increasing the coping resources of the affected population and developing their capacities and reduce their vulnerabilities.

Programs that address social trauma should respond to both explicit and latent demands which already exist in the community. Linking programs of behavioural change to existing needs in the community whether recognized or not is another strategy in Balay's program implementation. In the latter instance, however, Balay focuses more on helping people articulate their needs and identify their own solutions.

The community-based approach of Balay is anchored in the principle of "starting from where the people are, and building on what they have." The concept works from the assumption that despite the impairment of domains of community resources there will still be forces and

resources available that give life and energy to a system. Balay uses a positive approach rather than the usual problem-focused approach in program implementation.

The community intervention strategies used by Balay in Mindanao consist of various activities in conflict areas and involve multi-ethnic members of the local community as active participants. The approach is multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary. During the first phases the interventions take place in the local community, but later phases of intervention focus on the participation of local community members in a broader national or regional dialogue. Interventions are either horizontal (focusing on addressing the current issues) or vertical (focusing on addressing issues of prevention and the continued participation in the process of peace). The interventions respond to the "visible" impact that violence and displacement have on infrastructure, production, and social network. At the same time, it addresses the "invisible" impacts of armed conflicts manifested in social discord, heightened biases and misunderstanding, disempowerment and lowered sense of personal and collective dignity.

The following is an illustration of the phases that a community intervention goes through:

1. Balay members travel to the local area of conflict or are invited by local community leaders, government authorities, and civil society organizations. Contacts are established with persons in authority such as Christian priests, Moslem imams, indigenous clan leaders, local government officials and traditional village leaders. This phase identifies communities based on a set of criteria which includes status as displaced communities, exposure to traumatic events, characterized by community distress and social discord.
2. Balay talks with as many community members as possible in order to assess the current needs of the community. This step will show the best practices and strong points of the partner community, which they can use in mobilizing themselves for regaining psycho-social and socio-economic stability. This is sometimes referred to as situ-

ational analysis. Balay uses portions of the Rapid Assessment of Mental Health Needs of Refugees, Displaced and Other Populations Affected by Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations (WHO, 2001) in assessing displacement-related situations of the partner communities. The community diagnosis will largely involve community members obtaining insights about what the community perceives as major concerns, especially those related to their displacement. The second type of assessment will look into lifestyles and behavior that aggravate their already dire situation. The assessment will also account for positive behavior that can lead to prevention of these problems.

3. The community members are invited to participate in the process of planning the healing of the community in the aftermath of conflict. This process is brought about by gathering information about the conflict (conflict and resource map) in an attempt to discern what has happened. The community members join in a healing alliance where they actively plan the necessary interventions at a community level. At this time community members are encouraged to share their feelings and thoughts about what happened during the period of violence with the other members.
4. This phase is the actual implementation stage of the process or reparation where the community works together on implementing the specific plans of action that have been decided upon during phase 3. Community partners will design structures that are best suited to pursue their dreams and visions. This step includes their plans about their organizations and identifies the key stakeholders who will be involved. This would entail the voluntary mobilization of community partners negotiating with government authorities (or other parties in conflict) to attend to their rehabilitation efforts and peace building. Balay will facilitate the drafting of goals and objectives that will bring the community partners towards their attainment of their plans. The community partners define their monitoring and evaluation systems during this step, which include a number of simple indicators that they can use to track their progress.

Among the intervention activities which are agreed upon by Balay and community partners are: creating peace camps, arranging economic support and educational assistance for youth and children, restoring farming activities, human rights seminars and making psychological processing available for those members who are severely traumatized and in need of individual attention.

Balay makes use of the following specific intervention strategies:

Peace camps

These camps are for young people between 14 and 26 years of age. The duration is three days and the camps are offered to young people from conflicting groups who are invited to learn about each other's cultural backgrounds through cultural presentations by resource persons representing the Moro, the Lumads, and the Settlers. The young people are encouraged to talk about their feelings, thoughts and aspirations with each other and they learn about the historical diversity and convergence of the multi-ethnic population in their communities where they used to live together peacefully. The aim of the camp is to reduce cultural bias amongst participants. At the end of the peace camps the participants make plans to create organizations of mixed cultural groups when they return home. Some participants become peace advocate leaders, trainers, or peer counselors.

Schools for peace

These are schools that teach peace and respect for human rights to children. It discourages fighting amongst religious groups of children and they teach the children about their common history of living together in peace. The teachers are trained to facilitate therapeutic play activities and provide counseling to children in distress. Government and rebel forces are asked to look at schools as "zones of peace" that should be spared during outbreak of armed hostilities. Schools in Manila are invited to establish linkage with schools in conflict areas for the students and teachers to exchange information on their respective situations and support each other in promoting a culture of peace.

Community planning

Representatives of various community groups of women, youth or leaders work together on planning tools, talk about their aspirations, create resource maps of the community and rebuild areas that have been destroyed during conflict.

Education

Education includes training community members in how to document events in the conflicts and human rights violations. It can also involve teaching community members about co-operative management or organic farming. Generally the training aims to create a network of self-help groups in the community.

Economic support

Community members are encouraged to form productive co-operatives or community livelihood associations. These groups are comprised by people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and aim to decrease the reliance on external aid, increase the productive resources in the community and strengthen pluralist co-operation among the peoples.

Policy change

Through the creation of peace panel consultants at the grassroots level, the aim is also to raise concerns at the regional or national level. Community partners are empowered to be able to represent the concerns and demands of the people in the formal peace process between the parties in the conflict, and at the same time conduct dialogues with government authorities in order to create social conditions for rehabilitation and development.

Space for peace

The creation of the Space for Peace happens when community members in a particular area decide that they will not accept fighting in their area. This means that if Moslem rebels or the Christian military

arrive in an area declared a space for peace the elders of the respective religious group residing in that area will negotiate with them in order to get them to refrain from using force. Aside from being geographical areas, these spaces are about creating "emotional space" where mixed community members can participate in a dialogue with each other and thereby bridge their misunderstandings and resolve their differences in a constructive and culturally appropriate way.

Psychological activities

Individuals and families showing signs of traumatic stress are invited to participate in stress management workshops, trauma counseling sessions, debriefing, and value clarification activities. At the community level, villagers are enjoined to take part in group dialogue and workshops on how to develop a culture of peace (COP). The building of relationships and social healing are encouraged through the practice of traditional peace rituals of the 3 peoples, the Moros, the Lumads, and the Settlers

5. A year after the first interventions have been initiated, the rehabilitation plan and the peace plan are re-assessed in order to find out whether the intervention strategies have been successful. Balay and its community partners will conduct an end line assessment in order to establish what the project attained and what it has not attained, and which helpful and unhelpful factors have affected the project.

Case #1

During a conflict over control of a local highway, the fighting between Moslem rebels and the military drove away civilians in the large village of Nalapaan in Pikit, North Cotabato. Many houses and other structures for residential purposes were damaged and destroyed, and some farm animals were hit by bullets. Families had to leave their villages and move to evacuation centers. The head of the local disaster response team was reluctant at first to the idea that rehabilitation of the villages should take place when the fighting was still occurring, but in the end, the leaders of the area agreed to work for peace. They began the peace

process by attempting to negotiate between the warring parties and they made contact to the military and the MILF. The parties agreed to make Nalapaan a neutral ground where no fighting would happen.

The local members of the community participated in the rehabilitation of the village by planning the construction and reparation of houses and other structures, as well as the distribution of irrigation pumps, hand tractors and other instruments. The NGOs arrived to lend support and extend services. Peace education was an important part of the program and volunteers from both Moslem and Christian communities participated and together they formulated a declaration of peace for their village. This initiative inspired other villages to work for peace in their areas also.

During another incident in Saranay, an armed conflict erupted when Moslem rebels went into the village and killed two civilians. The incident was related to a long standing dispute between some Moslem families and the Christians in the area. The fact that some of the local Moslems were related to the attackers only heightened the tension between the two groups as the local Christians were angry with the local Moslems. The parish priest and head of the church's inter-religious dialogue program in Pikit raised the issue to the rebel leadership who subsequently issued an apology to the affected community with a commitment to investigate the tragic event and to take measures that attacks on civilians will not happen again. After a cease-fire had been initiated, different NGO's began facilitating dialogues between the Christians and the Moslems in order to prevent the conflict between them from growing. During the dialogues, the groups recalled the good relationship that existed through the many inter-marriages, which had taken place over the years. During the process, the Christians were able to better understand that the Moros were not to blame for the violent incident. Together they performed the ritual of *kanduli* for peace and forgiveness. In addition, the elders in the village agreed to negotiate with Moslem rebels and government soldiers, should they return to the village, and to convince them not to carry out any military operations in Saranay anymore. As for the young people of Saranay, many joined a

peace camp and became organized in the Maguindanao-Ilocano Youth for Peace Association (Anasarias, 2001).

Case #2

Brgy. Chua in Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat, is a mixed community of Moros, Lumads and Settlers. The community has experienced recurrent resettlement due to military operations against the rebels. Although the peoples have lived on the same territory for a long time they had many biases towards each other and did not know each other. A fundamental issue was land ownership and many Moro villagers joined the MILF. As part of the peace process, a reflection session was held with leaders from each of the peoples participated. At the session, the participants discussed their historical ties and found that the Lumads had been living in the area long before the Spaniards to Mindanao, likewise were the Moros also original inhabitants of the island.

They acknowledged that since they are now sharing the same place, they have to learn to live in peace with each other. As a result several people underwent training in community organization and learned how to utilize the methods of the process of action-reflection-action. In this method, dialogue is utilized to support the people's capacity to claim their power as a community. Through various organizations the community members were able to create peace dialogues, develop the area economically and improve political leadership. Tension was reduced in the village and community projects such as water pumps and livelihood undertakings took place.

5. Conclusion

Communities who have been subjected to trauma through wars and conflict are in need of rehabilitation and healing. Many humanitarian organizations who provide rehabilitation focus on the treatment of the individual using the diagnosis of PTSD or other diagnoses and they provide expert assistance in dealing with the after effects of trauma on the psychological level. It could be argued that this strategy is not

drastic or effective enough when dealing with entire communities who are affected by trauma.

Balay in the Philippines on the other hand focuses almost entirely on the community as a whole and on members participating in the process of restoring their own community on an inter-personal as well as on a practical level. The interventions of Balay do not focus on diagnosing individuals or treating symptoms of distress through clinical psychological counseling, but instead they focus on very concrete and practical interventions such as bridging cultural misunderstanding, providing livelihood support, community capability building or working for future peace.

Community members of opposing groups are invited to talk to each other, repair their relationships and rebuild villages. Communities are not only restored, but can actually be improved beyond their previous level of functioning as a result of the rehabilitative interventions. In this way rehabilitation and prevention of future conflicts and problems go hand in hand, because the interventions address the root of the problem on a large scale and not only attempt to address at the after-effects of trauma in a few individuals.

Thus the intervention strategies of Balay move away from former approaches of individual psychological expert help to a participatory practical co-creation of healing on the community level. Community members become empowered in the rehabilitation process and become active participants in their own healing rather than merely recipients of services from rehabilitation centers.

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14. Traumatized refugee families – the child's perspective

Edith Montgomery

1. Introduction

Families who have been granted asylum in Western countries often share a past of violence, loss, insecurity and anxious waiting. Parents have chosen to flee from areas with war or other forms of organised violence in the hope of making a better future for themselves and their children in another country. That they have ended up in Denmark is often a coincidence.

After the arrival in Denmark, and after the first relief because of the successful escape has faded away, they must go through a long and insecure waiting time in a Danish refugee camp before they may begin a new life.

After having been granted asylum, the families will face other types of strains in the Danish society. Even though they have been granted residence permits they are not exactly cordially welcome. The rest of their lives in Denmark they may experience rejection, derogatory remarks, distrust and isolation from the Danish population. Their education is often useless here, the language is difficult to learn, the labour market is difficult to access, the older children are behind in school etc. Thus there are many stressful conditions to cope with besides handling a traumatic past.

2. Torture

Torture differs from other types of organised violence and assaults by being intentional, systematic and specifically directed against the tortured person. Often the purpose of torture is not to extract information, but rather to break down the victim's personality so that he or she may