

Managing Social Conflict: The Philippine Peace Zone Experience

Madelene Sta. Maria
De La Salle University

This research looks at how victims of conflict engage in peacemaking. The respondents lived in the Sagada Peace Zone in the Mt. Province, the Tuluunan Peace Zones in North Cotabato, and the Cantomanyog Peace Zone in Negros Occidental. Their efforts at conflict management included patterned activities undertaken to avoid the consequences of armed conflict between the New People's Army and the Philippine Military. Peacemaking accounts showed that efforts at managing conflict include the preservation and declaration of unity, enforcement of peace through community-based coordinating structures, a communal stance of neutrality, and the enforcement of peace through community moral agents.

When we read the news about the rise of hostilities in Mindanao, or about the violence occurring in the Moluccas of Indonesia, many of us may have wanted to ask with exasperation and desperation when will all this violence end. We know that in Mindanao, attempts at peacemaking has lasted for more than 20 years, and has gone through repeated failures. In other parts of the Philippines, individual lives are lost, or are stunted because of conflicts that have their roots in the economic and political conditions in our society. To address these causes of conflict more effectively, a climate of peace must be present. Attempts at peace-making therefore need to be recognized and studied. As students of

peace, we need to find out how such attempts can succeed; we need to understand how peace may be attained and how conflict may effectively be managed.

“Peace” is a label we assign to specific events, conditions and actions that bring about certain thoughts and feelings we share with others. We may possess the same consciousness about what peace means. This consciousness about peace comes about when the correct combination of activities that make up a particular action are present. For example, when an individual or a group of people are victimized by the violence resulting from the aggression of conflicting parties, actions are undertaken to minimize or remove the undesired consequences of conflict in their lives. These actions usually require a conscious attempt to conceive of what peace should mean and what the experience of nonpeace is consisting of. The actions then embody these meanings, a shared consciousness is formed, and contexts are consequently created for such actions to be carried out, or for a peaceful condition to prevail. In my opinion, actions that allow the emergence of a shared consciousness about peace should become an important focus for the study of how peace may be maintained and how conflict may be resolved.

In the midst of conflict and violence in the Philippines, groups of individuals have openly announced themselves as peace constituencies. These groups may be found in communities that have experienced the horrors of war. To achieve a condition characterized by the absence of armed conflict, some of these communities have declared their areas as demilitarized zones or as zones of peace. These declarations came as a response to the occurrences and threats of death, to the constant disruptions in their normal daily life activities, and to the strain in community relationships that resulted from suspicions and fear that prevail during times of war. For members of these communities, these aforementioned experiences constitute nonpeace. Communities then take it upon themselves to articulate in words and in actions the peace they wish to achieve in their com-

munities. They manage the conflict around them¹ by engaging in specific actions that create contexts of peace.

A Peace Zone declaration may be viewed as a response of a people to the consequences of a strategy undertaken by the state to solve the insurgency problem in our country. The use of military force as a primary instrument against rebellion aggravates destruction in the community. When warring factions resort to arms and violence, the people's lives and means of livelihood are sacrificed and are put on the line. In reality, neither state nor non-state forces in the armed conflict can guarantee the continued existence of those they promise to protect; and through the Peace Zone declaration, the community clearly communicates their awareness of this reality (Gastardo-Conaco & Lee, 1994). Members of the Peace Zones likewise communicate that the order that brings about peace will not be attained through coercion, but through compassion and persuasion.

To date, a total of eleven Peace Zones have been established throughout the Philippines. The first of these is the Naga City Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality established in September 1988 in the province of Camarines Sur. Within the same year, residents of Sagada in the Mountain Province declared their area as a Demilitarized Zone. Between 1989 to 1990, residents of Tabuk, Kalinga-Apayao, of Sitio Cantomayog in the Municipality Candoni, Negros Occidental, and of Baranggay Bituan, of Sitios Miatub, Nabundasan and New Alimodian in Tulumun, North Cotabato declared their areas as Zones of Life and of Peace. All of these Peace Zones were established between the late 80s to the early 90s when the armed conflict was at its height in the country (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, 1998). Other Peace Zones continue to be established after 1994. Some of these are found in educational institutions that aim to build a culture of peace. A brief narration of the experiences of nonpeace and the consequences of political conflict on a community will now be presented on the Peace Zones that are to be focused on in the present study.

EXPERIENCES PRECEDING THE DECLARATION OF THE PEACE ZONE

Sagada Peace Zone

The situation in Sagada turned intolerable when communist-government crossfire killed young members of the local community (Resolution, Sagada, 1988). Warring factions on both sides of the conflict likewise pressured local residents to join the armed clashes. This caused tension, suspicion, terror and fear among the Sagada populace. Local residents could neither farm peacefully nor maintain normal relations among themselves (see also Resolution, Sagada, Mt. Province, 15 November 1988). Unable to rely on any external body for relief from this unbearable situation, the leaders drew up a resolution to stop the fighting in Sagada. They conducted house-to-house visits, discussing the possibility of transforming Sagada into a demilitarized zone. Residents held rallies in the municipal building area, denouncing the killings and discussing action plans for demilitarization. Local peace leaders sent letters to government leaders, and visited Camp Aguinaldo to gain governmental support for the Peace Zone. In the meantime, representatives of the two warring factions held separate meetings. The national government formally recognized Sagada as a Peace Zone in 1989.

Tulunán Peace Zone

Having experienced similar violent disruptions in their community life, some people in the Mindanao municipality of Tulunán emulated the Sagada model and formally declared their areas as Zones of Peace between 1989 to 1990. The Tulunán residents likewise experienced a history of civilian deaths due to crossfire, and executions of local people suspected to be collaborating with the government military or the New People's Army. Civilians rumored to be executed by the military were mostly church workers who worked closely with the local civilian population. The residents of Tulunán named these casualties "martyrs of the church."

Unable to continue to live in their places of residence, the people in the affected communities of Tulunan evacuated to an elementary school building where they stayed for seven months suffering from hunger and other physical and psychological difficulties. The evacuees asked help from the Catholic Church, some government institutions and the media. The people set up a clinic in the evacuation center to organize the distribution of food and medicines. They likewise held consultations and meetings among the evacuees in the center that led to the drafting of a resolution declaring the affected communities in Tulunan as Zones of Peace. As recounted by Montiel and Briones (1995), this resolution was distributed to the local government, military, and the media. The Peace Zone declaration was formalized in February 10, 1991 through a ritual they call the "exodus", wherein approximately 100 families moved from the elementary school evacuation site to the Peace Zone in Barangay Bituan. Fr. Ronnie Villamor, then Tulunan parish priest led the "exodus" ritual. Fr. Villamor also held mass at the Peace Zone site, to commemorate the beginning of an era of peace. During the performance of the "exodus", members of the military were said to have photographed each family, but miraculously, the film got spoiled and none of the pictures were developed.

Cantomanyog Peace Zone

The people of Cantomanyog evacuated to an elementary school in a nearby baranggay when the military launched Operation Thunderbolt to flush out the New People's Army rebels in the municipalities of Candoni, Hinoba-an, Ilog, Cauayan, Kabankalan and Sipalay (collectively known as the CHICKS area). Residents were warned of the operation but initially refused to comply with the orders to evacuate. Bombs dropped by government helicopters forced the local people to leave. Residents intended to stay in the evacuation center for a month only, since they had just started planting in time for the rainy season. Exactly what they had feared happened during their stay in the center. There was to be hunger, disease, and extreme boredom. Cramped in one room in the school building,

the people of Cantomanyog witnessed an average of 10 children from other evacuated communities dying of measles every day. Their parish priest, Fr. Rolando "Rolex" Nueva was always around to bless and help bury the dead. Although many of the children of Cantomanyog fell ill, none of them died. For the people of Cantomanyog, this was to be remembered as a miracle — a sign of salvation for the community.

The Cantomanyog refugees decided to ask the military personnel in the evacuation center permission to return to their village. They were not hindered from returning but were warned that bombings continued in the area. In October 1989, a young farmer who returned to feed his backyard livestock was shot by unidentified armed men. The members of the community soon learned that after this death, 13 more farmers were to be massacred. This led to an immediate community meeting. Having heard of President Corazon Aquino's call for peace zone builders over the radio, they then sought the advice of Fr. Rolex who helped them articulate their stand regarding their desire for peace in their community. After weeks of prayer and discussions, a Peace Zone declaration was signed on Christmas day in 1989 (Gregorio, 1995). Copies of the declaration were then sent to the military, the local government and the NPA.

In Sagada, Tulunan and Cantomanyog, Peace Zone declarations symbolized the people's desire to stop violence in their communities. The Peace Zone represented the cessation of war. We may now look deeper into the meaning of a Peace Zone as an alternative to violence and as an embodiment of a desired social order from the declarations and other documents on the concept.

THE CONCEPT OF THE PEACE ZONE

According to the definition given by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), a Peace Zone represents "a people-initiated, community-based response to the situation of raging armed conflicts in the country. The (Peace Zone) community declares their desire to be free of violence and the pres-

ence of arms and armed groups and to deal with its problems in non-violent ways" (Accomplishment Report of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, 1998). This definition refers to the initial actions and statements made by the community members as a result of their experience with terror and violence.

There are other meanings associated with the concept of the Peace Zone that are not articulated in the OPAPP definition. The people's declarations also indicate the need to restore that which was lost by the state of nonpeace perpetuated by warring and more powerful groups in the country. The people used the concept of a Peace Zone to articulate what they desire to have in their lives for true development to occur, and to insulate themselves from the consequences of armed conflict. For the residents of Sagada and Tullan, for example, a Zone of Peace represents the chance "to be able to return to (their) places, continue farming and live comfortably and peacefully" (Tullan Peace Zone Declaration, November 25, 1989), as well as the resumption of "normal" relations among themselves and the freedom to move about without fear in their communities (Resolution, Sagada 1988). It also was a call for "respect and observance of (their) customs and cultural practices" (A Plea for the Demilitarization of Sagada, n.d.). For the people of Cantomanyog, the establishment of a Peace Zone represents the people's appeal for the restoration of compassion, dignity, freedom, peace, prosperity, and justice. (*Pagpamat-ud sa Pagtukod sang Isa ka Sona sang Pakig-daet*, December 1990).

The concept of a Peace Zone embodies a rejection of the way by which conflict is dealt with in our society. Whereas the state maintains that coercion is necessary to suppress sources of conflict, the people in these Peace Zone communities use moral persuasion and prefer compassion in dealing with conflict (Coronel-Ferrer, 1997; Gastardo-Conaco & Lee, 1994). These bodies also represent the move, initiated within the Peace Zones and through the concept of a Peace Zone, that signifies, as Gastardo-Conaco and Lee (1994) point out, a redefinition or a recreation of political institutions —

that is, from institutions that are alienating to those that promote social affinity.

Coronel-Ferrer in 1997 defines the Peace Zone as a “geographical area within which war and any other forms of armed hostility may no longer be waged, and where peace-building programs will address roots and manifestations of conflict in the community” (p. 14). The types of peace-building² activities enumerated by Coronel-Ferrer include the building of peace-constituencies, the reduction of conflict, the settlement of conflict, the execution of peace research and training programs, and the supervision of social development work. Most of these peace-building activities are seen to be taking place in the Peace Zone communities under study. Peace-constituency building refers to such activities that promote the peace agenda and culture, or to human rights campaigns that aim to mobilize a critical mass on issues that relate to peace. The Peace Zone community has been referred to by Coronel-Ferrer as a “solid peace constituency” (p. 32). Conflict reduction, on the other hand, pertains to those activities that decrease the level of political violence. These activities include peace zone building, peace pact making, or dispute settlement.

In Peace Zone sites, conflict reduction efforts arise when community leaders dialogue with the warring factions (that is, with the military or the NPA) even as warring groups violate Peace Zone guidelines. In these cases, the antagonists are persuaded to abide by these guidelines. While conflict reduction involves the use of dialogue in attaining peaceful conditions, conflict settlement refers to efforts at mediating between conflicting parties. In the Peace Zone research sites, conflict settlement covers only internal community problems. Mediation efforts exclude the larger political conflict. In Sagada, however, Peace Zone leaders' mediation efforts have started to include conflicts arising between neighboring villages (Sagada Mayor T. Kilip, personal communication, September 9, 1999). Sagada is now being offered as a venue where conflicting parties may meet and settle their differences.

Finally, peace-building involving social development work refers to the implementation of projects that enhance people em-

powerment, alleviate poverty, and achieve sustainable development. Peace Zone communities carry out these peace-building efforts with the support of various government and non-government institutions. Government development projects started in 1992, when President Fidel Ramos formally recognized selected Peace Zones as Special Peace and Development Areas (SPDAs). As SPDAs, the Peace Zones received 5 million pesos each for local development projects³.

Bringing Peace Zones Together

In October 1994, leaders from the Peace Zones of Cantomanyog, Tulunan and Marihatag (Surigao del Sur) met in Tulunan with other concerned parties to discuss what their communities experienced, and to articulate their identities as Peace Zone members. Zosimo Lee (1994) documented and analyzed these discussions. From his analysis, we may identify four themes that summarize their ideas about a Peace Zone. The first theme has to do with relations among community members. Respect, concern for one another, and interpersonal openness characterize community relationships. The second theme relates to advocacy for, and acceptance of the truth. Residents possess independent views and the ability to articulate their own truth. A third theme concerns their view of themselves as capable collectives working toward the establishment of a new social order. A final theme relates to their approach to the challenges of life. They spoke of a readiness to respond to change — a readiness that comes from courage, confidence (*kapanatagan ng loob*) and trust which, in turn, emanates from their faith in God.

RESEARCH GOALS

Seeing themselves as a group with high levels of collective efficacy, autonomy, and strong communal ties, community members work together for the continued existence of the Peace Zone. Residents point to the absence of political violence as a significant proof that the Peace Zone thrives.

This study seeks to take a closer look at these efforts, to view these peace efforts. More particularly, the research examines social relations in conflict management.

THE DATA-GATHERING PROCESS

For the present investigation, data were obtained from the Peace Zones of Sagada, Cantomanyog and Tulunán⁴. The field visits to Peace Zones took place during the following days: 25-29 April 1999 and 10-13 September 1999 in the Sagada Peace Zone; 24-27 June 1999 and 17-21 September 1999 in the Tulunán Peace Zone area; and 26-28 November 1999 in the Cantomanyog Peace Zone. In all research sites, interviewers talked with Peace Zone leaders who actively participated in the setting up of the Peace Zone and continue to live in the Peace Zone site. Individual interviews lasted approximately one to two hours.

In the Tulunán and Cantomanyog Peace Zones, group interviews were likewise conducted with some community members. In Tulunán, local residents participated in group discussion sessions upon the invitation of a non-government staffer active in the area. The individual and group interviews in Tulunán were done in the vicinity of Cooperative stores where members of the communities usually meet one another, in community centers where meetings and religious activities are held, or in respondents' homes.

The office of Governor Coscolluela of Negros Occidental facilitated the Cantomanyog visit. Several local residents dropped by the community guesthouse where the interviewers stayed, to hold informal conversations with the researchers. The latter held individual interviews during the daytime. They engaged in group discussions during meals and during evenings.

In Sagada, researchers selected individual-interview respondents through a referral process. Researchers requested each respondent for additional names of community members who would be able to furnish the researcher with important information about the Peace Zone.

Unstructured interviews focused on stories about how the Peace Zone was established, and how peace is maintained through community conflict management. Group discussions and individual interviews started with a general question about the current status of the Peace Zone. Succeeding queries asked more specific questions related to what the respondent(s) talked about. Probes asked respondent(s) to elucidate on significant events and reasons behind these occurrences.

MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN PEACE ZONES

In Peace Zones, how does conflict management differ from conflict resolution? Community members recognize that political conflicts continue in spite of the Peace Zones. To claim that this conflict has been resolved misrepresent reality. As Mayor Kilip of Sagada (personal communication, September 9, 1999) points out: "...the war, if it has to go on, whether we want it or not, will still go on." Residents speak of the continuing threat of war, as expressed here by the people of the Bituan Peace Zone in Tulumun:

Wala pa kaming kalinaw dahil hindi pa panatag ang kalooban namin dahil sa may bali-balita na babalik daw ang mga army. Babalik raw sila, magtatayo ng detachment. Pero ngayon may konting kalinaw. Pero mula nang itayo ang Peace Zone 1990 hanggang 1992, wala pa rin kami. Takot pa rin kami ... Alam mo pag bumalik ang army, babalik ang NPA sa bukid. (Bituan residents, personal communication, July 25, 1999)

(We still do not have peace because we are not yet confident because there are news that the army will return. They are said to return, they will set up a detachment. But now there is a little peace. But ever since the Peace Zone was set up from 1990 until 1992, we still do not have it. We are still afraid ... You know if the government army comes back, the New People's Army will return to the field.)

Conflict can only be managed in order to protect the community from harm. By declaring Peace Zone areas, residents empower themselves in order to establish peace in their communities.

Groups or individuals who wish to rid themselves of the consequences of conflict undertake conflict management. This is a form of peace action by victims of a conflict which they do not view as their own, as well as by those who may not want to mediate warring parties. It is also possible that this form of peace action may lead to conflict transformation or may persuade the antagonists to undertake some conflict resolution action.

Significance of the Study

Investigating how Peace Zone members manage existing conflict will elucidate how a third party participates in reducing or transforming conflict. Past studies tend to focus on the experiences of conflicting parties, rarely on the experiences of those who suffer from the conflict of others.

FOUR PEACE ZONE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Respondents' accounts of their Peace Zone experiences can be categorized into four primary activities related to conflict management in Peace Zones. A Peace Zone community usually undertakes the following activities to manage conflict.

Activity One: Preserving Unity

The first of these activities is *working towards the preservation of unity and the declaration of this unity* based on common expectations and goals. The desire for unity comes from a shared experience of community suffering. One Peace Zone resident describes his inspiration for unity:

May pumunta dito from Iligan. Kinausap kami. Tinanong: Ano ang significance ng Peace Zone? Parang wala namang kaibahan sa normal, bakit siya special? Iba yung lugar na di gaanong nakaranas ng kahirapan. Dito ang problema ay kung paano mabuhay. May conflict pa at giyera. Pero ang tao nandun

pa. Sa ganung sitwasyon, yun ang nag-udyok para mabuo ang grupo at maghanap ng solusyon. Yun ang dynamics mismo. Nakagawa sila ng paraan para matuloy ang pag-iisa (personal communication with Toto Nim, Coordinator of the Tulunan Parish, September 20, 1999)

(There were some who came from Iligan. They talked with us. They asked: What is the significance of the Peace Zone? It is no different from the normal, why is it special? A place that has not experienced that much difficulties would be different. Here, the problem is how to survive. There still is conflict and war. But the people are there. This situation pushed the group to look for a solution. There lies the dynamics. They found a way to be united.)

Unity emerges through the community's own efforts, and through regular community consultations on concerns that affect the village as a whole. A Cantomanyog resident explains,

Kasi ang Cantomanyog naging zone of peace kasi kami ang gumawa eh. Walang tutulong na iba ... paagi sa meeting ... yung mga asembliya. Yun ang balanse. Yung meeting ang napag-isa dito sa mga tao dito. (Cantomanyog Peace Zone leaders, personal communication, November 22, 1999)

(Cantomanyog became a Peace Zone because we did it. No one else helped ... Through meetings ... the assemblies. That was the balance. The meeting united the people here.)

Community consultations likewise defined how antagonists should behave in relation to the community. For example, Peace Zone residents ask antagonists to fight elsewhere and leave the community to their own affairs. A Sagada school principal declared,

... if they want to fight huwag lang dito, dahil tayo ang kawawa ... Mga friends and relatives din natin. Anong gagawin natin? Then we have to tell them, that should not be like that ... that should not be like that ... because it is not good. (Sagada school principal, personal communication, September 8, 1999)

(... if they want to fight, then not here because it is to our disadvantage ... these are also our relatives and friends. What

should we do? Then we have to tell them, that should not be like that ... that should not be like that ... because it is not good.)

Their declaration of unity also points to positive values such as brotherhood, compassion, development, truth, and equality.

Activity Two: Creating a Structure for Peace Enforcement

A second activity of conflict management involves *enforcing peace through a coordinating community structure*. A number of local residents who created the Peace Zone act as structure representatives. They manage the internal affairs of the Zone and relate with external agencies on peace-related matters.

In his elaboration of Gene Sharp's study on the politics of non-violent political action, Summy (1990) mentions alternative institutions as one nonviolent approach to conflict. In the Zones, peace coordinating structures serve as alternative bodies that are created or re-created from traditional peacekeeping structures to supervise the community's peace and order situation. For example, the Sagada Peace Zone maintains a Peace and Order Council originally composed of the leaders who established the Zone. Other members of the Council include older men from the *Dap-ay* (the traditional clan council), local government officials, women, and institutional heads in the community (Sagada school principal, personal communication, September 8, 1999). In Tulunan, the Inter-Peace Zone Coordinating Council grew out of the evacuation center coordinating body. The Council was formed in February 1990 consisting of leaders from each Peace Zone in Tulunan. In Cantomanyog, the structure is called the Executive Committee composed of seven members from the community. The structures in Cantomanyog and Tulunan evolved from the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities previously established through Catholic Church efforts.

Members of the organized peace bodies implemented the Peace Zone guidelines, disallowing gambling, selling liquor, and carrying war weapons inside the Zone. They allowed only individuals with "good intentions" to enter their communities⁵. When armed groups

transgressed Zone boundaries, local peace leaders request them to leave their weapons outside the Zone. One Cantomanyog resident narrates,

May mga NPA na pumasok dito ... Pero dahil may Execom, sila ang humarap at nagplatar sang ano sang tindog sang peace zone. Sa side sa military may violation man sila pero tungod kay may nakapunggo, naka-atubang sa ila na ito ang amon nga lugar, na wala gid makasulod sa amun na may armas kay ti ginabawal man ang armas. (Cantomanyog residents, personal communication, November 27, 1999).

(There were some NPAs who entered here ... But because there was an Execom, they faced the NPAs and informed them of the stand of the peace zone. With the military, there were violations but because there were representations, the military was faced and told that this is our place, that no one should enter with guns because arms are no longer allowed.)

Peace coordinating bodies affect the departure or resettlement of individuals who stir violence and/or continuously violate the Zone guidelines. (a Peace Zone leader in Tulunan, personal communication, April 26, 1999).

Leaders of the Peace Zone structures not only protect the community from the consequences of war, but also preserve the autonomy of the community by asserting the right of the people to make their own decisions. Some Peace Zone residents have grown wary of parties who may take advantage of the Zone's status as special areas of development. The Peace Zone coordinating bodies protect the local people from opportunists as funds flow in when the Zone is declared as a special area of development. One Bituan resident claimed that,

Ang gusto ng tao, yun ang sundin. Huwag nila kaming manduhin dito ... Marunong pa kami sa kanila. Hindi nila (kami) maloloko ... Ang gusto namin klaro. Yun may process na talagang makita namin ... Yan ang gusto namin. Ayaw namin yung basta isaksak lang ang pera nila tapos ang gusto nila ang masusunod. Hindi kami pakinggan. (Bituan residents, personal communication, June 25, 1999)

(What the people wish for is to be followed. They should not order us around. We know better than them. They cannot fool us ... We want it clear. We want to really see the process ... that is what we want. We dislike it when they shove their money to us and what they want must be followed. They do not listen to us.)

Activity Three: Neutral Positioning

A third activity in managing violent social conflict consists of what is called *neutral positioning* – i.e., asserting the community's neutrality in the war. Residents perceived that neutrality protects them from warring groups still present in their midst. One Tulunan leader and another Sagada resident explain the need to remain neutral:

Walang kapayapaan dahil both sides nakapasok. Peace Zone is for the absence of war. Puwede pa rin na pagkakataong maglalaban silang dalawa. May posibilidad yun. Dalawa ang kalaban ng tao kung tatayo sila, kaya neutral ang tao. (Barangay Kagawad in Tulunan, personal communication, September 19, 1999)

(There is no peace because both sides can still enter. Peace Zone is for the absence of war. There is still the possibility that both sides may fight. That is possible. The people will have to fight two forces, that is why the people stay neutral.)

... some of our students were part of it ... we said, if you want to fight, we favor neither the New People's Army nor the military. If you want to fight, you go somewhere else ... in the mountains, siguro in the mountains. (Sagada resident, personal communication, September 8, 1999)

While asserting their neutrality, the members of the Peace Zone communities communicate what they value, and they expect that this be respected by the warring parties. For example, when one murdered fighter was left to rot in the river near Sagada, the local people removed the corpse, to prevent river pollution. A Sagada school principal explains,

Kasi we don't care who dies because its your war, you are fighting ... but we are concerned with the water because it's pol-

luting ... it is the source of life form, if nobody would like to retrieve the bodies, we could not stop the fighting, then we will do it ... we are not trained to side people, and we are not into war, rather we are fighting for our livelihood ... what we are doing is for the people. (Sagada principal, personal communication, September 8, 1999)

For the people of the Peace Zones, the good of the community, autonomy, and friendship are the values that buttress their stance of neutrality. The dialogue process affirms neutrality and values the community stands for. Peace Zone residents describe the need for dialogue,

... our best weapon was dialoguing. Because it's the only way that you can explain what the (peace zone) concept is all about. ... the best weapon we have against those who were opposed to the concept ... We can talk. This is the accepted way. We've done it at least at a very significant level because later on, we could observe some level of understanding from either side. (Sagada Mayor, personal communication, September 9, 1999)

Ang pumasok na may baril, may dialogue na huwag na silang pumasok na may baril ... Yung dialogue sa gabi matagal ... sa side ng New People's Army ... Amon nga ginasugtan ang amon nga mga pulisiya. Gipabasa sa ila ... nasugot naman sila. (Cantomanyog residents, personal communication, November 27, 1999)

(Those who enter with guns, we hold dialogues to tell them not to enter with their guns ... the dialogues at night are long ... with the NPA ... We tell them of our policies. We let them read these ... they eventually agree.)

The manner of dialogue may differ for each side of the warring factions. For example, among the people of some Tulunan Peace Zones, media, the Church or other institutions usually initiate communication with the government. A face-to-face dialogue with government officials may then be conducted. With the New People's Army, written messages or "petitions" are sent to initiate the dia-

logue. When a dialogue is possible, leaders of the Peace Zone then go "to the mountains" to conduct the dialogue.

The local people describe the importance of dialogue in maintaining the desired balance that comes with their neutral stance.

Halimbawa, yung sa dump truck na ginamit sa gravelling ng kalsada. Sinabi namin sa kanila (NPA). "Kung yun ang kailangan ng tao," sabi nila ... Kasi baka ambusin nila, lagot tayo niyan sa gobyerno. (Barangay Kagawad, Tulunan, personal communication, September 19, 1999)

(For example, the dump truck that was used for gravelling the road. We informed them (NPA) about it. They said, "If that is what the people need." ... Because they might ambush it, the government may take action against us.)

They say, they came to, they come to search against us. Little by little, they come to agree with our request. The first that we have done, never be spy on both sides. And they will also try to see — please do not recruit a spy here in our place. We say that to the NPA and also the military ... And that is how we were able to convince them. That we, they found out, that we are not siding on one side ... we tell the truth to reap good ... Maybe our tool was neutrality. That we have been neutral to both the NPAs and military ... we are trying to have a — friendship with them. We are bringing them friendship. (Lakay Iladio Likigan of Sagada, personal communication, September 11, 1999)

As long as Peace Zone residents maintain neutrality vis-à-vis the warring groups, conflict may be managed effectively.

Activity Four: Moral Leadership

A fourth important activity in Peace Zone conflict management involves *enforcement by moral leaders*. In Tulunan and Cantomanyog, leaders of church-based organizations assume moral leadership. In both these communities, the *Gagmay'ng Kristohanong Katilingban (GKK*, trans. Basic Christian Communities, now called Basic Ecclesial Communities) strengthens community lead peace endeavours. The GKK undertakes regular consultations with com-

munity members' to identify salient community problems, adopt a common perspective toward these problems, and unite their efforts for these concerns. Because of the introduction of the Basic Ecclesiastical Community since the 1980's, the local people developed a greater awareness of their responsibility and respect toward each other (Marco, Bahena & Alvia, 1988).

The Catholic Church has taken on an important part in the people's efforts, especially during war times. Parish priests in both Tulunan and Cantomanyog played a significant role in the people's struggle for peace. The priests' roles turn crucial when events threaten peace in the community, or when symbolic acts need to be carried out to strengthen the Peace Zone. Influential persons in Church-based organizations (e.g., the GKK) likewise lead the community. They elucidate the people's understanding of peace, with Church teachings on peace and justice.

In Tulunan, for example, the head of the Inter-Peace Zone Coordinating Council, Francisco "Onyok" Abihon, Jr., is also a leader of a *kapilya* (or a GKK family-cluster). He received training through a Steward Leadership Seminar sponsored by the Church and leads the Sunday Bible Service for the community. (Mang Onyok, personal communication, June 25, 1999). Anyone who wishes to discuss matters about the Peace Zone will surely have to talk with Mang Onyok who resides in the Peace Zone of New Alimodian. On Sitio Cantomanyog, Manang Corazon Eliseo stands out as a local leader. She likewise emerged from the GKK. These are Manang Corazon's thoughts on peace advocacy:

Kay malab-ot naton ang tinuod na Kristo. Ang Kristiyano unta buligay kita, nga isa lang. Kay kung kita mahimo kita peace, sila ang mauhi, ti walay peace. Eh, ano ang peace kung ikaw herway kay tapos ako pigado. Di wala kay peace na matawag. Tiaw mo na kung naga-obra ta sa tibuok Pilipinas dili ta makab-ot ang peace kung kita pigado. Ay sila mismo ang agguba sang peace. Kay kung sila nagabulig sa ton, maagum ta ang peace, ag Kristianong panginahì, kay si Kristo gusto niya sang peace. Ti siya ang nagsabi na ang pakigdaet ihatag ko kaninyo. Sila

mismo ang nagpusa sa amon. Ti wala sang peace. Pero kung ang atong panginabuhì, bligan sang pulitiko ilabi na si Erap, mga senador. Paano natin ipatingkawas ang mga Pigado? Ti mao na ang pakigdaet na gipatingkawas ni Kristo, eh. Kay ang pakigdaet si Kristo ang naghatag sa aton. Di ang peace dapat sila man mag solid. Matuod-tuod nga peace, ang peace hindi lang sa giyera, kundi sa tanan gid sa ekonomiya, kultura, pulitika. (Manang Corazon, personal communication, November 27, 1999)

(If we were to see the real Christ. The Christians should help each other to achieve peace. (But) if they are to be followed, there will be no peace. What kind of peace will there be if you are rich and I am poor. This cannot be called peace. For example if we work in a far-off place in the Philippines, the peace will not reach us if we are poor. Because it is they who make the peace. If they are helping us, then we will see the true peace of a true Christian. Because Christ wants peace. He himself said that I give you peace. They themselves are causing us hardship. There is no peace. But if we were helped in our livelihood by the politicians, especially Erap and the senators: how are we to uplift the poor? It is like Christ's suffering were all useless, because Christ suffered for us. With peace they should also be true. Because true peace is not only in war, but in all: economics, cultural and politics.)

Community leaders who remain active in Church-related activities, like Mang Onyok and Manang Corazon, continue the teachings of their parish priests and other Church leaders regarding non-violence in the attainment and preservation of peace and justice.

Community elders likewise provide moral leadership. For example, in Sagada, elders have traditionally played an important role in dispute settlement through the *Dap-ay*. The *Dap-ay* represents a locus or place in the community where the old men (women were traditionally not allowed to join the *Dap-ay*, although recently the younger, more "modern" women are said to be more participative) gather together to discuss and facilitate the resolution of conflicts in the community (Manang Cristina Digawan, former member of the Peace and Order Council, Sagada, personal communication, April

26, 1999). Gastardo-Conaco and Lee (1994, p. 20) expound on the functions of the *Dap-ay* and how it influences the social relations in the community:

The dap-ay is a mechanism for dialogue or discussion, and even facilitates regular and "ritualized" exchange of ideas and views ... The dap-ay ... (is) the traditional socio-political system that mediates among individuals, groups and communities, and even between humans and deities ... Because of this tradition of having an accepted forum of exchange, the Sagada community is fairly close-knit. There is definitely a sense of belonging to the community, even if differences exist among beliefs, political orientations, and ideological leanings.

In present times, however, residents regard *Dap-ay* activities as ceremonial and most of the conflict-settlement tasks fall under the responsibility of the *Lupon*, composed of local government and other community leaders (Sagada school principal and other Sagada residents, personal communication, April 25-27, 1999). The elderly, nevertheless, continue to remain influential in matters regarding conflict within the Peace Zone. They face those who belong to the warring groups armed with moral persuasion to deter them from any hostile or violent acts. Below is an account of how an elderly tried to dissuade a member of the military to conduct operations in Sagada:

But when they came here ... also told the commander, so that you please stop your plan to bomb our houses. Because they already planned, according to them ... members of the military told me that the plan there in Mindanao ... to apply ... Mindanao in Sagada. They were telling that. And I told them, no, we (are) a peaceful people ... You go right into the main village and observe ... You will find out the nature of the people ... Many people from other places happen to gather here in Sagada knowing that the people here do not harm ... Because that is not our nature ... So you please go to the village and observe ... I tell them the truth. (Lakay Iladio , personal communication, September 11, 1999)

Another account shows us how an elderly woman who was then a member of the Peace and Order Council tried to reason with a member of the rebel group.

... there was particularly one boy who was always talking (in a dialogue with the NPAs), and one of them asked me, "Who is that boy?" I said, "I do not know, but his face is familiar." And then later on he went into the kitchen and also the man who asked me also went into the kitchen and when he came back he told me that was the son of _____. So I said that is my relative. So I went to the kitchen, I said, " (name of boy), why are you here?" ... "Where are you living?" ... I said, "Why don't you go to my house, you know I live there." ... I told him after that (after the schoolhouse was attacked), "Why, why do you attack in the school if you know that you are in the exile and the school is here, the community is here, why do you attack then? Suppose your bullets came into the community?" ... He said, "I was not a member of that group because I was in ..." And I cried because of that fire, the one attacking in the community ... but I said ... "no, you were there, you were there ..." (female elderly, Sagada, personal communication, September 9, 1999)

The following excerpt further illustrates how the suspected members of the warring groups are dealt with by the elderly in the community.

... (to a suspected rebel:) You are young. And do not try to cause any hate in our place ... always believe that life is very dear to us here in Sagada ... (Lakay Iladio, personal communication, September 11, 1999)

Aside from the elderly, another very influential group in the community that have taken on the task of preserving peace, especially within the community, are the women. The following accounts give us an idea of the techniques employed by women in their peace-keeping efforts, and the reasons behind their effectivity as agents for peace. The excerpts below tell us about the Cantomanyog experience:

Ang mga nanay, yun ang nag-ano niyan. Kasi ang mga nanay ... hindi gusto ang mag-inuman ... Yung babae ang naggagapos

... *yun ang kalayaan nila, eh. Pag nalasing, ang babae (ang) magtali ... natakot man kami (mga lalaki) ... kasi ... nahihiya. (Cantomanyog residents, personal communication, November 27, 1999)*

(The mothers, they are the ones who do it. Because the mothers ... they do not like the drinking ... The women are the ones who tie (them) up ... that is their freedom. When they (the men) get drunk, the women tie (them) up ... we (the men) get scared ... because ... we get embarrassed.)

At saka 'pag meron doong sugal ... ay, pinatigil talaga ... ang ginagawa namin, ginawa ko nga yan noon, kinuha ko ang tubig at saka basyahan ko ng tubig ... Babae ang nagkuha ng baraha kasi ... kung lalaki, baka maglabanan lang sila ... magka-initan. Kapag ikaw lalaki, babae ang kuwan sa iyo, mahiya ka, babae and mag-ano sa iyo, mahiya ka ... lalaki ka, hindi man maglaban ... Kasi 'pag lalaki ang nagpunta niyan baka mag-initan lang kayo niyan ... baka magsuntukan pa. (Cantomanyog residents, personal communication, November 27, 1999)

(And when there is gambling ... it is really stopped ... what we do, I have done that already before, I get water and I wet (them) with water ... The women confiscate the (playing) cards because ... if the males (do it), they may just fight with each other ... they get heated up ... if you are male, the female will do it to you, you will feel shame, the female will do it to you, you will feel shame. You are male, you will not fight back ... Because if the male goes there, you might just end up fighting ... there might be a fistfight.)

In Sagada, both the elderly and the women perform the task of enforcing the Peace Zone guidelines.

Somebody among the men said, "You better stop (gambling and drinking) because the women are here. The nauton (= elderly) are here." ... and then one said, "Who told you to come here and tell the people to go home?" So we said, "We, ourselves." "Whose rules are you implementing?" "Our rules." Then they said, "That is why the government do not believe because it is your rule, not the government's rule." But they eventually left ... If they come back, we'll continue to stay there and tell them to go home and then tomorrow, we will ask the help of their

parents. So they will know when we talk together. (former Peace and Order Council member, Sagada, personal communication, September 9, 1999)

The reasons why the women take it upon themselves to become effective enforcers are given in the following excerpt:

Because if a man will go there, he will be shot ... that is the source of water. Going down to the southern barrios. And then we know that the water will be polluted ... so as much as possible we get the bodies before they rot ... Because ang alam ko (trans. from what I know) they are the only ones who could go. If the women will be shot, we know ... who would we blame. We know, we know ... Siguro takot din sila sa women (trans. Maybe they are also afraid of the women) ... they have the bigger voice and the louder voice ... the women are more diligent ... No one would like to have a drunkard husband, or her children to be just loitering around, stealing or drinking. It seems that the women are more concerned with the behaviors of their families than men. (Sagada school principal, personal communication, September 9, 1999).

In Cantomanyog and Sagada, the women contribute significantly to the maintenance of the Peace Zone. In Cantomanyog, membership in the Peace Zone Executive Committee is dominated by women, and as depicted in the excerpt above, they are acknowledged to be agents that effectively use techniques, e.g., employing acts that bring the males to shame, to control behavior in the community. In Briones' study in 1998 on the role of the Church in the Cantomanyog Peace Zone, for example, it was mentioned that the initial discussions to assess the consequences of armed conflict in the community were undertaken primarily by the housewives who were concerned about the death threats to their husbands. In Sagada, accounts predominate about how the women would organize themselves to respond swiftly when matters of serious community concern have to be dealt with. Here we find that the role of the woman as mother in the family becomes an important tool in enforcing the rules for peace in the community.

In Tulunan, the men rather than the women tend to lead in enforcing Peace Zone guidelines. This might be due to the fact that the earlier organized groups in the Tulunan area were that of farmers' groups predominated by men, who maintained their leadership status when subsequent forms of organizations, such as the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities, grew in the area.

The four Peace Zone activities related to conflict management possess overlapping characteristics. The following section illustrates interconnections among these four activities.

THE PEACE ZONE ACTIONS RELATED TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The Peace Zone may be viewed as a representation of a community's decision to assert its sovereignty over other existing political forces in the country. The people's neutral claim supports this sovereignty. By asserting that they do not wish to side or be used by any of the warring factions or by representatives of these factions, the Peace Zone communities succeed in distancing themselves from warring parties. The Peace Zone experience with external development aid demonstrates how conflicting parties may use the communities as leverage to transform a promising conflict-settlement strategy into one that is destructively competitive. Local residents welcomed the government's move declaring Peace Zones as areas of development. However, the state's development initiatives inadvertently created a web of inefficiencies and internal intrigues.

The Peace Zones residents, however, persist in their conviction about neutrality — a belief reinforced by their sense of collective unity and efficacy, developed through the Basic Ecclesial Communities (in Tulunan and Cantomanyog), and through traditional communal decision-making practices (in Sagada). With the strengthening of community organization, the Peace Zones endorse a concept of pluralistic power where initiative comes from the people's desire for a just and peaceful social order. Peace Zone

residents prefer nonviolent strategies for resolving conflict, bolstered by the concepts of compassion, persuasion, autonomy, openness, and truth. These concepts need to be translated into workable forms that interface with existing frameworks for peacebuilding and dispute settlement.

As Coronel-Ferrer (1997) observes, the Peace Zone communities are unique Philippine contributions to peace-building approaches. Peace Zone communities teach us that maintaining peace requires attending to both structural and interpersonal factors. More particularly, elements of a successful Peace Zone include community unity, coordinating systems for peace enforcement, neutral positioning, and moral leadership.

NOTES

1. The members of the Peace Zones covered by this study have experienced and are still experiencing threats to the principles they laid out for the maintenance of peace in their communities. These threats result from factors internal to the community as well as from external sources of conflict that continue to adversely affect the lives of members of these communities. I documented these threats in two separate papers, *The Psychology of Peace Building* which was read in the Psychological Association of the Philippines Conference-Workshop on Political Psychology, 23 July 1999, and *The Role of the Peace Zone in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution: Emerging Problems and Barriers* which was read at the International Workshop on New Dimensions of Conflict and Challenges for Conflict Management in Southeast Asia, s5-8 December 1999, in Penang, Malaysia.

2. Montiel and Briones (1995) distinguish between peacemaking and peacebuilding by defining peacemaking as attempts to stop violence in a particular area. These attempts may include for example the setting of geographical boundaries for a demilitarized area. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is said to refer to efforts that aim to minimize structural violence. I am of the opinion that the processes of peacemaking and peacebuilding

may overlap in the actual attempts at averting violence and resolving conflict. As in Coronel-Ferrer's identification of peacebuilding activities, conflict reduction and settlement may be said to involve efforts at peacemaking.

3. The development funds, however, have not yet been fully utilized, and under the present administration of President Estrada, there seems to be a moratorium in the disbursement of the remaining funds for other necessary projects. The programs for the realization of a just and lasting peace laid out for the peace process proposed by the past administration seem to have been discontinued.

4. The Sagada Peace Zone was selected as a site for research because of the researcher's familiarity with the community being a regular visitor of the area. Ties have long been established with some members of the community, facilitating the relationship that was needed for a smooth undertaking of the research activity. Field visits to the Tulunan Peace Zone area in North Cotabato and the Cantomanyog Peace Zone in Negros Occidental were made possible through the Civil Society and Governance Project of the Social Development Research Center (SDRC) at the De La Salle University. The author is a senior researcher of the project headed by Dr. Francisco Magno (also the present director of the SDRC). The Civil Society and Governance research is funded by the Ford Foundation. The research sites were selected for the purposes of the said project. This presented an opportunity for the researcher to collect data as well for the present investigation.

5. From the experience of doing research in the Peace Zones (with the exception of Sagada which is frequented by visitors because of its popularity as a tourist area), gaining entry into the community required one to obtain a permission or an endorsement from the Peace Zone leaders. In Cantomanyog, for example, the office of the Governor required us to express in a letter addressed to the Executive Committee of the Peace Zone our intentions in visiting the community. In Tulunan, entry into the Peace Zones and acceptance by the community members was made possible and was facilitated through the endorsement given by the church leaders. There have been various incidents

when visitors were denied entry or re-entry when the people became suspicious of the real intentions of these individuals.

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