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## **Left-Behind Subjects: A Critical Interrogation of Philippine Development from the Margins**



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## FOREWORD

Before I get to the foreword, let me take this opportunity to thank Erwin Bañez, Lisa Rosel, Jeng Reyes, and Ivy Panganiban for being part of the panel we organized for the Association of Southeast Asian Studies Conference 2023 entitled: *Left-behind subjectivities: a critical interrogation of Philippine development from the margins*. As the title suggests, much of the inspiration for this two-issue volume was derived from our panel. A similar panel was also organized for the 5th SEASIA Biennial International Conference 2024. In both panels, we attempted to confront the shadow cast by development by looking at those who were left behind by it. I thank them for their contributions which ultimately influenced the tone and scope that this volume has taken.

Like the first one, the second issue of the Philippine Journal of Social Development Volume 17 directly confronts development and looks into the struggles of those who were left behind by it; this includes providing accounts on how people in the margins experience, navigate and deal with forces, structures, and ideas which claim to promote development. As I suggested in my foreword in the last issue, taking on the vantage point of those who were left behind is a political act that aims to privilege those that have endured various forms of deaths and have been rendered invisible or forgotten. In this way, this volume takes on the side of and celebrates life, despite the death-inducing effects caused by development and its totalizing tendencies. In the articles found in both issues, life is expressed in various forms of resistance, the creation and claiming of spaces, invoking of identities, etc.

However, we must not mistake this celebration for a vague sense of triumph as the concept of life can also be pernicious. Despite its creative and transformative potential, the act of invoking life can also create a Manichean world separated by discrete zones—that of salvation and the abyss (de Sousa & Martins, 2021; Maldonado-Torres, 2021). We see various iterations of this Manichean world from the history and legacies of Western imperialism,

contemporary racism, and internal colonialism. Here, in the Philippines, this Manichean world was made visible when Duterte waged his drug war in the name of saving human lives from the *adiks*, which he described as brain-dead slave-corpses. For Duterte, killing the *adiks* is nothing but natural; death must come to the *adiks* so that others may live. Besides, the *adiks* are, for Duterte, dead anyway.

In the same way, this Manichean world also manifests itself in development models and claims which invariably determine or differentiate between *the* model from the alternative, which identities matter or whose history and struggle are accounted for. Looming from the vantage point of those left behind is the imposing shadow of development, casting darkness on rejected or forgotten ways of life, sedimented histories, dismissed claims and identities, destroyed spaces, etc. This volume hopes to become one of the many lights that shine against the shadow of development so that we can reflect and confront it. Akin to the first, this issue takes on various subjects on development and illuminates the experiences and struggles of those who have been sidelined by development, as well as their attempts to counteract them.

We begin with Maria Corazon Jimenez-Tan's article where she describes the experiences of the peasant women of *Magsasaka at Siyentista para sa Pagpapaunlad ng Agrikultura* (MASIPAG) who practice agroecology. In her article, Jimenez-Tan describes the empowering effects of their agroecology practice notwithstanding their struggles against the dominant neoliberal and capital-driven agriculture models, state violence, and patriarchy.

This is followed by Clarisse Mae N. Abao who also discusses the struggles of women, albeit in the context of public sector organizations. Abao describes how the difficulty women face in terms of career mobility in the public sector, specifically, on how the "glass ceiling" is internalized and how it manifests itself in workplace arrangements.

Another article on women by Kevin David S. Estigoy describes the experience of the group called *Ronda ng Kababaihan*, a women's group in Pateros that was established at the height of Duterte's drug war and continued on to serve their community during the pandemic. Estigoy challenges state-centric notions of security and discusses how women think and act on safety and security when the main source of insecurity is the state.

From articles focused on women, we turn our attention to Louis Justin "Kahel" J. Rebadolla's article that focuses on the experiences of *baklas* in times of disaster. Employing a novel data collection method he calls *tsikahan*, Rebadolla recounts how some *baklas* living in Aroma, Tondo dealt with a fire that displaced hundreds of individuals and families. Rebadolla also describes that disasters are not equalizing events, but are compounding events that exacerbate intersecting vulnerabilities.

The last two articles of this issue focus on Indigenous Peoples (IPs). We first turn our attention to Leizl Pautan Agad's article where she describes how the Mangyan tribe participated in the conceptualization and execution of the *Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project*. Agad looks into the various stages of the project and describes the degrees of participation that were assumed by the Mangyan tribe. Agad went on to explain the various enabling and hindering factors that affected the participation of the Mangyans.

We end this issue with a second article on Indigenous Peoples, specifically the Tedurays, by Jennie Lyn C. Reyes. In her article, Reyes discusses how the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), claimed to be an instrument of peace, has reproduced colonial relations that was experienced by the Moro population of Mindanao from imperial Manila. Reyes focuses on the Teduray experience and how the BOL has empowered the newly instituted Moro power holders while, at the same time, making the Tedurays vulnerable to violence and dispossession.

Karl Arvin F. Hapal  
Issue Editor

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## **Farmer-Led Agroecology and Peasant Women Empowerment: Stories from the Masipag Network in the Philippines**

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**Maria Corazon Jimenez-Tan**

### **ABSTRACT**

Through a Participatory Action Research, the peasant women of the MASIPAG network collectively analyzed and drew insights from their involvement in farmer-led agroecology. Their analyses focused on how agroecology helped empower peasant women, how agroecology benefitted their families and communities, the factors or conditions that facilitated or hindered the active participation of the peasant women in agroecology, and strategies to help promote peasant women empowerment in farmer-led agroecology. This study discussed the prevailing gender issues in the agriculture sector and recommended strategies for peasant women empowerment that must be integrated into the programs and policies of organizations promoting and practicing farmer-led agroecology for food sovereignty and social justice. This study is part of the continuing efforts of MASIPAG to strengthen its program for organizing, capacity building, and leadership development among peasant women, which will, in turn, also strengthen the movement for farmer-led agroecology.

*Keywords: farmer-led agroecology, peasant women empowerment, food sovereignty, social justice, participatory action research*

*“Today, we unite to stand for just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems. We resist all deceptive schemes done in our name to consolidate corporate control over agriculture. We firmly believe that food systems must change and be anchored on women peasant’s rights to land, water and resources, women and community-led agroecology, people’s food sovereignty and the right to adequate, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food.”*

*The Rural Women’s Unity Statement of the 2021 Global People’s Summit on Food Systems*

## **Introduction**

All throughout history, women have played key roles as food producers, seedkeepers, resource managers, and stewards of the environment. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), peasant women produce about 60-80% of food in developing countries, and about 50% of the world’s food production (Davies, 2023). In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, women provide food for 50-75% of households (Khadse, 2017).

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the critical roles of peasant women in agroecology touted as an alternative to the industrial, corporate-controlled, profit driven, environmentally destructive, fossil-fuel dependent farming that exploits the labor of small food producers, including peasant women. The *Cooperation Internationale pour le Developpement et la Solidarite* (CIDSE) Task force on Agroecology explains the four dimensions of agroecology (CIDSE, 2018):

- **Economic dimension:** harnessing the power of local producers, local markets and consumers in providing sustainable livelihoods for peasant families.
- **Political dimension:** prioritizing the needs and strategic interests of small-scale food producers, and transforming power relations by asserting the decisive involvement and leadership of local food producers in the control of agricultural resources, in decision-making and governance of food and agricultural systems;

- **Socio-cultural dimension:** rootedness in the culture, identity, Indigenous knowledge, innovation of local communities; promoting horizontal (farmer-to-farmer) sharing of knowledge and skills; building solidarity across people and communities while also pushing for diversity; building a people's movement supportive of women's rights, inclusive and appreciative of women's roles and participation in agriculture; and
- **Environmental dimension:** building resilient, accessible, efficient, self-sufficient, healthy, safe, pollution-free food systems by building and protecting biodiversity and natural agro-ecosystems.

In the global south, the dominant farming mode is monocropping. This model is highly dependent on chemical inputs and is mostly market-oriented and corporate-controlled. Worse, this farming mode has caused extreme poverty among farmers. In response to the adverse effects of conventional farming models, many farmers shifted to sustainable agriculture practices and agroecology. In this model, farmers work towards people-led/farmer-led social transformation (Khadse, 2017). Farmer-led agroecology aims to radically transform prevailing power relations within the global agriculture and food systems, and work towards achieving food sovereignty and social justice (CIDSE, 2018; Khadse, 2017; People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty, n.d.).

### **MASIPAG, Farmer-led Agroecology and Peasant Women**

MASIPAG is one of the pioneering organizations promoting agroecology in the Philippines. MASIPAG, which stands for *Magsasaka at Siyentista para sa Pagpapaunlad ng Agrikultura* (Farmers and Scientists for the Development of Agriculture) is a national network of small scale farmers' organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and scientists promoting agroecology and farmers' rights. Its membership includes approximately 50,000

small-scale farmers organized into 670 farmers or rural women’s organizations, 20 NGOs and scientists (agriculturists, veterinarians, social scientists) from all over the country (Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021). MASIPAG’s core programs may be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*MASIPAG Programs for Farmer-led Agroecology*

<b>MASIPAG Programs</b>	<b>Program strategies</b>
Technical	CIMME: Collection, preservation, management of indigenous grain varieties Breeding (DSAE) Diversified and sustainable agroecological systems (FDAT) Farmers’ development of appropriate technology Education and training
Local marketing and food processing systems	Production, processing, local marketing, fair/socialized pricing of agricultural products
Advocacy and networking	Main advocacy themes: farmers’ rights to land, seeds, technology, knowledge, and markets
Organizational Development and Network building	Strong and organized farmers/people’s organizations Shared leadership Expansion and consolidation of the network
Climate change resiliency	Resiliency, risk mitigation, adaptation of communities to climate change, emergency response and recovery

*Note.* Adapted from “Peasant Science: Science by and for the people,” presentation by MASIPAG, as cited in Tan, 2024.

MASIPAG supports the farmers’ struggle for land, which remains the most fundamental cause of underdevelopment of agriculture, and of the poverty among farmers in the Philippines (Tan, 2024). According to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) about seven out of 10 farmers do not own their land; majority of those who have land have no more than two hectares (Tan, 2024). MASIPAG farmers’ organizations undertake local and national advocacy campaigns to assert farmers’ right to land and the implementation of a genuine agrarian reform. The network also supports the *bungkalan*—the farmers’ collective and militant occupation and cultivation of idle lands, degraded areas in the

countrysides, or portions of corporate plantations or *haciendas* (UMA, 2017). Bungkalan is a struggle against land monopoly, and privatization and commercialization of land (Tariman-Acosta, 2017). In many bungkalan areas, agroecology is also now being practiced. This includes the preservation, protection, and promotion of Indigenous/traditional rice varieties and Indigenous farming systems such as organic and diversified farming. These practices are a direct challenge to corporate control of agricultural resources and monocropping systems of industrial corporate farming (Tariman-Acosta, 2017).

Within the last decade, MASIPAG's program for organizational development and network strengthening (ODNS) gave more emphasis on building the capacities for organizing, consciousness raising, and leadership development among the peasant women in MASIPAG (Tan, 2021). In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase of women leaders in the working committees of the MASIPAG people's organizations (PO), and in various leadership positions at the local, provincial, regional, and national level of the network's organizational structure. There are more women rice breeders, peasant women practitioners of Diversified and integrated Farming Systems (DIFS), and women Farmer-Trainers (FTs).

While this is seen as a positive trend, it is important to account for the experiences of peasant women as they practice agroecology and situate it in the broader struggle of peasants against neoliberalism, specifically the corporate control of agricultural resources. By looking into their experiences, the study aims to shed light on the gendered and structural challenges of agroecology practice in the Philippines, while also highlighting and celebrating their victories in terms of the empowering effects of their practice on them and their families. Undertaking a Participatory Action Research (PAR), the study enjoined the peasant women to reflect on:

1. How have their engagements in agroecology contributed to their empowerment in terms of the economic, political, socio-cultural aspects of their lives, and to their efforts in protecting and sustaining their environment?
2. How have their families, organizations, and communities benefited from their agroecological practices?
3. What factors facilitated or hindered their active involvement and full implementation of agroecology?
4. What social development policies and programs should be recommended to: (a) help strengthen farmer-led agroecology in the Philippines; (b) help further empower peasant women through agroecology?

The PAR undertaken for this study involved the author and a research team from MASIPAG. The study employed a critical and qualitative research design that largely drew inspiration from the bottom-up, farmer-to-farmer learning approaches of farmer-led agroecology. Specifically, PAR facilitated the creation of spaces and undertaking participatory processes that are conducive to the collective and critical analysis of the experiences of the MASIPAG peasant women's engagement in agroecology. Besides this, PAR also facilitated the processes of promoting critical consciousness by allowing women to critically examine and draw lessons from their lived experiences and life stories.

The collective reflection and critical analysis of the experiences of the MASIPAG peasant women directly fed into the 'action' component of the research; specifically, the ODNs efforts by MASIPAG. According to AMIHAN (2024, as cited in Tan, 2024), raising consciousness, organizing, and mobilizing women belonging to the biggest and one of the most oppressed sectors in Philippine society is critical and integral to the promotion of equality and their empowerment. This process builds the confidence and capacities of peasant women to fight for their rights and development agenda, which include promoting sustainable

and people-led, people-centered agriculture practices, and struggling against social and gender-based forms of inequality and the structures that support it (i.e. neoliberalism and patriarchy) (Mpofu, 2018; Prasad, 2021; AMIHAN, 2020, as cited in Tan, 2024).

The conduct of the study entailed facilitating several activities including four regional women's workshops, six focused group discussions (FGD), five key-informant interviews, and participating in various MASIPAG activities. The four regional women's workshops (one in Luzon, two in Visayas, and one in Mindanao) were whole-day workshops wherein leaders and members of selected MASIPAG farmers' or women's organizations exchanged experiences and their analyses of the gains and benefits from their agroecology practices, as well as issues and challenges they faced as peasants and as women engaged in agroecology. The FGDs (two for each region) focused on more detailed individual and collective life stories on how agroecology impacted them as peasant women, on the transformations they experienced within their families, their organizations, and communities as they engaged in agroecology. Five key informant interviews were also conducted with experts on agroecology and rural women within MASIPAG and from outside the network, and three validation sessions. A total of 248 MASIPAG farmers, mostly peasant women, were involved in this PAR.

### **Integrating Gender in Farmer-led Agroecology**

The following section focused on: (a) the critical roles of peasant women in agroecology, (b) the positive impact of agroecology on peasant women, on their families, organizations, and communities, (c) the historical and prevailing class and gender issues in agriculture, which has intensified due to neoliberalism in agriculture, and (d) strategies for integrating a gender perspective into agroecology.

Worldwide, there has been growing recognition of the critical roles of peasant women in agroecology. Peasant women have been at the forefront of efforts to preserve Indigenous/traditional seeds and community-based seed systems, which is the foundation of local biodiversity (Mpofu, 2018; Tan, 2024). In Malawi, for instance, peasant women comprise more than half of the farmer-research team members of the Soils, Food and Health Communities program in 209 villages (Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021). As co-creators of Indigenous farming knowledge and practices, and as stewards of the environment, peasant women have been active in lobbying work and policy advocacy for programs and policies that protect their local environments and promote Indigenous knowledge (Khadse, 2017; Mpofu, 2018). Stories from *La Via Campesina* and other national and international rural women's organizations show that peasant women are among the most active participants and leaders in struggles against corporations and landowners that take away land from farmers and indigenous communities, and in struggles against development projects that destroy the environment (Mpofu, 2018).

Likewise, there are increasing accounts of the positive impact of agroecology on peasant women, on their families, and communities. In Cuba, Brazil and Uruguay, organizations of peasant women share about how agroecological practices have resulted in better family nutrition, diversification of income sources, and even the redistribution of roles and responsibilities within the households (Zaremba et al., 2021). Stories of peasant women in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam show that as environmental health improved, so did the quality and quantity of their agricultural produce, their family's health, livelihood, and income (Khadse, 2017; Towards a Non-Toxic Southeast Asia, 2016).

Agroecological practices such as collective learning and the promotion of connectivity among peasant women have helped bring them out of their isolation and into organizations, even into leadership positions (Zaremba et al., 2021). Members of *La Via*

Campesina share about the struggles they have had with the men within their organizations and their movements through which they have gained equal participation in debates, decision-making, and in representation in leadership (Mpofu, 2018). Critical education that promotes critical consciousness and self-reflexivity, capacity building, and leadership development among peasant women is indispensable for a just agroecological transformation (Zaremba et al., 2017).

At the same time, women rights activists have observed that there are many agroecology movements globally wherein women are present in high numbers, but are hidden as wives of farmers, and are not present in decision-making and leadership positions in their organizations and communities (Khadse, 2017). Furthermore, even as they become more active in agroecological farming and in their farmers' or rural women's organizations where they learn about agroecology, peasant women have to bear with intensifying multiple burdens as they remain in charge of care work/reproductive work in the home.

Historically, social reproduction has been taken on largely by women in the confines of their homes and communities and are part of women's unpaid labor. Oosome and Naidu (2021) explain that the privatization of social reproduction—the relegation of care work to households, especially to the women, has intensified as a result of neoliberalism. This is because within the global neoliberal economic regime, capitalist markets are relying more on women's reproductive work which does not only reproduce labor but human life itself, with much of the reproductive work being done within non-capitalist realms of production, such as household work and subsistence farming (Oosome & Naidu, 2021).

Katz (2001) explains that even as states abdicate their responsibility for social reproduction, it will be accomplished at any cost by women. As states continue to reduce national budgets for basic social services, as the climate crisis destroys natural food, medicine

and water sources, women's care work or social reproduction has become even more difficult. Ossome and Naidu (2021), drawing from a research of Deere (1976) explain that:

The reproduction and maintenance of labour power only results from the super-exploitation of familial labor in the unit of subsistence reproduction. Here then, the division of labour is key in the extraction of surplus: women and children are mobilized to produce the means of subsistence for the production and reproduction of labour power for the labour market. (Deere, 1976, as cited in Ossome & Naidu, 2021, p. 78)

The chronic crisis resulting from neoliberalism has caused the increasing number of unemployed or underemployed. Much of the production for the survival needs of this growing 'global surplus population' as Marx called it (Prasad & Yeros, 2024) is now being shifted to the home (Ossome & Naidu, 2021). These include subsistence farming and petty commodity production for the family as a source of income (Ossome & Naidu, 2021). And women bear the brunt of these multiple tasks and responsibilities. Women's subsistence farming has become even more difficult due to the privatization of agricultural land for commercial purposes, and the destruction of the environment, which is the natural resource base for subsistence farming (Tan, 2024). To quote Luxemburg (1951, as cited in Ossome & Naidu, 2021, p. 68), "Non-capitalist social formations of household and family labour shoulder a large proportion of the burden of meeting minimum consumption levels essential for daily and generational reproduction, and continues to subsidize capital accumulation."

Mies and Shiva (2014) and Spear (2021) also argued that monopoly capitalism, imperialism, and neoliberalism benefit from the promotion of feudal patriarchy as it benefits from the undervalued, unpaid, flexible labor of women in performing both productive and reproductive work. The devaluation, invisibilization, marginalization of women, the exploitation of their labor, and violence against women are systematically perpetuated as

these are also mechanisms for profit extraction, control of labor, and pacification and regulation of dissent (Eviota, 1992, as cited in Gaddi, 2013; Khadse, 2017).

In the Philippines, peasant women are also at the forefront of efforts to promote safe, more sustainable farming practices, which they call *likas kayang pagsasaka*, or *organikong pagsasaka* (sustainable agriculture or organic farming). However, their active and sustained engagement in agroecology is challenged by the many issues they have to deal with as farmers and as women.

AMIHAN, the national federation of peasant women's organizations in the Philippines, and the Center for Women's Resources (CWR) explain that in the Philippines, peasant women experience oppression and exploitation as farmers, and added forms of exploitation and oppression as women (Tan, 2024). The historical and structural roots of women's oppression in the Philippines is referred to as the *feudal patriarchal* system (CWR, 2020; CWR, 1998; Sison, 1998, as cited in Tan, 2024). The feudal patriarchal culture resulted from the feudal culture of subservience perpetuated by the Roman Catholic church and landlord class during Spanish colonization, combined with the consumerist, individualist and bourgeois culture perpetuated by American colonization (Taguiwalo, 2015).

The strongest expression of the feudal culture is experienced in the rural areas, especially by peasant women (AMIHAN, 2024, as cited in Tan, 2024). Peasant women have been socialized into becoming subservient, dominated and controlled by their fathers or husbands (CWR, 1998). They have accepted that their place is in the home and that their primary role is being mothers and wives, and being the primary caregivers of their family. They accept their inferior or secondary status in the home and in the community, and hence their farming work or income generating activities are seen as only supplementary to the income of the husbands who are traditionally the main breadwinners (CWR, 1998; AMIHAN, 2024, as cited in Tan, 2024).

Furthermore, the control and ownership of women—manifested in the prevalence and normalization of violence and abuse of women in the home and community—persists within the feudal patriarchal system (CWR, 1998). Mies and Shiva (2014) and Spear (2021) argued that monopoly capitalism, imperialism, and neoliberalism have benefitted from patriarchy.

Given the continued pervasiveness of gender issues in the agriculture sector, Zaremba et al. (2021) argued the need to integrate a gender perspective into the principles and practice of agroecology. Using a gender lens, they studied the principles and dimensions of agroecology formulated by the High level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on Food security and Nutrition, adviser to the UN FAO. These dimensions are also reflected in the CIDSE framework on the four domains of agroecology. Zaremba et al. (2021) identified gender issues that may arise if gender is not deliberately and systematically integrated into the principles, goals, and practice of agroecology. These included the following:

- Adding to women's multiple burden if prevailing gender/sexual division of labor is not challenged, or if fair division of labor or collective work is not practiced when undertaking labor intensive tasks such as the collective use of natural, organic, and renewable resources, which are often part of women's domestic chores.
- Continued undervaluation and non-support for backyard gardening, care of farm animals, collection of water and firewood for the home, which are traditionally part of women's domestic chores perpetuates the exploitation of women's labor.
- Non-recognition, undervaluation, and limited support for women's income generating activities such as food processing, marketing of vegetables and other homemade foodstuff, even as these contribute much to the food security of their family and community.

- Non-recognition of women's knowledge, traditional or Indigenous resource management systems as legitimate knowledge systems.
- Peasant women's limited access and control over agricultural resources (such as land, technology) makes her agroecology practice more difficult.

Eviota, a Filipina feminist scholar explains why reproductive work, often part of women's undervalued work, is necessary for sustaining productive work:

Both productive and reproductive work are part of the process of survival and renewal. Productive work is done to fulfill people's basic needs for food, shelter and clothing while reproductive work produces and maintains the next generation of humanity. Reproductive work does not aim to simply populate but to develop people to become useful members of society. (Eviota, 1992, p. 174)

Eviota (1992, p. 174) asserted that "as long as family life takes up most of women's time, women cannot participate in the public sphere in the same way as men." To challenge the prevailing sexual/gender division of labor, it is imperative that women and men should be "equally responsible for both reproductive and productive work and that women and men have equal rights to productive work" (Eviota, 1992, p. 174). Ultimately, the state, as the primary duty bearer to its citizens' welfare and well-being, should be primarily responsible for care work and social reproduction (Tan, 2024).

Indian economist, Bina Agarwal (2012) stressed the pivotal role of peasant women in agroecology as they are farmers, consumers, and household food managers. Their access to food has an impact on the food security and health of their family, the health of farmers and local food producers, and on intergenerational health and nutrition. Agarwal (2012) asserts the importance of recognizing women as farmers and not simply as farm helpers, of improving women's direct access to land and tenure security, to production credit, agricultural inputs, technology, and information. Furthermore, Agarwal (2012) underscores

the importance of undertaking more agricultural research and development of crops that women cultivate based on a better understanding of women's farming systems, and of promoting institutional innovations that help in harnessing the collective strength and collective agency of women, such as the group approach to farm investment and cultivation.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be seen that farmer-led agroecology provides a more sustainable and people-centered food production model where farmers are decisive agents. But given the pervasive and deeply ingrained class and gender inequities in the agriculture sector, practitioners and advocates of agroecology must purposively and systematically integrate into the vision, principles, and practices of farmer-led agroecology strategies that address both class and gender-based oppression and exploitation. As peasant women bear these gender issues the most, it is critical that they become aware, empowered, and organized into decisive collective change agents, in their peasant women's organizations and/or in their farmers' organizations in challenging and transforming prevailing class and gender-based inequities in agriculture. The promotion of agroecology alone is not sufficient to achieve food sovereignty and social justice. Agroecology needs to be undertaken alongside collective efforts towards structural (economic, political, socio-cultural) transformation.

### **The Experiences of MASIPAG Peasant Women in Farmer-led Agroecology**

This PAR undertaken with the MASIPAG women are stories about their individual and collective efforts to become leaders of their organizations, peasant scientists, practitioners of diversified and organic farming, breeders of locally adapted rice varieties, frontliners of advocacy campaigns against large dams, open pit mining, the red-tagging, harassment of their organizations and militarization of their communities, and leaders of the peasant struggle for land. There are also heartwarming stories about how women have transformed themselves, their relationships with their spouses and children such that they have become active partners

in the movement for farmer-led agroecology. The succeeding section provides a glimpse of those stories and lessons derived from MASIPAG peasant women's engagements in farmer-led agroecology.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Empowering Women and Promoting Sustainable Food Production***

The peasant women of MASIPAG, through their individual and collective practice of agroecology, have experienced transformation and empowerment in the economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects of their lives. These include the following:

1. Gaining collective control over agricultural resources, food production and marketing processes:

Now we have our own seeds from our PO's trial farm. From the 50 traditional seeds given to us by MASIPAG, we have been able to select and mass produce 10 varieties which we distributed to our members. We do not need to buy seeds because now we can produce our own seeds. (MAKISAMA-Tinang, as cited in Tan, 2024).

With the help of MASIPAG trainings, we learned to create natural concoctions to manage the pests and improve the fertility of our farms. As we are now able to create our own fertilizers, pesticides and other farm inputs, and with seeds from MASIPAG, our farming expenses have decreased (North Cotabato PO, as cited in Tan, 2024).

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<sup>1</sup> The complete stories of the MASIPAG peasant women's engagement in farmer-led agroecology are in Tan, M.C.J. (2024). *Farmer-led agroecology, Land Struggles and Peasant Women Empowerment: Stories of the MASIPAG Peasant Women*. [Unpublished dissertation for the Doctor of Social Development Program. College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines Diliman].



Figure 1. MASIPAG Peasant Women involved in rice breeding and local marketing (Source: Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021).

The Lem Bulul Farmers' Association (LFA) of Lake Sebu, an organization of T'Boli farmers, mostly women, is an organization that protects and collectively manages their local seed system. The entry and expansion of commercial farms in Lake Sebu and the aggressive promotion of genetically modified rice varieties in the area has affected the Indigenous culture farming systems of the T'Bolis. But the LFA are determined to protect their Indigenous seeds, crops, and farming systems and continue to resist planting hybrid and genetically modified (GM) rice varieties (Tan, 2024). They have maintained a one-hectare communal seedbank and trial farm through which they study the various Indigenous rice varieties they have and select which ones they will mass produce/propagate for their own individual farms (Tan, 2024).

As part of their effort to recover, preserve and promote their upland rice varieties and Indigenous crops, they conducted a seed expedition with MASIPAG in 2022.

Our PO's seed expedition, in partnership with MASIPAG, recovered 16 indigenous varieties of palay seeds, four corn varieties, and eight Indigenous

varieties of squash (*basuk*) in barangays around Lake Sebu. These are now being preserved and maintained in our communal trial farm (LFA in South Cotabato, as cited in Tan, 2024.)

Many peasant women of MASIPAG are also actively engaged in collective marketing. For instance, The Kababaihang Nagtataglay ng Bihirang Lakas (KNBL) (Women with Unique Strength) is a MASIPAG-affiliated federation of rural women organizations in Davao province who, through the help of METSA, a Davao-based NGO-member of MASIPAG, collectively market the organic vegetables they grow in their backyards.

In 2004, KNBL in partnership with METSA, started marketing the organic produce of peasant women in Davao City. Since then, peasant women have been able to sell their organic produce in Rizal Park in Davao city and in other local markets around the province. METSA and KNBL's experience in food processing and collective marketing actually paved the way for the collective local marketing and food processing program (LMPS) of MASIPAG (Tan, 2024).

KNBL and METSA, in partnership with Go Organic Davao City, helped strengthen the organic farming movement in Davao and the establishment of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in the Philippines in 2014 (MASIPAG National Office, 2023). PGS is a certification mechanism for and by small farmers organizations and like-minded Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

2. Strengthening collective work, collective leadership, and the principle of the commons: In their farmers' or women's organization, the peasant women learn to practice collective work, collective leadership, collective responsibility, and the principle of the commons—common stewardship of the land, seeds, and collective benefits from the fruits of their labor. They learn that collectivism is beneficial as it

helps distribute work and responsibility, promotes democratic and participatory decision-making, leadership and governance, and sharing of the fruits of their collective work (Tan, 2024). The *bayanihan spirit* has been revived and is thriving within the MASIPAG POs and partner communities.

Bayanihan is a system for labor exchange for farming activities and food processing. It has also become a support system for our organizational and community activities. “In bayanihan, we practice collective work, collective responsibility, collective decision-making and leadership” (MASIPAG Visayas regional women’s workshop, as cited in Tan, 2024).

Collective responsibility and leadership is further honed through the committee system promoted and practiced among the MASIPAG POs. Through the committee system, each member of the PO must become part of any of the POs’ working committees, such as committees on sustainable agriculture, health, organizational development, advocacy and networking, climate change resiliency, and for some POs, the women’s committee. Each committee prepares its own work plans, schedules, and targets in accordance with their PO’s objectives, goals and work plans agreed upon during their annual planning. In the past, the women of MASIPAG would only join the committees on health, food processing, or marketing. In recent years, they have become active members, even leaders of the other committees as well.

Collective work is also practiced in the bungkalan areas of many MASIPAG organizations especially in Negros, Bicol, and parts of Mindanao. In Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, the peasant women actively enforce the work point systems in their bungkalan. The *work points systems*, which is developed and agreed upon by each PO, is a system that promotes fair sharing of income among those who

participated in the bayanihan in their bungkalan areas. A portion of the income or harvest from the bungkalan is also allocated for the organization's operational fund and emergency fund which members can avail of when needed (Tan, 2024).

3. Developing their capacities as organizers, leaders, as farmer-trainers, as scientists: An increasing number of MASIPAG peasant women are becoming leaders in their organization's committees, in the provincial or regional management teams, and in the Board of Trustees of MASIPAG. Many have also become leaders of their barangays. One of the male farmer-leader from a MASIPAG PO in Bohol (as cited in Tan, 2024) shared:

At the height of the pandemic, it was our women members who would patiently visit all our PO members to sustain regular communication and coordination. Our women members are the ones diligently attending our PO meetings and training. They are also more patient, creative and meticulous when it comes to innovating natural inputs for our farms, also in planning programs and activities, and the overall management of the organization. They are more persistent, unlike the men who are easily discouraged by challenges. Our PO would be crippled if the women members are not around.

Likewise, one of the MAKISAMA-Tinang members said:

The women in our organization are usually the ones taking care of our trial farm. They are patient enough to monitor the growth of the rice stalks—regularly measuring how much it has grown, counting the grains, and recording all these in the logbook. The men are usually outside of the farm or community, finding alternative sources of income (MAKISAMA-Tinang, as cited in Tan, 2024).

The peasant women have also been active in developing Farmer-developed Appropriate Technology (FDAT) and in enriching what MASIPAG calls *peasant science*.

In their practice of sustainable agriculture, the peasant women realize that they are the scientists in their farms. In conventional farming, the farmers just purchase and apply the chemical fertilizers and pesticides onto their farms. In agroecology, they study and research about their crops. They innovate better ways of growing and taking care of their crops using natural resources they find in their backyard or farms. Their minds are actively involved in problem solving and in addressing the challenges in farming. They really feel that they are the ones in charge of their farms (MASIPAG Visayas NGO Partner in Bohol, as cited in Tan, 2024).

4. Building their capacity for alliance work, partnership-building and advocacy for people-centered development policies and programs: The peasant women have also become active in establishing and strengthening partnerships with various stakeholders of agroecology. For instance, the Kiday Community Farmers' Association (KCFA) in Quezon, composed mostly of peasant women, works closely with the Gender and Development (GAD) office and the Mayor's Office of General Nakar in implementing projects of rural women. In Real, the MASIPAG POs work with the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) to promote organic farming. In Kabankalan, the MASIPAG POs work with public schools to promote organic vegetable gardening.

We have had campaigns against selling junk food in schools, against the use of glyphosate and other pesticides in the farms and against the construction of large dams. We have partnership with public schools in our barangays to teach

our youth about organic gardening and other activities to protect the environment (MASIPAG Visayas Regional Women's Workshop, as cited in Tan, 2024).

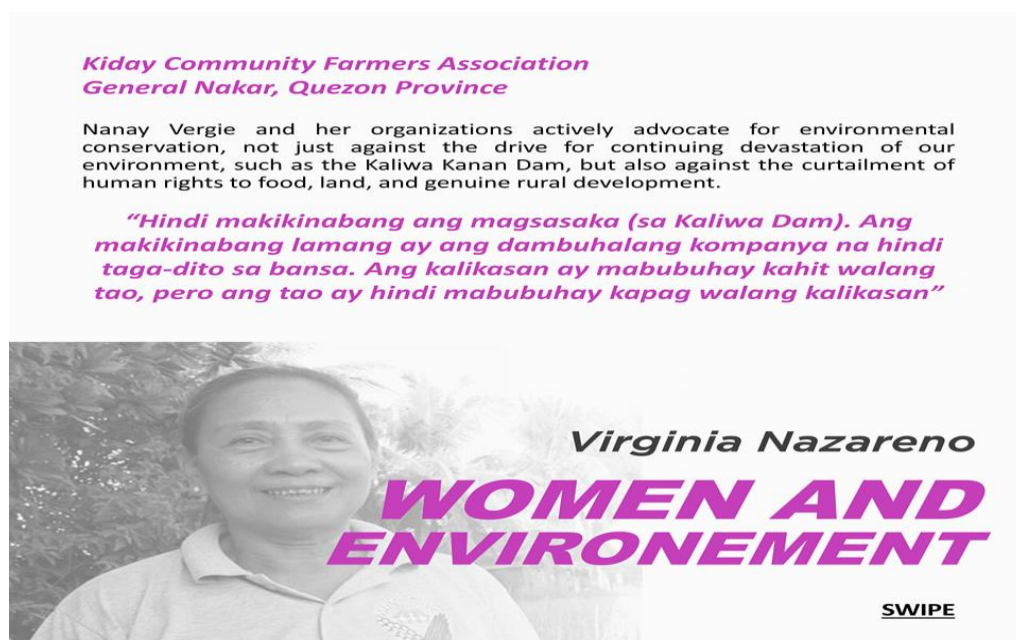
MASIPAG peasant women are also active in campaigns and lobbying work to institute local ordinances that will declare their municipality or province as fully organic or GMO free. For instance, MASIPAG POs in Kabankalan (2013), in Patnongon (2017), and in Leyte (2022) successfully lobbied for local ordinances that promote organic farming and the banning of GMOs. As METSA and KNBL (as cited in Tan, 2024) narrated :

In 2007, METSA, KNBL and other like-minded NGOs and civil organizations formed the Mamayang Ayaw sa Aerial Spray (MAAS) which lobbied for an ordinance banning the use of chemical aerial sprays in plantations Davao City. Within the same period, METSA, KNBL, along with a broad network of organic agriculture advocates, successfully lobbied for an organic agriculture ordinance in Davao which became the first of its kind in the Philippines. This inspired the crafting of the National Organic Agriculture law in 2010.

This ordinance banning aerial spraying was signed into law during Rodrigo Duterte's time as city mayor. Unfortunately, several banana plantation owners questioned the legality of this ordinance and filed a case against the city government.

The MASIPAG peasant women also played important roles in pushing for important policies at the national level. For instance, they were active in campaigns that brought about the passing of the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (RA 10068), and the Amendments to Organic Agriculture Act (RA 11511) in 2020 which highlighted the role of small scale farmers in promoting organic agriculture in the

Philippines and the PGS (Tan, 2024). In April 2024, the Philippine Court of Appeals issued an order to cease the commercial propagation and conduct of activities related to BT Eggplant and Golden Rice until concerned respondent government agencies can submit proof of safety of both. This is in response to the years of lobbying and campaigning of farmers' organizations, environmental activists, scientists and civil society organizations, including MASIPAG. One of the petitioners in this case is Nanay Virgie Nazareno, Chairperson of the MASIPAG Board of Trustees and founder and active member of the KCFA in Quezon (MASIPAG National Office, 2024).



*Figure 2.* MASIPAG Peasant Women leaders as frontliners in advocacy campaigns. (Source: Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021).

5. Becoming active leaders in the peasant's struggle for their rights and for their land: An increasing number of MASIPAG member POs are experiencing red-tagging, harassment and political persecution as they continue to assert their rights as farmers, and challenge government policies that destroy the environment and livelihood of farmers. In recent years, the peasant women have become more active in ensuring the

safety of their families, organizations, and communities, as shared by a MASIPAG Visayas Partner in Bohol:

The women would usually take on the responsibility of protecting the security of their families and communities, especially communities that are red-tagged by the military. They would plan alarm systems, community monitoring and safeguarding systems. In one case, the women successfully campaigned against the unnecessary presence of a military detachment in their community.

According to the women from Negros during the regional women's workshop:

When there are confrontations with the police or military during protest actions, or when we engage in bungkalan, the women are better than the men in dealing with the military. This is because the men get angry easily and confrontations with the police or military may lead to fistfights.

For almost three decades, the farmers of MAKISAMA-Tinang in Tarlac have been struggling to claim their right as Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARB) of a 200-hectare sugarland tilled by their ancestors for many decades. Finally, on May 2024, they were officially granted their right to the land, and will be installed into the 68 hectares out of the 200 hectares. They have resolved to continue to till their lands collectively, to practice agroecology, and to fight for the 132 hectares they have not yet been able to claim.

One of the women leaders of MAKISAMA-Tinang said:

The women are also the ones persistent in our land struggle even if the names of the ARBs in the CLOAs are our fathers. In our farm hut, only 10% are men, because most of them are working outside the farm as construction workers and the like. Majority of those in the farm hut are women, even the older women keep watch with us at our farm hut. And so the majority of those who

got arrested and incarcerated and had cases filed against them were the women of MAKISAMA-Tinang. And even up to now, when the military or police come to question our activities, the women from the composite/negotiation team have to dialogue with the police or military. We also think that it is best that the women do the negotiations with the police or military as we are calmer, have better control of our emotions, than the men.

In the bungkalan area near their *kubol* (hut), the women plant vegetables and other crops to produce food for the mainstays of the kubol. Sometimes, they sell these vegetables or engage in food processing to supplement their organization's funds. The ongoing struggle for land, and continuing efforts to practice agroecology are how the farmers of MAKISAMA-Tinang collectively assert their rights.

6. Becoming empowered as individuals, as women: The peasant women are discovering and harnessing their collective power, as well as their power as individuals, as women. During the MasMin regional women's workshop, they have shared:

We have become empowered as members and leaders of our PO. We gained self-confidence, learned to speak in front of an audience, and learned to assert. As leaders, we learned to listen effectively to our members, learned to be more patient and understanding, to be more conscientious about fulfilling their responsibilities, and becoming a model to our members. We learned how to better manage their POs.

According to the women leaders of Makisama-Tinang:

I learned to fight for our rights. And I realized that I can be strong and courageous when I know that I am fighting for what is right. Before, I used to be shy. Now I can speak up and be assertive. My sense of responsibility for

myself and for others was strengthened. Every day, when I wake up, I have a sense of purpose. I wake up early knowing that there is work to be done in our farm, in our kubol. I always tell our members that my strength and courage comes from you. We are strong individually because we are strong collectively.

### ***Benefits of Agroecology on Families, Organizations and Communities of Peasant Women***

Diversified farming systems, which is a key principle and practice in agroecology has been beneficial to the families of the peasant women in terms of the following:

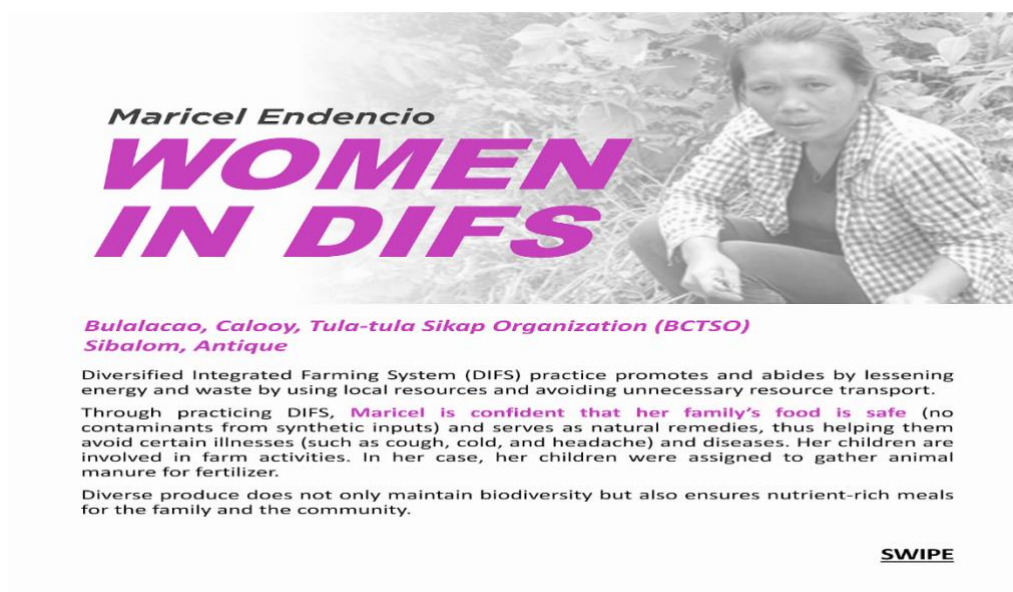
1. Attaining some level of food security, good health and nutrition of their families. For them food security means the following: “[We] No longer [have] to buy rice or vegetables for our daily consumption as we have enough supply of rice from our harvest, and vegetables and fruits from our backyard garden” (Masipag Visayas Regional Workshop, as cited in Tan, 2024).

When we used to practice conventional farming, the rice from our harvest would be consumed after only a few months. Now in organic farming, we have enough supply of rice from one harvest season until the next one. We are also assured that what we eat is safe and our family is healthier (Bohol PCB, as cited in Tan, 2024).

“Food is now more accessible because we can get them from our backyard garden. Because we have diverse crops now (not just rice), when disaster strikes, we still have some crops for food and some income” (MASIPAG LUZON Regional Women’s workshop, as cited in Tan, 2024).

2. Developing diversified sources of income for the family and less farming expenses: They are able to develop diverse sources of income from selling their surplus organic vegetables and fruits (bananas and the like), processed foods (e.g. *kalabasa*, noodles,

fruit jams, turmeric powder, organic coffee, candied pili nuts, cassava chips, to name a few), which they market collectively (Tan, 2024). Furthermore, they are also able to reduce their farming expenses as they can breed and preserve their own seeds and community seed systems, they can create their fertilizers, natural pesticides and other agricultural inputs. Labor costs have been reduced because of their bayanihan or labor exchange systems.



*Figure 3.* MASIPAG Peasant Women practicing and promoting Diversified and Integrated Farming Systems (DIFS) (Source: Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021).

1. Practicing collective responsibility, decision making and leadership in their homes:  
The MASIPAG Peasant women noticed that when both the wife and husband are active members of their POs and are actively engaged in agroecology, they also learn to practice collective planning, collective work, collective decision-making and shared responsibility in the farm and in the home. Some of the women during the PCB FGD in Bohol stated:

Before, my husband and I used to fight a lot about our increasing debt due to rising prices of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. My husband never consulted me before about the farm—he decided what to do and we had to

follow. Now that we are both involved in our organic farming, we actively discuss how we can improve our farming practices. Before, he would get mad when I would go out of the house and be active in the community. Now, we are both active in our organization because this is where we learn about agroecology. He even reminds me to attend our meetings and trainings.

Now that I am more active in our farm and in our organization, my husband and my children have also learned to take on household chores so that I can attend trainings and other activities of our organization. Now, when I come home from our trainings, my husband has already prepared our meals, fed our farm animals, filled up our water containers, and fetched our children from school, things that I was relied upon to do on my own every day. My children are also now involved in our organic farming. We sometimes bring them to trainings and seminars on agroecology. And so our agroecological practices created opportunities for us to bond with our children and to teach them about hard work and teamwork.

### ***Persistent Class and Gender Issues***

Landlessness, corporate control of agriculture, the import-dependent and export oriented agriculture has impacted the livelihoods of small-scale farmers. These issues arising from neoliberalism in agriculture are the main hindering factors to the active participation of peasant women in agroecology, and the full promotion and scaling up of farmer-led agroecology. But as women, they also experience the following gender-based oppression and exploitation as a result of the intensification of neoliberalism in agriculture:

1. Intensifying multiple burdens: Women are now taking more roles in agricultural production, in their organizations, and in their communities. Yet, they are still in

charge of taking care of the home, the children, the elderly and the sick (Tan, 2024).

Members of the METSA and KNBL shared:

Women are now equally engaged in farming like the men, in income generating activities and livelihood projects to add to their family income, in farmers' organizations. And yet, they are still mainly in charge of reproductive work—taking care of the children and/or grandchildren, managing the home, caring for sick family members, aging parents and parents-in-law. This has intensified the multiple burdens experienced by women. When the family is in debt, the women are expected to loan money or line up for government subsidies.

Climate change has an added impact on peasant women because of their socially determined roles and gender division of labor. When food and water sources are destroyed or contaminated, the family's food security and health are at risk. This impacts women more, as traditionally they are the homemakers, backyard vegetable gardeners, caretakers of their chickens, pigs and other farm animals, water managers, subsistence farmers and stewards of the environment. When extreme drought causes wells and rivers to dry up, women have to walk longer distances to fetch water for her family, farm animals and vegetable gardens.

2. Patriarchal norms and beliefs limit women to the traditional roles of being housewives and mothers: Some of the MASIPAG peasant women said that for some of their members, their *bana* (husband) is the hindering factor in their active participation in their organization and community. When the husbands are not active members of their farmer's organization and/or are not agroecology practitioners, the husbands prevent the women from going out or from joining farmers' or women's organizations.

We have learned to adjust and manage our time. There is so much additional work to do when practicing sustainable agriculture, but we have no choice but to do it. Otherwise, our families will go hungry. And so we just learn to adjust and manage our time. But it really helps when you are a member of an organization because of the bayanihan practices, and because the members support each other (MASIPAG Visayas Validation Session, as cited in Tan, 2024).

Women from the Mindanao Validation Sessions shared, “We have to include the men in our families and organizations in seminars on women so that they will understand the issues and conditions we face as women.”

As the men are still seen as the breadwinner of the family, when the women try to earn some income as hired farm workers or agricultural workers in plantations, they get paid less than the men. There are some farm owners who do not hire women because they are seen to be not as strong or fast as the men.

3. Added impact of political persecution on peasant women: Some of the MASIPAG organizations, especially those that are actively engaged in land struggles or protest movements against development aggression, are red-tagged or experience political persecution by the military or police. More and more, peasant women are relied upon to deal with these issues as oftentimes, they are left behind in their communities as the men have to migrate to other areas in search of other sources of income. Peasant women suffer from gender-based harassment and violence from the military or police.

## **Conclusion: Linking Farmer-led Agroecology to the Over-all People's Struggle for Social Transformation**

This study is an urgent call to ensure that people's right to food and food sovereignty, that women's empowerment and gender equality remain a priority agenda for social development and key to the vision of social transformation. While national laws and international covenants, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), articulate these as priority development goals, in reality, these themes are marginalized and remain secondary to the goals of economic development, power and wealth accumulation for a few.

This study showed how farmer-led agroecology, founded on strong organizations of farmers, rural women, on the promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices, on genuine agrarian reform, on the promotion of the principle of the commons—collective stewardship of land and natural resources, collective leadership and governance, fair sharing of benefits of the fruits of production—can help achieve food sovereignty and social justice. The experience of the MASIPAG peasant women showed how affirmative action that leads to capacity building and leadership development of peasant women can empower women such that they are decisive partners in sustainable, people-centered, and people-led development. At the same time, their experiences have also shown how continued discrimination against women, devaluation of women's work and worth, privatized social reproduction leading to multiple burdens, are key gender issues they continue to deal with on a daily basis within the home, organizations, and community.

Towards this end, farmer-led agroecology as a movement working towards sovereignty and social justice must also work towards the creation of policies, programs and strategies that deliberately, consciously, and systematically promote peasant women empowerment to achieve the following:

- Assertion of peasant women's access and control of land and other agricultural resources.
- Fair valuation of women's indigenous knowledge and contribution to farmer-developed appropriate technology and peasant science, drawing from her multiple roles as subsistence farmers, from herbal medicines, water managers, and stewards of the environment.
- Fair valuation of women's care work or reproductive work as an important aspect of sustaining productive work. Immediate responses include the need to promote shared responsibility of care work within the home and the community to help eliminate the heavy burden of social reproduction on women. But a more strategic and long-term response would be asserting state responsibility for social reproduction. The nurturance of a country's labor force and the succeeding generations must be a priority component of social development.
- Challenging and transforming prevailing gender division of labor into fair division of labor and shared responsibility, and leadership in the home, organization and community.
- Capacity building and leadership development among peasant women.

Key to integrating gender in agroecology is institutionalizing participatory and collective processes, and spaces within rural organizations wherein women (and men) are able to share and analyze their experiences and lessons from their engagement in agroecology. Being able to systematize these analyses and lessons becomes a strategy to expose, deconstruct, and address the prevailing inequities so that more transformative social relations and social orders can come to light (Lopes & Jomalinis, 2011). Class and gender analysis must be integrated into the organizational processes of social investigation and issue analyses, program planning,

monitoring, evaluation, in strategies for education, capacity building and organizational development.

The experiences of the MASIPAG peasant women also shed light on the critical link between promoting agroecology, the struggle for land and people's sovereignty, and the struggle to assert farmer's rights. This is true in the Philippines and many developing countries where the fundamental cause of underdevelopment of the agriculture sector, the poverty among farmers, and intensifying food insecurity is land monopoly and corporate control of the agriculture sector. Therefore, the struggle to promote farmer-led agroecology must be linked to the struggle for genuine agrarian reform and nationalist industrialization. Sovereignty and social justice, especially among the farmers and local food producers, can only be achieved through a Genuine Agrarian Reform that will ensure the free distribution of land to all farmers, eliminate land monopoly and corporate control over agricultural lands and resources, invest in agricultural infrastructure and provide subsidies and other forms of support to farmers (Anakpawis Party List, n.d.). Nationalist industrialization will ensure majority Filipino ownership and control of vital and strategic industrial sectors and enterprises that will provide adequate, affordable and quality services and products to the Filipino people (IBON Foundation, 2016).

The link between the struggle for land and promoting agroecology is clear for the peasant women of MASIPAG. They know that agroecology cannot be sustained without the farmers' collective assertion of their rights as farmers, rights as women, their right to development, including their right to land. As the peasant women of MAKISAMA-Tinang said, "How can we implement agroecology without our own land? And what is the use of our farmlands if we cannot implement agroecology to produce safe, healthy, nutritious food for all."

The prevalent and deeply ingrained social structures of neoliberalism and patriarchy continue to challenge our collective struggle to achieve food sovereignty and social justice.

Hence, social development scholars, practitioners and activists must critically study, draw inspiration and write about the lessons from how peasant women and farmers, in their daily engagements in agroecology, in organizing and movement building, are challenging and transforming power relations and creating safer, healthier, sustainable modes of agriculture and food production, asserting our sovereignty over our development processes. As stakeholders of social development, it is necessary that we are also truly in solidarity with the struggles of the peasant women for food sovereignty and social justice.

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## **Kwentong Kasarian ng Kababaihang Kawani: Experiences of Philippine Public Sector Women Employees Facing and Coping with Workplace Gender Discrimination**

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**Clarisse Mae N. Abao**

### **ABSTRACT**

Gender workplace discrimination continues to be alarming despite the institutionalization of anti-discrimination policies, guidelines, and principles accounting for various social differences at the international, national, and even organizational levels. One of the common policies is the merit system which is commonly employed during the hiring and promotion of individuals in government institutions. Drawing from the narrative inquiry, this study explores the stories of women from selected public sector organizations in the Philippines and how they perceive and experience gender discrimination in the workplace, particularly in hiring, promotion, and delegation of assignments. By capturing their perspectives, the researcher analyzed the different forms of workplace gender discrimination experienced by women in the public sector as well as their coping mechanisms which reflect how this problem is seen in the context of the public sector employment setting.

Keywords: *gender discrimination, workplace discrimination, public sector, Philippines, photo-elicitation, auto-photography*

In 2019, after almost a year of working at a national research and development (R&D) government agency, I was reassigned to a new unit within the same organization to work as an executive assistant—a position I did not apply for, but an opportunity I took for a possible pay increase. When I asked about the responsibilities and functions the post required before I took over, I was told, “You will write, take photos, and do errands for Sir [boss]. If he has official travels, wait for his arrival. Ensure that the room he’ll stay in has food, water, and has strong water pressure and clean beddings.”<sup>1</sup> I embraced these tasks enthusiastically but soon observed a gender disparity: Male managers led technical divisions involving leadership and specialized tasks, while female managers led administrative units with comparable qualifications but fewer opportunities for technical roles. The agency's director, a male third-level official, oversaw the meetings.

Employment in government usually adheres to the merit principle, where hiring and promotion are based on individual ability and fit, evaluated through competitive exams and criteria rewarding excellence (Legal Information Institute, n.d.; Ali et al., 2017). In the Philippines, civil service recruitment follows this merit system, overseen by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which enforces policies for effective personnel administration (Legal Information Institute, n.d.; Quah, 2016).

One of the principles employed by CSC is the Equal Employment Opportunity Principle which states that:

Agencies are also encouraged to adopt Equal Employment Opportunity Principle guidelines to remove barriers and discrimination during the selection process or in participating in or accessing learning and development interventions on the basis of

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<sup>1</sup> To make this article concise, all the quoted narratives, which were mentioned in Filipino or a mix of Filipino and English from the research participants starting from this point to the end of the article were translated to English.

sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE), civil status, disability, religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation...” (CSC, 2022, para. 7)

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 has also created a roadmap to increase women’s participation in the labor force by “providing economic opportunities and addressing the gender bias and gender stereotypes associated with women” (NEDA, 2023, para. 14).

Despite the international and local principles and systems available to ensure fairness and just employment, particularly in the government setting, the merit system has limited scope when specific factors come into play such as age, race, disability, and gender. There is implicit discrimination and occupational inequality when a certain individual or group is denied equal treatment due to their social difference, which impairs their “opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation” (International Labour Office, 2021, p. 42).

Women are among the disadvantaged groups in the workplace due to the recognized challenges of patriarchy since organizations are traditionally designed for men to succeed in riding in “glass escalators” (Stainback et al., 2011, p. 1181) while women continuously face “glass ceilings” (India Today, 2020; Stainback et al., 2011).

The Philippines stands out for its impressive labor force participation, approaching 50% across various sectors including academia, politics, and law (Li, 2022; Santiago, 2008). According to Tabuga & Cabaero (2019), there are 15 million formally employed women, with over 1 million working in government roles. Notably, women constitute 61.55% of the career service across the country (CSC, 2019). Despite holding more second-level positions in the public sector compared to men, women are still significantly underrepresented in higher-level roles like directors and cabinet positions (CSC, 2019). The country continues to face challenges in offering women the opportunity to advance in “traditional centers of power” (Li, 2022, p. 36).

Gender discrimination arises when stereotypes overshadow women's qualifications and abilities (Gregory, 2003; Heilman & Caleo, 2015). In the Philippines, discrimination includes gender stereotyping, pay gaps in male-dominated fields, and poor working conditions in the informal sector (NEDA, 2023).

Workplace gender inequality manifests in organizational structures, processes, and practices (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Britton and Logan (2008) observed that jobs are inherently gendered, with women often occupying "nurturing and supportive" roles that mirror their traditional domestic responsibilities (Britton & Logan, 2008, p. 108). These gender stereotypes restrict women from roles associated with rationality and authority, typically reserved for men (Young & Hurlic, 2007). This leads to both horizontal and vertical segregation within organizations, perpetuated by both individual biases and the gendered nature of organizational culture and structure (Britton & Logan, 2008).

Notably, the Philippines has a long history of advocating for gender equality in the workplace as operationalized by the Magna Carta of Women. In the public sector, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) through its Memorandum Circular No. 2011-01 has institutionalized the creation and strengthening of the Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) per government institution (PCW, 2022). The GFPS is one of the efforts of the PCW to mainstream gender in the workplace, particularly in the public sector (PCW, 2022). However, since not all GFPS of government agencies are functional, the PCW continues to monitor the system devise tools to ensure the objective of establishing GFPS will be realized by each government agency in the Philippines (PCW, 2022).

Institutional measures like the merit principle do not fully capture the realities faced by women in the workplace. Gender roles, stereotypes, and biases, whether conscious or unconscious, contribute significantly to maintaining gender inequality. The same goes with

the institutionalized groups, which may not be functional despite the tools and policies in place for monitoring and implementation. Addressing these issues requires examining women's actual experiences and their capacities at the micro-level rather than relying solely on institutional mechanisms to work.

Despite the apparent gendered assignments and discrimination, there have been few efforts to explore and address these issues, especially within the organizational context of Philippine government agencies.

### Exploring Gender Workplace Discrimination in the Philippine Public Sector

“How do women experience workplace discrimination?” This article aims to answer the question by looking into the experiences of women working at a national government agency. Specifically, this article will examine the perception and narratives of these women. Using their narratives, this article aims to shed light on the institutional and social factors that women face in the public sector. This includes the effects they experience from such discrimination, as well as their efforts to overcome their struggles. Finally, this study also intends to provide key recommendations to help address gender-based discrimination in the public sector.

Guided by the narrative approach of inquiry, I looked at how women “highlight [their] versions of self and reality...produced through storytelling” (Chase, 2005, p. 67). Highlighting the participant’s agency and experience through their stories is an approach that enables me to investigate the richness and complexity of capturing the participant’s experience of the world (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The narrative approach used in this study was conducted in phases. The study began with participant observation where I, the researcher, observed the routines, activities, and experiences of the women under study. Berg (2001, p. 117) claimed that this method is useful in interrogating “organizations and organizational structures [and] social roles among group

members.” Implicit and explicit organizational gender discrimination can be more visibly and critically examined through this method.

Participant observation was followed by photo-elicitation and auto-photography where participants “identify, document, and represent their community’s strengths and concerns from their perspective through a photographic technique” (Wang, 1999, as cited in Sutton-Brown, 2014, p. 169). Designed to serve as a pre-activity before the narrative storytelling, auto-photography entailed the participants in taking and/or providing photographs that best represent who they are and how they see themselves at work. The photos may include a person or set of people, a thing, a place, an event, or a symbol that they value in the workplace. Short descriptions were asked from the participants based on the meanings they associated with each photo. Finally, photo-elicitation and auto-photography was followed by narrative storytelling. This facilitated research participants to identify meanings and elicit reflections. The stories contain the narrative as elicited by the photos taken, which make room for critical dialogue and promote openness in participant-initiated sharing (Sutton-Brown, 2014). When people tell their stories, their selves, experiences, and realities are shaped, constructed, and performed (Bell, 2002).

During the data collection from November 2022 to May 2023, the employees were identified through non-probability purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) a current female employee of the selected government agency at the time of the study, (b) a middle manager or rank-and-file employee who has experienced or undergone the formal process of hiring and promotion, (c) has equal to or more than one year of service in the selected government agency, (d) may or may not have experienced working in other government agencies prior to the current agency they are employed at the time of the study, (e) willing to share experience and stories regarding hiring, promotion, task assignments which may be subjected to gender workplace discrimination, and (f) consents to participate

in the research. Guided by cross-sectional analysis, the narratives were gathered through interviews and analyzed into common themes.

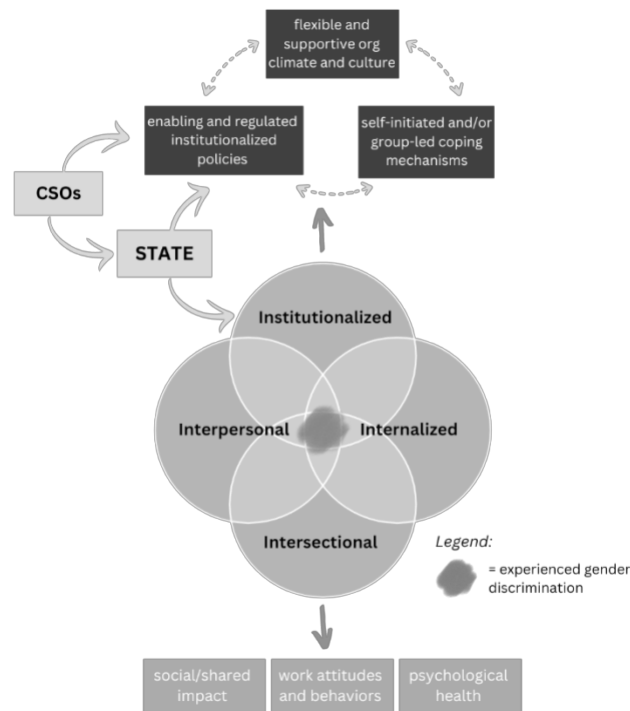
The next sections will present the framework of the study, summarizing the relationship between and among the different forms of gender-based workplace discrimination, the actors that were in play, and the hindrances and enabling mechanisms based on the context of this study. This will be followed by the results of the empirical and analytical examination of the participants' narratives from how they chose and took the photos that best represented their work, the descriptions that they associated with these photos, and the implicit and explicit forms of gender discrimination embedded in their experiences in the workplace.

Coping mechanisms of the participants' experienced gender-based workplace discrimination will also be discussed. Considering the limitations of the employees' coping mechanisms, the researcher presented the different forms of discrimination that were observed to be present in the narratives. Recognizing that there are different forms of discrimination apart from the individualized form may also give opportunity to uncover the hidden dynamics and to devise ways on how to possibly address the overall gender-based workplace discrimination experienced by women in the public sector.

## Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1**

### *Conceptual Framework*



This framework highlights the intersection of organizational-led and perceived gender discrimination experienced by women. Organizational-led discrimination is rooted in institutional structures, while perceived discrimination stems from personal socialization outside the workplace. Together, they shape women's overall experience of gender discrimination. The impacts of this discrimination are multifaceted, affecting physical and psychological health, work attitudes, behaviors, and social dynamics. Notably, the social and shared impact extends beyond the individual to their immediate networks. These interconnected outcomes highlight the broad-reaching consequences of gender discrimination in the workplace.

The framework in Figure 1 also identifies strategies to mitigate gender discrimination, including (a) self-initiated or group-led coping mechanisms, (b) supportive organizational cultures, and (c) institutionalized policies. These approaches can function independently or together, offering multiple pathways to address discrimination.

The state's influence is twofold: it can perpetuate gender discrimination through rigid institutional policies, or conversely, help minimize it by promoting supportive policies. Formalization, while potentially reinforcing discriminatory practices, can also be a tool for positive change. Civil society organizations play a critical role in pressuring the state to enact policies that reduce workplace discrimination, fostering an environment where women can thrive.

This framework underscores the complex interplay between individual, organizational, and state-level factors in shaping women's experiences of workplace discrimination, while also offering pathways for addressing these challenges.

#### From Stories to Realizations to Coping Mechanisms

This section presents the narratives of five women working in the public sector. Their narratives include workplace stories and their perceptions of their roles, learning and development, promotion, and work assignments in the workplace. Besides workplace narratives, this section also shows how gender-based workplace discrimination is perceived by women, how they think it affects others (women), and how gender-based discrimination intersects with other forms of discrimination. We begin with the story of Laila.

#### ***The Story of Laila, the one who Described Herself as an “Executive Alalay”***

Laila, a middle manager, has been working for almost 20 years in her current organization. Before joining her current workplace, she started as an executive assistant at an

international firm where she labeled her role as an EA (normally shortened abbreviation of an Executive Assistant), but she meant “Executive *Alalay* [Assistant]”.

In 2005, seeking tenure and a job aligned with her technical expertise, she joined the public sector through one of the organization’s technical divisions. Yet when she was hired, she initially performed functions as a technical assistant to the deputy director wherein she fulfilled both technical and administrative duties. Eventually, she transitioned full-time to a technical division, allowing her to fully engage in her area of technical expertise. When asked about why she still performed technical tasks that are not part of her terms as an assistant despite being overloaded with her administrative duties, she said, “It is just that I am enjoying the technical part of my work.”

In 2013, acknowledging her abilities, she became the director's executive assistant, relinquishing her role in the technical division she was previously assigned. However, in 2015, she was permanently appointed as an information officer, a role reflective of her duties as an executive assistant doing administrative work rather than her technical expertise.

**Figure 2**

*Laila and project proponents in fieldwork*



*Note.* Laila shared this photo as her memory of her pride at work as a technical focal person and project coordinator.

After her stint in 2017, Laila was assigned to lead the administrative and finance division. Despite her specialization and joy in performing as a technical focal person, she was told that her assignment to lead the division was because she earned the trust of the former director. Laila shared, “The director was looking for someone trustworthy to handle the administrative division, and he deemed that I am the only one fit for the job.”

In her eagerness to still perform technical work, she juggled both technical and administrative functions. “I am multitasking as an administrative division chief and a technical focal person. Since I am enjoying the technical work that I do, handling administrative functions was difficult for me. I cannot balance both functions.”

At the time of the study, Laila was reassigned to the division where she currently functions based on her *plantilla*<sup>2</sup> as an information officer.

***The Story of Claire, the one who Perceived Herself as a Loser who Thrived***

After graduating from college, Claire decided to look for job opportunities in the public sector inspired by some members of her family who are also public servants. This decision was further rooted in the desire to give back as imparted by her experience and beliefs from the state university she graduated from, “We are scholars of the people; I need to return the service for the people.”

Among all her colleagues, Claire was only one of the few who did not have any connections affiliated with the organization upon being hired. She believed that she was able to enter the organization on merit. While this seems to be a smooth sailing journey, her experience said otherwise. “A loser is someone like me. I do not have connections with the organization. You will not be noticed and appreciated if you are not involved or connected with any of the employees here.”

For five years, Claire worked as a contract of service (COS) employee. On top of her experienced discrimination because of her lack of connections, she also shared the limitations imposed by her employment status.

If you become a permanent employee, you seem to become untouchable... You have the right to say no to tasks, as you will not be expelled at work that easily. The permanent employees in our team are the ones who are perverse. We, COS employees, cover all the work, but when we complain, we are perceived as bad employees.

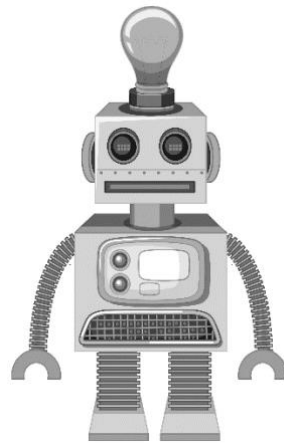
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<sup>2</sup> Plantilla refers to a tenured or a regular status of employment (e.g., permanent, contractual, coterminous, etc.). Permanent is a type of a plantilla status or position.

When asked how she dealt with her unpleasant experience, she initiated to capacitate herself to upskill in the related areas that may contribute to her work. “I looked for other things to do, hence I entered a master’s program and graduate school because when I express my opinion on meetings and they know that I am studying, I feel that my insights are valid.”

**Figure 3**

*A photo of a robot chosen by Claire*



*Note.* Claire shared a photo of a robot when asked how she sees her role in the organization. As she explained, the robot is like her functioning in an automatic manner trying to deliver all the tasks even beyond her salary grade and terms of reference as if she cannot be tired or else the deliverables will be compromised. From Vectors

(<https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/4341980-vintage-robot-toy-on-white-background>)

Apart from her technical functions, she was also one of the Gender and Development (GAD) focal persons of the organization. She shared that she learned and unlearned new concepts that she was also able to apply at home.

I learned a lot. Religion has a large influence on our family because the church teaches us that it is the Father and men who should be obeyed in everything, while women

should be submissive. So, when I became a GAD focal person, I learned that there are also tasks that I can do more than what I was taught.

Claire had worked diligently as a technical staff and was able to land a permanent plantilla position in her five years of stay in the organization. Now working for almost a decade, she was given an additional assignment to serve as the youngest assistant chief on one of the technical units in the organization. Despite being assigned to a supervisory role, she is working concurrently on her technical functions. The assignments piled up, but her salary grade was still the same.

She shared that whenever the unit she was recently assigned to hoped for a positive outcome of a request, she was asked by her supervisor, a female employee, to lobby the request to the management on behalf of the unit as this was perceived to yield positive results. “According to my supervisor, the director listens more to me because he listens more to a person who’s attractive even if he doesn’t agree to what that person is reporting for approval.”

Claire shared those gendered roles and expectations are persistent in the organization as seen in their kind of work.

If there is an event, men comprise the exhibit committee in charge of carrying heavy stuff and the transportation committee because this demands physical strength.

Women can also be part of the transportation committee, but they are expected to be tough.

### ***The Story of Paula, the one who Dreams of Being Known by Name.***

Paula was in her sixth year at the organization. She was a COS employee for five years until she was promoted to a permanent position. Like Claire, she was one of the organization’s youngest permanent plantilla employees.

As she just recently underwent the hiring process, she shared her experience. “They follow rubrics and merit systems in place and consider the character of the staff and the supervisors’ assessment as well, which are deemed important in hiring.”

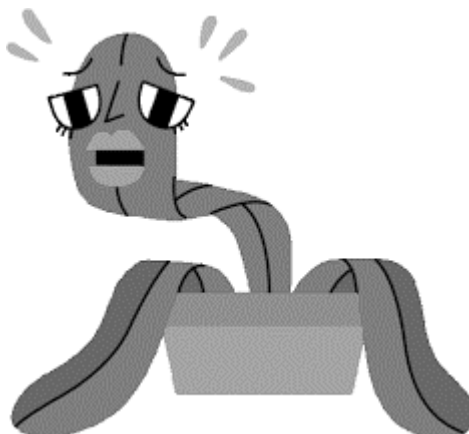
Paula shared her experience about hiring and promotion. As she observed, the selection and promotion board value the candidates' character, which was based on the board's preconceived notions and beliefs. These beliefs, as she claimed, factor gender stereotypes and gendered roles especially in associating the candidate with assignments based on their sex. Paula explained,

Right now, the management is mostly men, but their assistants are women. Our male leaders’ right-hands are females. It is about a worldview that men are leaders and women are the best supporters. In the organization, [gendered roles] is not that loudly discussed, but it still exists.

Paula added that not everyone can lead, some are good followers. She believed that there was minimal to no discrimination taking place if women, despite the majority being in assistant positions, were happy and content in their positions by choice.

**Figure 4**

*A photo of a plant chosen by Paula*



*Note.* Paula compared herself to a plant—sometimes in its full freshness, sometimes dry, sometimes tired. A plant, as she described, is what she is at work. She also mentioned that she, as a plant, is also subjected to different kinds of pests and diseases which makes her more resilient and thrive in the organization despite the challenges. (<https://tenor.com/view/flora-friends-plant-exhausted-tired-dying-gif-14462219>)

In terms of task assignments, Paula also shared her observations that occurred in the division she was assigned in:

Women are more likely to accept unwanted tasks than men. When men do tasks that are not aligned with their expertise, they are not able to perform the tasks well. The supervisors are more lenient to men compared to women. When women fail on their unwanted tasks, they are treated more negatively as compared to the men who fail.

Paula also added: “Women find it more difficult to decline tasks compared to males because we are softer emotionally than males.”

It was Paula’s first time applying for a permanent plantilla position, and she said she earned the position. When asked about her motivation to apply, she shared:

When I became a permanent staff member, I am more confident in my insights. In terms of authority, I am more believable, though sometimes I find it difficult when I am the youngest in a meeting with male project proponents and experts because they do not consider my insights valid. I feel disrespected and sometimes invalidated.

When asked about her dream as a female employee, she sounded fully empowered:

I dream of being a name, that even if they still have not seen me, met me, or seen my photo, they will already know me. I want my name to stand alone as I am [Paula]; and that I can deliver my tasks and my job.

***The Story of Vilma, the one who Wants to Rise to be Visible***

Vilma specialized in her current technical function which she has practiced in the organization for more than a decade. Among the almost 150 employees in the organization, she is one of those with the most advanced educational background.

**Figure 5**

*Photo of Orchids*



*Note.* Vilma shared a photo of orchids shined by the sunlight. She said this signifies her hope and positivity that there are always learnings and light that come in every challenge at work and in life. (<https://www.pinterest.ph/pin/665758757397712150>)

Despite her seasoned experience and exceptional competencies, she remained as a technical unit chief with a salary grade equivalent to only that of a section chief supervised by a division chief. She had numerous attempts to apply for a promotion for a division chief considering her capacities and eligibility, but she failed in her application to be promoted in the organization.

During the time of this study, a new opportunity opened for a vacancy with a higher salary grade compared to her current one. Since some employees perceive that there is a preferred individual for the position, only a few expressed their intent to apply.

Vilma's colleague at one lunch meeting shared her insights regarding the job post: "If that was me, why would I even bother to tire myself in the process when the decision is already decided? Even if the other applicant lacks qualifications, he or she will still be chosen by the management."

Vilma shared that despite this, she continued aspiring to rise in the ranks of the organization to increase the visibility and authority of the unit she currently manages. "I am really looking at an organization hoping that there is an equal footing for units. [Since 2021], I have not intended to apply for a job in another organization except for that division chief post."

While recognizing her eligibility to apply, she also shared that she took back her chance. "I would rather not apply for the job. I will not be chosen despite being eligible; I will no longer apply."

Apart from hiring and promotion, Vilma also shared that she was offered to be detailed<sup>3</sup> as a division chief at the central office. Though this may look promising, she will still be paid based on her current salary grade.

Adamant to take this opportunity as she wants to stay at the organization, the Director who was just recently reinstated as the agency head after his plantilla item was on hold for a while, told her, "You cannot decline that because I will be in danger and you as well. You

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<sup>3</sup> Detailing pertains to assigning individuals on another role to a higher or attached agency of the organization where they originally report to but are still compensated based on their original plantilla position from their original agency.

know that I just recently got back [to my position]. I hope you understand.” Vilma quoted the Director in a non-verbatim manner.

Vilma expressed how she felt after her conversation with the Director:

I want to excel here. It is hard for me to accept the decision and the reality of life, but I think that is the bitter pill that all of us here need to swallow. It is the reality of the office, yet I will still try and accept it, as I have no choice.

She also shared an instance wherein she felt confused why her suggestion was declined despite it being positively regarded by her other colleagues and was deemed valid. She added that because of the stereotypes that the director has about her, her ideas, no matter how good and valid, will not be regarded. She shared, “Is it my idea being contradicted because it is wrong, or is it me, the person, being contradicted?” When asked about how she coped and built her acceptance of the situation, Vilma said:

I am thinking that this would not happen if this wasn’t allowed by God. He trusted me and gave me the chance. I would be capitalizing on the [management’s] trust and God’s trust of putting me in a situation no matter if I do not want it.

### ***The Story of Emy, the one who Climbed Over the Salary Grade***

Emy specialized in public relations and writing despite her background in economics. Although she started fresh at the organization, she had more than 30 years of experience at another government agency where she worked as an entry-level information, press, and public relations (PR) officer. Emy shared her experience with how they gather information for articles they publish.

When it comes to fieldwork, there are more men because they handle information technology (IT)- and photography-related tasks better. Men are not a problem in terms of fieldwork because there will be no menstrual cramps, hormonal imbalance, or menstruation problems.

While men were focused on the external fieldwork activities, women were assigned to the office to write and prepare articles for the editors. Emy shared,

There are more women in PR because we are more articulate, and being an attractive woman is an advantage. Editors are mostly males, and they are busy. Some females are smart but not attractive, but being smart is not what the editors see at first glance.

Working in PR, Emy was used to being called to out of the blue meetings with editors to whom she submitted her articles to, to be part of the newspapers. “I am used to it. Even on nights or weekends, we do unpaid work because it is the nature of my job. It is difficult, I have time. My office is busy even on Sundays.”

Only a few years later, she was promoted to a permanent position and rose from the ranks to division chief. She shared, “My promotion and salary increase came fast because I did everything that they asked me to. I was thinking that I am exploited somehow, but if I did not agree to be exploited, would I be promoted that fast?”

**Figure 6**

*Emy’s Personal Data Sheet*

28. INCLUSIVE DATES (mm/dd/yyyy)		POSITION TITLE (Write in full/Do not abbreviate)
From	To	
11/11/2022	present	Project Development Officer IV
11/11/2014	11/11/2021	Public Relations Officer IV
11/11/2012	11/11/2014	Public Relations Officer IV
11/11/2002	11/11/2012	Public Relations Officer IV
11/11/1993	11/11/2002	Public Relations Officer III
11/11/1991	11/11/1993	Information Officer II
11/11/1990	11/11/1991	Public Relations Officer I
11/11/1989	11/11/1990	Public Relations Officer I
11/11/1989	11/11/1989	Information Officer I
11/11/1989	11/11/1989	Information Editor

*Note.* Emy shared a glimpse of her Personal Data Sheet, which serves as the template of profile, experience, and information for government office applicants, to show how fast she rose into the ranks.

Apart from doing more than what was asked and working even beyond office hours without overtime pay, she also shared her motivation to perform. Despite being overloaded with work and uncomfortable with her engagement with article editors, Emy still did her job flawlessly, but harassment was inevitable. According to Emy:

There were sexual harassers. They will touch your hands when you hand your article over. I was sensitive at first, but later, I just made myself think that it is just my hand, and the experience can be washed away. Once the relationship is established, just let them touch your hand because the most important thing is that your article is published the next day.

While she sought help and raised the concern with her supervisor, she was told, “You are a PR officer. It is part of your job to make them feel at home. It is just a hand; you were not raped.”

Hence, she decided that her motivation to be relieved from those tasks was to climb up the ladder.

I went through that. It is normal. We all go through that. I forced myself to overcome those kinds of work. I became the one who sends articles to editors through my female subordinates. I do not know if they experienced what I experienced, as long as I am over it.

The harassment from the editors she experienced was minimized as she gained authority and rose through the ranks. Further, it was deemed normal that women like Emy in

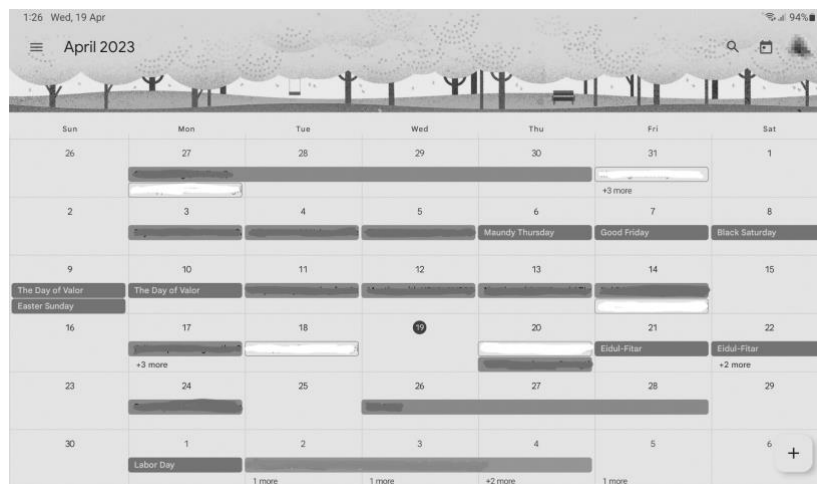
PR shall also experience what Emy had while she was starting on the job which may have possibly posed social and shared impacts.

We must prove ourselves before we can be recognized for what we have as women, but that’s the way it is. It has been part of our culture because we were raised that way. We still have more to prove.

Years later, the agency she worked at closed, which opened the opportunity for her to be hired as an executive assistant of another government agency, but as a COS employee. Emy still wanted to aspire to self-develop and shared her intent to join training opportunities at the agency, however, she was limited by her employment status. “I am saddened that I cannot apply because I am beyond the age requirement. I am also limited by my employment status. I reflected that there are limitations of being a COS employee.”

**Figure 7**

*Screen capture of a calendar*



*Note.* Emy shared a screen capture of a calendar that showed the appointments of her boss. Per Emy, her current work centralizes on arranging his boss’ schedules as his executive assistant.

At the time of the study, she was happy with her role since she was able to apply her multitasking skills in a fast-paced environment even after shifting to a new office.

Look at the director's EAs, they are mostly females, right? Personally, I believe that in an EA, secretarial, or an assistant position, you should have the skill to multitask, and women are the best at multitasking. Let's admit it, men cannot multitask as well as women can.

The women's narratives in the public sector in the study are centered on gendered roles and expectations by the organization and its systems in place, discrimination by their superiors and colleagues that hamper their professional growth and recognition, internalized gendered roles which are affected by the gender socialization from their culture and norms, and other forms of discrimination that intersect with the gender discrimination that they experience. The next part will discuss the different categories of gender workplace discrimination that women have experienced based on the narratives that they shared.

### Minimizing and Coping With Gender Workplace Discrimination

From the narratives of women, this section turns to how women cope with and minimize gender discrimination. Based on their narratives, the following themes were generated:

1. Women try to venture into upskilling opportunities on their own to increase their visibility, chances, and recognition of the team they belong to, despite the effect of having more workload and responsibilities.
  - Vilma earned her post-graduate degrees from her efforts while working at the organization. "I am really looking at an organization hoping that there is an equal footing for my unit." (Vilma)

- “I looked for other things to do, hence I entered a master’s program and graduate school because when I express my opinion on meetings and they know that I am studying, I feel that my insights are valid.” (Claire)
2. Women practice submissiveness to earn favors like promotions so they can surpass their struggles which are minimized once they become a figure of authority. Submissiveness also helps them get through their tasks due to perceived easier ways of approval due to their stereotypes and physical appearance.

Despite this as a coping mechanism, it should be noted that submissiveness is also an effect of interpersonal and internalized discrimination. It can be done by women consciously as seen through the following narratives.

- “My promotion and salary increase came fast because I did everything that they asked me to. I was thinking that I am exploited somehow, but if I did not agree to be exploited, would I be promoted that fast?” (Emy)
- “I forced myself to overcome those kinds of work. I became the one who sends articles to editors through my female subordinates. I do not know if they experienced what I experienced, as long as I am over it.” (Emy)
- “According to my supervisor, the director listens more to me because he listens more to a person who’s attractive even if he doesn’t agree to what I am reporting for approval.” (Claire)

Women also practice submissiveness unconsciously as manifested by the internalized discrimination experienced by the research participants:

- “It is normal. We all go through that.” (Emy)
3. Women turn to their spiritual beliefs to learn how to cope with and accept their conditions in the workplace in view of discrimination.

“I am thinking that this would not happen if this wasn’t allowed by God. He trusted me and gave me the chance. I would be capitalizing on the [management’s] trust and God’s trust of putting me in a situation no matter if I do not want it.” (Vilma)

The coping strategies mentioned above represent both conscious and subconscious actions employed by women to navigate their daily work lives despite the discrimination they experience. It is evident from their narratives that these coping mechanisms are limited to experienced individualized discrimination, while there are little to no coping nor mitigating mechanisms to help address other forms, such as institutional, interpersonal, and intersecting forms of discrimination.

#### Examining Experiences of Gender Workplace Discrimination

The narratives of women were analyzed into four types of gender workplace discrimination that are interlinked to maintain the state of discrimination. The first three categories: institutionalized, interpersonal, and internalized, were initially referred from the types of other forms of discrimination discussed by Rodriguez-Knutsen (2023) (i.e., racism) as deemed similar with the narratives of the research participants in the study. The researcher also added the fourth type, which is the intersectional, based on the analysis of the other forms of discrimination that intertwine with the gender workplace discrimination experienced by women.

#### ***Institutionalized***

Institutionalized or systemic gender workplace discrimination has its roots in the laws and the current system that is practiced by the organization and its management. This may

also include the unwritten norms and culture as perpetuated by the system and principles the organization upholds.

Though merit systems as advised are said to be adopted, preferential and biased hiring is still apparent. The preference of male leaders to lead divisions has minimized the representations of female leaders in the organization, which has led to unwritten rules that only qualified males can apply and aspire for such positions. Meanwhile, while women take on executive roles, they are limited to the assistant and right-hand staff of the division chiefs, who are males. While there is one female division chief, she leads the division in charge of public relations and communication—an assignment that is perceived to be gendered and more aligned to females as manifested by its number of staff dominated also by women. Conclusively, the existing merit system within the organization was rooted from the existing culture in the workplace of the research participants as they had observed and experienced.

The following narratives from the research participants showed how institutionalized gender discrimination in the workplace were manifested:

- “Look at the director’s EAs, they are mostly females, right? Personally, I believe that in an EA, secretarial, or an assistant position, you should have the skill to multitask, and women are the best at multitasking. Let’s admit it, men cannot multitask as well as women can.” (Emy)
- “It is about a worldview that men are leaders and women are the best supporters.” (Paula)

The management’s instructions are treated as valid as policies. Due to the political nature of hiring and promotion which are heavily influenced by the management’s preference, merit systems, despite being in place sometimes, are intentionally overlooked due to the call

for compliance. Vilma narrated how the director's directives are treated as the rule and reality of the organization:

- “I want to excel here. It is hard for me to accept the decision and the reality of life, but I think that is the bitter pill that all of us here need to swallow. It is the reality of the office, yet I will still try and accept it, as I have no choice.” (Vilma)

To further strengthen the analysis of the narratives on institutionalized gender-based workplace discrimination, the researcher also conducted participant observation to identify the enablers and hindrances within the organization that concern gender workplace discrimination.

In line with the Philippine Commission on Women's initiative, the government agency under study celebrates National Women's Month every March, led by its GFPS. The organization's GFPS is tasked to lead in mainstreaming gender perspective and assessment of the gender-responsiveness of the organization's policies, plans, and programs. Part of the activities is the training and seminars that aim to increase the awareness of the employees regarding gender sensitivity and related gender issues. Last March 2023, the organization led two seminars on gender sensitivity in the workplace, highlighting gendered roles and how an organization can be inclusive in its efforts to promote just employment and work assignments for all. The seminar was the first initiative of the organization from its 35 years of foundation to discuss concepts such as gender discrimination, gender roles, and stereotypes in the context of the workplace.

Though the initial implementation was a success, the awareness raising should be a continuous commitment and initiative of the organization as cultural change does not happen in an instant. Despite the GFPS being aware of this, the GFPS is not functional in terms of proactively programming gender mainstreaming activities in the organization. Since the composition of GFPS is only an ad hoc function and the organization lacks the number of

capable personnel to lead and join the GFPS, there is no designated personnel who can consistently focus to attend to the mandates of the GFPS.

With the perceived successful start of the GAD seminar series last March 2023, the management included the crafting of strategies for gender mainstreaming lined up on the activities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. While efforts may initially start with the capacitation of the agency's GFPS, the management perceives that these efforts could benchmark the building of awareness, capacity, and consciousness of making women visible, people with diverse genders, and other employees belonging from other sectors who can also contribute meaningfully to the agency's mandate and operations.

This may be a promising idea, but it has yet to undergo proper program contextualization and assessment for proper inclusion in the agency's lineup of activities for the succeeding years which are yet to be approved by the management. Unless the program has been successfully defended for implementation in the central approving body, the plan for gender mainstreaming for the succeeding year is not yet cast in stone.

The organization has an existing employees' association where this can be discussed and proposed for assessment or for gender audit to the management. However, due to employees' reluctance to speak up about challenges out of fear for their job security, openly addressing these issues among colleagues is challenging. Hence, organization-led seminars where gender discrimination is being discussed may be helpful for affected women to feel more comfortable to open up to the employees' association which can provide them a safe space to share their struggles.

Apart from the gender mainstreaming strategies, there are also other budding efforts to retrofit national policies to the organization's context. Particularly, this refers to the reform of the human resource policies in preparation to acquire a level award for the Program to

Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM).

The conscious efforts of the organization for the PRIME-HRM are heavily institutional like the compliance of the organization on the CSC's merit system and Equal Employment Opportunity Principle; hence, in the long run, the initiatives may be more leaning towards being compliance-based rather than being driven by warranted change for a more inclusive and enabling environment for women and other marginalized employees to thrive in the organization.

In summary, the human resource policies and procedures, since generally paralleled with what was prescribed by CSC, are weak and are not always clear; hence, this makes way for more gray area mechanisms that make room for hiring discrimination to happen. Existing efforts do exist to mainstream gender equality and address discrimination, but unwritten and informal norms also form part of the institutional culture of an organization.

### ***Interpersonal***

Interpersonal is also referred to as personally mediated. This type of discrimination happens when women's conscious and subconscious biases affect how they perceive and interact with others. Stereotypes of themselves and others are often categorized under this type.

Research participants who were in executive positions still struggle with exercising their authority especially when seated with a board with male-dominated executives because of gender stereotypes. Vilma's experience is an example:

- “Is it my idea being contradicted because it is wrong, or is it me, the person, being contradicted?” (Vilma)

Women were given more tasks—most of which they could not refuse because they were perceived to be quality workers; but when it comes to recognition and promotion, they become invisible. Laila’s and Paula’s experiences and observations, respectively, are examples of this:

- “The director was looking for someone trustworthy to handle the administrative division, and he deemed that I am the only one fit for the job.” (Laila)
- “Women are more likely to accept unwanted tasks than men. When men do tasks not aligned with the expertise that they have to work, they are not able to perform the tasks well. The supervisors are more lenient to men compared to women. When women fail on their unwanted tasks, they are treated more negatively as compared to men who fail.” (Paula)
- “Women find it more difficult to decline tasks compared to males because we are softer emotionally than males.” (Paula)

A woman who has experienced discrimination in terms of gendered roles may consciously or unconsciously discriminate against her fellow women by justifying the normality of her experiences, just like how Emy shared:

- “I went through that. It is normal. We all go through that.” (Emy)

Further, while justifying one’s experience as normal may be considered as one of the ways to cope, it may also be framed as a form of discrimination towards another woman. Hence, creating a ripple effect of interpersonal discrimination even towards fellow women in the workplace.

- “I forced myself to overcome those kinds of work. I became the one who sends articles to editors through my female subordinates. I do not know if they experienced what I experienced, as long as I am over it.” (Emy)

Due to the perceived superiority of males and their roles, some women have been victims of sexual harassment. A worse case happened when women who sought the help of authorities within the organization were silenced and forced to move on without resolve, like Emy's experience as an example:

- “You are a PR officer. It is part of your job to make them feel at home. It is just a hand; you were not raped.” (Emy)

### ***Internalized***

Referred to as the most toxic type, internalized discrimination is manifested by women who have accepted and believed the negative experiences that happened resulting in “self-devaluation, resignation, and feelings of hopelessness” (Rodriguez-Knutsen, 2023, para. 3).

Due to the hiring, promotion, and delegation culture existing, some of the research participants refuse to take on leadership roles as they feel helpless especially when competing with male candidates. This can be seen on Vilma's account:

- “I would rather not apply [for the job]. I will not be chosen despite being eligible; I will no longer apply.” (Vilma)

Many women refused to participate in the study when invited for an interview due to the threat of their jobs being lost as it is the time of the year when service contracts are renewed. This is also due to the known dynamics of the politics within the office.

- “If that was me, why would I even bother to tire myself in the process when the decision is already made ?” (Vilma's colleague)

Internalized discrimination may also be analyzed from Paula's belief that the problem with and the blame for the system belongs completely to the individuals, particularly their options (i.e., Paula believed that there was minimal to no discrimination taking place if women, despite the majority being in assistant positions, were happy and content in their

positions by choice.) This belief can further be nuanced by analyzing what are the options or choices available, how these options were made available to women, and how women feel about these options available for them. Happiness and contentment of women on their choices, as described by Paula, mask the systemic discrimination taking place within the organization.

### ***Intersectional***

Based on the narratives, gender workplace discrimination also intersects with other forms of discrimination on account of connections with internal employees or the management, employment status, age, and even the kind of work, whether technical or administrative. The research participants also shared accounts on intersecting forms of discrimination with gender discrimination in the workplace:

- “A loser is someone like me. I do not have connections with the organization. You will not be noticed and appreciated if you are not involved or connected with any of the employees here.” (Claire)
- “When I became a permanent staff member, I am more confident in my insights. In terms of authority, I am more believable, though sometimes I find it difficult when I am the youngest in a meeting with male project proponents and experts because they do not consider my insights valid. I feel disrespected and sometimes invalidated.” (Claire)

As analyzed from the women’s narratives, the discrimination they face revolves around power imbalances. This includes institutionalized discrimination, where policies exert noticeable control over women, interpersonal and intersectional discrimination manifested through exclusion and limited options, and instances of discriminating against others, intersecting with various forms of discrimination. Additionally, internalized discrimination

emerges from entrenched narratives and cultures that normalize power imbalances, as it is an exercise of hidden power. In essence, all forms of workplace discrimination ultimately stem from power dynamics and contribute to gender inequality.

## Recommendations

The recommendations for this research are twofold: one set is intended for future researchers interested in conducting similar studies, while the other is aimed at public sector organizations' institutionalized mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.

1. **On the conduct of the research.** It was observed that during data collection, most women expressed their preference for interviews to be conducted before or after office hours. When questioned about their preference, they cited a cautiousness to avoid being identified as participants in the study.

The research was limited to analyzing the forms of discrimination women experienced through their narratives. With additional time and the alleviation of women's fears of being recognized by their colleagues or fellow participants, incorporating a focus group discussion (FGD) could provide them with a sense of solidarity and an opportunity to collectively strategize ways to address, or at least mitigate, workplace gender discrimination. Future researchers conducting similar studies may consider incorporating FGDs to raise stakeholder awareness of the oppression or discrimination experienced and help the communities collectively act to address these challenges.

2. **On improving the functionality of the existing institutionalized mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.** Recalling that the research participants had their interviews outside office hours, and fear their identities being known for surfacing gender discrimination in the workplace, it can be concluded that this may be associated with

how gender workplace discrimination is indeed a taboo and an unrecognized problem in the organization. Note that this study has only presented gender discrimination on women employees; other gender identities may be a different topic needing attention and addressing. This may also be similar with other government organizations with employees experiencing other forms of unrecognized workplace discrimination.

To address gender discrimination, the first step is to raise the topic for open discussion, and the initiatives on increasing awareness through seminars as well as the commitment of the management to include gender mainstreaming in the priorities may be good benchmarking activities to talk about and address this concern.

Prior to conducting strategies for organization-wide gender mainstreaming, the organization should first prioritize the conduct of a gender audit. According to Harvey (2010), a gender audit is a tool and a process to assess the integration of gender into an organization's policies, programs, and projects. Focused on internal clients, the gender audit uses a participatory process to raise the organization's strengths and weaknesses. It can also explore political barriers and constraints in terms of gender policies and programs in the organization. Thus, the results of the gender audit can be used in properly strategizing the gender mainstreaming efforts fit to the context and needs of the organization.

Apart from the agency's GFPS, the employees' associations are possible avenues for people to share common interests, dreams, and safe spaces. Given that it is a recognized institution with ample power to represent the employees' voices to the management, employees' associations can be a tool for proposing policies and initiatives which can change the current system in place for the betterment of all employees.

## Conclusion: Finding and Recognizing Gaps, Making the Change, one by one

Despite the existence of policies and mechanisms aimed at ensuring equal and just employment for all men and women, this study reveals a deeper context requiring attention regarding gender discrimination in the workplace. The limited studies on gender workplace discrimination in the Philippine public sector, which represents a significant portion of the labor force, have resulted in the invisibility of these issues, exacerbating and further marginalizing women in the workplace. Based on discussions, gender discrimination in the public sector workplace, particularly within the government agency under study, can be categorized into four types: institutionalized, interpersonal, internalized, and intersectional.

While there are adopted and institutionalized policies, such as those from the CSC or other national regulatory entities, and collaborative efforts by civil society organizations to minimize gender discrimination in the workplace, the management, which controls the adoption of these policies, may implement counterproductive measures and perpetuate the problem through organizational culture. Considering that an organization can be likened to a community, interpersonal interactions among women and among team members can perpetuate conscious and unconscious gender workplace discrimination, particularly concerning gendered roles and organizational culture. As also highlighted in the discussions, the unchanging outcomes of failed applications for promotion and opportunities have led to hopelessness and internalized gender discrimination. Lastly, while the initial three categories contribute to maintaining the state of discrimination, other forms of discrimination intersect with women's experiences in the workplace, including factors like age, employment status, and nature of work, among others.

The women's ways to cope as observed are mostly their internal efforts. The initiative to organize is yet to begin once the problem has been taken out in the open to be recognized and talked about. This is the moment when collective solutions within the organization and

the affected sector will be discussed, as well as representations will be properly placed in making decisions. These, in complementation with the organization's efforts, will be enough to make at least a dent of change in addressing gender discrimination in the workplace starting in the organization which may later be adopted by other public sector agencies.

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## Liwanag sa Dilim: The Case of Ronda ng Kababaihan in Their Pursuit for Human Security

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Kevin David S. Estigoy

### ABSTRACT

This study interrogates the conventional understanding of human security which is top-down, state-centric and gender-blind. When human security is jeopardized by the erratic tendencies of the state and state actors, social structures, and social institutions, people are forced to create notions and actions that directly address their day-to-day dealings and current realities. It is then argued that human security discourses “shift from the state to the individual” (King & Murray, 2001, p. 589). This study zeroed in on elevating the value of human life and dignity; primarily accounting women’s place and role in the human security agenda. This study gleaned from the shared lived experiences of the members of *Ronda ng Kababaihan (RNK)*, a women’s volunteer group in Santa Ana, Pateros that provides community services during the day and community patrols at night. It explored the interplay of their context, vulnerabilities, strategies, and identities as they navigate through crises. Furthermore, this study outlined the nexus of women empowerment and human security in relation to community development.

Keywords: *Human Security, Gendered Human Security, Women Development, Women’s Rights, Human Security from below*

## **Introduction**

The Duterte Administration was marred with violence and human rights abuses with its iron fist governance that used “draconian” or “militaristic” approaches, often victimizing the poor and the marginalized. This is seen not only in his so-called war on drugs but also in how he dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic. This led scholars and activists to describe Duterte’s iron-fisted governance as relying on “securitized” approaches to address crises, invariably leading to waging war against the poor (Atienza, et al., 2020; Philrights, 2019).

Conventional human rights theory posits the state as the primary duty bearer; it has the mandate to provide and care for its people. Every individual, as a rights claimant, has the power to demand what is due to them to have a quality life (United Nations Human Rights, 1993). This is what human security seeks to ensure. It aims to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats that promote long-term human fulfillment (Annan, 2000). While the state is duty-bound to provide security to its people, the state may consequently be the source of insecurity for its arbitrary use of power and violence. This very phenomenon is apparent in the shared lived experiences of the members of *Ronda ng Kababaihan* (RNK) in Santa Ana, Pateros. In examining their case, this study explores the interplay of grassroots women empowerment in addressing human security issues, specifically when the state and state actors are the causes of insecurity.

The RNK came to be known for their *pagroronda*, a community-based activity aimed to deter vigilante killings which became rampant at the height of Duterte’s war. Later, RNK’s *pagroronda* served to protect their community from COVID-19. In many ways, RNK’s *pagroronda* is a tacit rejection of Duterte’s militaristic stance on illegal drug-related extrajudicial killings and COVID-19 response.

When state and state actors fail, or worse, renege in their duty to protect their own

people, human security is prejudiced. RNK's actions provide compelling arguments to revisit the notions of human security that are conventionally understood as being top-down, state-centric, and gender-blind. It follows that human security is then being used as a subjective construct based on one's personal valuation of their contextual realities, and perception of threats and opportunities in day-to-day dealings. This study reimagines human security by looking at it "from below" (i.e., community-based actions to address various forms of insecurity), and in highlighting the critical role that women play in it, and how they withstand insecurity.

### ***Intersectionality of Human Security and Gender-based Security***

This research examines the intersectionality of bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based framework of human security as demonstrated by RNK, and provides an alternative analysis of the human security agenda that is contrary to the dominant top-down, state-centric, and gender-blind conceptions of security. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the socio-economic and political realities that RNK face in Sitio Pagkakaisa, Santa Ana, Pateros?
2. What types of violence are being experienced by RNK causing insecurity?
3. How does RNK deal with insecurity?
4. How do local notions and practices of human security contribute to community development?

The conventional understanding of human security centers on upholding the principle of state sovereignty (Del Roso, 1995). With its statist inclination, an emerging understanding of human security was pivotal, and critics pointed out the need to shift human security studies away from the state and bring it closer to the individuals, and safeguard the vital core of all

human lives from critical pervasive threats (Alkire, 2001; King & Murray, 2001). However, human security has its share of criticisms on several grounds, both from the actors and its processes. As Paris (2001) emphasized, human security is extraordinarily expansive and vague, covering physical security to psychological well-being, which makes it difficult to operationalize. Human rights activists are concerned that human security may potentially displace the focus from human rights and development into security concerns. For instance, embedding human rights policy in a security discourse rather than strengthening its legal hold; ensuring that every individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential (Annan, 2000). While there are materials and resources on human security and its relationship to development, there's still a dearth of understanding on how local notions and actions of individuals and communities contribute to and shape human security—particularly placing women on the human security agenda. Furthermore, Hoogensen (2005) emphasized that by using gender analysis it will expose the inherent weakness of the top-down articulations of the human security concept which is neglecting the bottom. Gender analysis within the human security framework is crucial in understanding how individuals deal with insecurity, violence, and inequality zeroing in on its intersectionality—context, vulnerabilities, strategies and identities. A gender-sensitive human security framework will uncover controversies on gender norms and gender disparities in family roles, community dynamics, education, economic opportunities, health care, safety and security, and political participation. Prioritizing gender in the human security discourses can foster more just, peaceful, and resilient societies.

### ***Methodology***

This research gleans from the participatory approaches employed by community development (CD) research. The scholarly intent of CD research is to foster societal change and empowerment. Development practitioners and the like make use of these key practices in the following ways:

- a. Use of a trans-disciplinary approach that cuts across different disciplines and considers the intersectionality of class, gender, and ethnic perspectives as part of the analytical framework.
- b. Research as strategy for capacity building especially among marginalized groups, and anchored on community development practice, knowledge, and skills.
- c. Ensuring scientific rigor to improve research dependability and application.
- d. Theorizing from below and indigenization of concepts.
- e. Accountability of the researcher to the different ‘publics’ (Tungpalan & Bawagan, 2015).

This research utilizes participatory workshops to identify local notions and practices of safety and human security. These workshops include *Puno ng Problema* [Conflict Tree Analysis], *Usapang Pangarap* [Dream Board], *Talalarawan* [Auto-photography], *Kwento Namin* [Our Story], and *Mapa ng Sitio Pagkakaisa* [Community Mapping]. The participatory workshops were designed so that RNK members could reflect on their collective practices and connect it with their daily lives.

Smith and Osborn’s (2008) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework was used for data interpretation and analysis which focused on how participants are making sense of their personal and social world and the meanings they attach to a particular experience, event, or state. There are three key features to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Experience, namely: experience, idiography and interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Experience means attending to aspects of reality which matter to people and give rise to particular behavior and actions. Idiography focuses on how to make sense of the concrete, the particular and the unique circumstances of a person, and how a person navigates these circumstances. Interpretation has two major components: Development of interpretative layers and the concept of the ‘gem’. Developing interpretative layers employs a double

hermeneutics: hermeneutics of empathy and hermeneutics of suspicion. Navigating between the whole and the various parts is one way of gleaning meanings from the material which can be further examined. The concept of the ‘gem’ illuminates and enhances interpretation and understanding. Typically, the gem is a ‘remark’ that has deeper meaning that warrants further examination (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

### **Conceptual Framework**

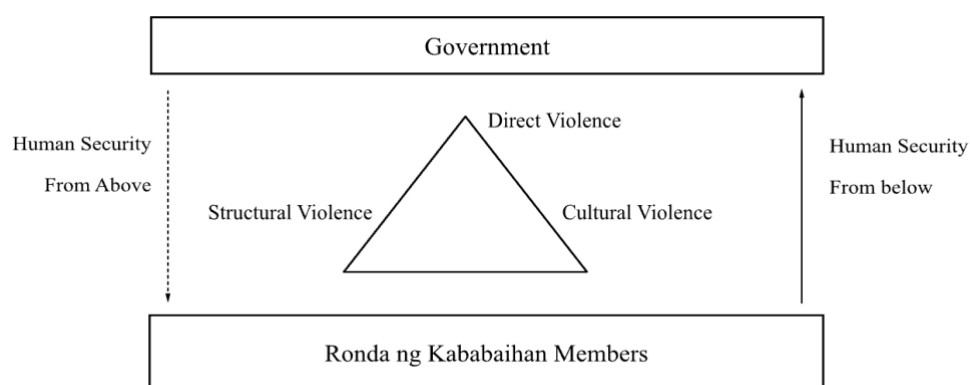
This research interrogates the dominant notion of human security that is primarily top-down, state-centric and gender-blind. Human security was first coined in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report. The overall goal was to expand the concept of security, which had been narrowly construed as security of territory against external aggression and protection of national interests through policies. (UNDP, 1994). From this UNDP formulation, human security seeks to shift the referent object of ‘security from external threat’ to ‘security of the people’. It was about ensuring basic human needs in economic, health, food, social, and environmental terms. Furthermore, it provides for the separation of the internal and external security functions of the state, and underpins the roles of the state and state actors in providing human security. Consequently, with this understanding of human security, very important components were overlooked to address contemporary controversies, such as when the state or state actors are the cause of insecurity. As a recourse, this study delves into the lived experiences of RNK as an alternative proof of concept that is bottom-up, community-driven and gender-based, centering on the individual or community's plight towards a gendered human security agenda.

The issue of violence is central to the human security discourse. According to Galtung’s (2004) Violence Triangle, cultural violence legitimizes both structural and direct

violence, linking these three types of violence in causal chains with cultural tenements that enable exploitation, repression, oppression, alienation, and other forms of structural violence. These three types of violence (cultural, structural, and direct) build on each other (Galtung, 2004). It provides perspectives in understanding motivations, actions, and impacts of the various state actors and structures involved in a conflict. Galtung (2004) posits that in societies with conflict, it is imperative to uncover specific causes as well as more general conditions that increase the likelihood of violent conflict or insecurity. According to Galtung (2004), these are the pertinent conditions making violent conflict or insecurity more likely: (a) little or no democratic means of dispute resolution; minorities excluded from political representation; (b) wealth, territory or resources shared unequally and controlled by powerful elites; (c) poverty; (d) government is above the law, making arbitrary and illegitimate decisions; (e) judicial system is absent or interfered with, not independent or fair, and (f) human rights are abused.

**Figure 1**

*Bottom-up, community-driven and gender-based human security*



*Note:* Adapted from “Violence, War and Their Impact on Visible and Invisible Effects of Violence, Polygog” by J. Galtung, 2004. Forum für interkulturelle Philosophie 5.

Meanwhile, gender theory provides insights on how societal structures of power, norms and roles contribute to insecurity. Gender theory rooted at the individual level asserts that security poses threats to the empowerment of an individual. It serves as a framework of action through discursive positioning that situates women as central, or as bare minimum, a part of the human security agenda. Hoogensen and Stuvøy (2006), underscored that gender approaches not only provide depth and certainty to a wider human security concept but also warrant theoretical conceptualizations that emanate from the bottom-up. In this sense, a gendered human security framework provides the integration of women and gender perspectives as potent resources to provide stability and lasting human security. When women employ resistance in order to survive, it is a crucial manifestation of human agency in human security.

Nussbaum (2011) formulated a theory of fundamental entitlements as her take on capabilities approach through central capabilities namely: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one's environment. These entitlements impose duties on state and state actors, social structure, and social institutions, who must ensure that all people meet minimal thresholds of those capabilities. For women to exercise agency, they must have security and live without fear of coercion or violence (UNDP, 2005).

This study outlines the alternative notions and actions of individuals in an urban poor community in relation to human security from the bottom level by learning from the shared lived experiences of the members of RNK. It aims to shed light on the following objectives:

1. Describe the different kinds of violence experienced by RNK.
2. Determine how the members of ENK respond to insecurity.
3. Illustrate how local notions and practices of human security contribute to community

development.

Hence, this study revisits the conventional human security and reimagines frameworks from the bottom-up, and particularly understanding human security from the eyes of women, as exemplified by the members of the RNK.

## **Results and Discussions**

### ***Life Before Tokhang***

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022), Pateros is a lone municipality and the smallest local government unit in Metro Manila, with over 65,227 residents as of 2022. The field site is located in *Sitio Pagkakaisa, Barangay Santa Ana* where many of the residents are mostly migrants from provinces or neighboring cities hoping for a better life. As an informal settler area, the residents have to endure the daily grind just to make ends meet. The current rate of population growth is now outpacing the rate at which cities are able to respond to the need for housing and provide basic necessities. This is the very condition under which informal settlers spread, but also thrive. Living in a dense neighborhood, residents in *Sitio Pagkakaisa* frequently face issues such as lack of electricity connection, prompting residents to resort to the illegal and dangerous tapping of electrical circuits or *jumper* just to have power in their houses. There is also an inadequate supply of water. Residents have to queue to fetch water from available sources such as water pumps and filtration for their daily consumption. In addition, more than half of the residents in *Sitio Pagkakaisa* do not own their lots and houses because of problems with land ownership policies. Gleaning on the narratives of the members of RNK, pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' privacy. Janice, an RNK member, shared, "The one who handles us here is being replaced every so often, that is why we are having difficulty in processing payment for our house and lot. It is a challenge to get proper

documentation.”

Nonetheless, things were relatively normal pre-tokhang in Sitio Pagkakaisa. Children could freely play and roam around. Students go to school, study, and play after. Some even stay up late playing basketball and street games. Construction workers, drivers, laborers, and vendors are among the men and fathers who go to work. Women and mothers go about their usual routine of running the house, attending to their families, work, business, and side hustles. According to Jade, an RNK member, “Before tokhang, I was a dresser in Guadalupe, but because we usually go home late at night, I decided to stop working there when our neighbor got killed,” Mika, another RNK member, added that her daily sales were affected, “Before the tokhang incident, we earned much from selling ice because they buy from our store as late as one o’clock in the morning.”

### ***Ghost Town***

I was awake at that time because I was tending to my sick child. We could hear noisy dog barks in the vicinity. I peeped through our window, and I saw tall people wearing helmets aiming their flashlights at the victim’s house until we heard crying and shouting, immediately followed by gunshots. We were terrified because we heard the cry for help from the victims, but we could not offer help because of fear.

Janice, an RNK member, still vividly remembers that grim night when it changed everything for all the residents there.

Unidentified men notoriously killed Rommel and Joseph in front of their families, who were both accused of using illegal drugs. Eight bullets penetrated their bodies, killing them instantly. Petrified family members incessantly mourned and pleaded for help but to no avail. It was only after the shooters had left that neighbors were able to extend help. When they arrived at the crime scene, they saw the victims in cold blood, a gory night having witnessed

blood leaking from their bodies.

“Our neighborhood looked like a ghost town after this incident,” Janice recounted. Sitio Pagkakaisa was filled with terror that even extending sympathies to the victims was a daunting dilemma. Sandy, an RNK member, described the unidentified men as the Bonnet Gang, “A group that mercilessly kills people involved in illegal drugs. They murder people inhumanely.” There were only very few neighbors who went to the wake because of fear of the Bonnet Gang. Children and the elderly were traumatized; as early as seven in the evening there were no more people on the streets. Everyone made sure to always double lock their doors. They were fearful to hear motorcycles roving the area. Fear was sown in every resident, terrified of another killing hereafter.

In the coming months, the killings have become more frequent in Santa Ana, Pateros. Janice narrated that her husband was even a witness to this:

My husband, an ambulance driver, responds when there are victims. He carries the victims of EJK [extrajudicial killing] to the ambulance, but is usually dead on arrival.

When my husband arrives home, he cannot contain the terror that he witnessed.

After that heinous incident, residents in Sitio Pagkakaisa feared the possibility of being the next target of the Bonet Gang. On the last night of the wake, it was rumored that “drug cleaning” in the area had just begun. Everyone was worried about their loved ones’ safety. It brought havoc to the community. These terrifying moments compelled the mothers and women in the community to protect their families by bearing the brunt and taking up the responsibility as the night watchers of Sitio Pagkakaisa.

One night, as she was grieving, Liezel called her friends to their house hoping to get comfort from them. As they discussed what they witnessed and how they felt about it, they all agreed that they needed to do something to prevent the Bonet Gang from attacking and killing

again in their neighborhood. Janice shared,

When the two men were interred, terror-filled our place. It was during this time that Liezel, a relative of the victims, decided to form a group to patrol every night. They overcame their fears to put an end to the killings.

Eight brave women leveraged their fears to protect their families by patrolling around their neighborhood which continues until today. They call themselves Ronda ng Kababaihan. These mothers leave their homes in the dead of night, finding shelter and security from each other, courageously placing their lives in danger from pagroronda.

The Bonet Gang killed more than 60 drug suspects in Pateros, eight months into the drug war (Baldwin, 2017). The violence compelled Mayor Ike Ponce III to denounce the Gang and condemn the extrajudicial killings, putting up banners plastered around town declaring that extrajudicial violence “is not the right process to stop the proliferation of illegal drugs, we value human life and adhere to the rule of law” (Baldwin, 2017, para. 3). He was the only local executive to oppose the administration’s hallmark policy openly at that time.

### ***Light Amidst Darkness***

For the past five years, RNK has established a night patrol routine that begins when the clock hits six in the evening. After her day of work as a Barangay staff, Janice, the President of RNK, goes house to house to remind the members of their pagroronda and sends a message to their Facebook group chat. She also notifies their contact in the local Philippine National Police (PNP) to alert them of their patrol route; at times the local police accompany the group. This instance fortifies the analysis that the community and the law enforcement are intertwined, except that RNK members navigate across the space towards their own objectives, whether to oppose or collaborate with the state and state actors, social structures and social institutions. This reading draws upon a broader understanding of the state and

society as disaggregated rather than monolithic.

They start patrolling around 10:30 in the evening. Armed with only flashlights, they check every block and alley. On their night patrols, they respond to neighbor disputes, drunk people in the streets, disruptive neighbors, troublemakers, youth gang wars, emergency patients, and even sibling and marital conflicts wherein they act as mediators. These findings show that they see emergencies and communal conflicts not only from the point of view of peace and order enforced through discipline, but also on rebuilding neighbor relations and transforming relationships through mediations and counseling sessions. However, in cases that are difficult to handle, they work closely with the local law enforcement for carceral approaches. Janice shared the fulfillment she felt with what they had achieved,

As a result of our night patrolling, people's trust in our community was restored, from the previous ghost town. The local police continue to believe in and support what we do, which is why they decided to include us in patrolling different Barangays in Santa Ana for further law enforcement. Together with the local police, we apprehend minors and drunkards on the street. Even though we are women, we are not afraid of the Bonet Gang, we will continue to strive.

### ***Offenses, Sanctions, and Penalties***

During this study, an RNK member was apprehended for street gambling. The arrested RNK member only sat and played cards because the original player had to do something, and she wanted her to keep playing her cards because there was a good chance of winning. RNK pleaded with the local police and tried to leverage their connection with the authorities, or what is called *arborin sa mga pulis*, to help them get their member out of the cell. However, the local police stood firm and asked for PHP 10,000 as bail money for the five people they've arrested, including the RNK member. RNK solicited money to raise PHP 10,000, and after

two weeks, they were able to post bail for the release of the five people arrested. This incident shows the glaring concern of law enforcement, that people will have to thread the needle to avoid encounters with the law, and this translates to the tensions between resistance and resilience in the community.

From the stories gathered, seemingly there are no sharply defined policies concerning the peace and order in their area. Residents are well aware that there are drug users and peddlers in their neighborhood. They do know some groups who freely peddle drugs to regular customers within the community, although many of those involved are outsiders. Additionally, residents participate in the illegal drug trade for daily survival. There are apparent tensions and contradictions in the policies, regulations, and implementation associated with the use and trade of illegal drugs not only in their local community, but by and large in the country. This stems from the militaristic approach of the Duterte administration that uses brute force. However, a more conscientious approach can be operationalized that focuses on the restoration, rehabilitation, and reintegration of the person.

### ***Different Faces of Violence***

Residents in Sitio Pagkakaisa are no stranger to community violence. According to Janice, “Drinking sprees that go unabated until wee hours of the night...are our problems here. Theft is also a common problem; even small items such as clothes hanging to dry are targets for thieves.” It has formed part of the direct violence residents have to deal with in their community.

Structural violence such as access to and shortage of water and electric supply, and land ownership are also pressing issues in the community. According to Mika,

Two parties are claiming ownership of the same piece of property. This has been a problem for a long time because no one knows who the rightful owner of the property

is. Just like in our case with Ate Janice, we can be displaced at any time.

Due to lack of clarity regarding legal property ownership, some RNK members are at risk of having their houses demolished. Mika expressed her disappointment,

We are constantly anxious that our house will be demolished because someone claims ownership of the lot on which our house is built. Although we have been here for a long time, we may be evicted at any time because another person claims ownership of the property.

Furthermore, direct, structural, and cultural violence were aggregated and even worsened from the unexpected onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of job opportunities remain prominent in Pateros, which results in cyclical poverty, with the majority of residents living on the edge to provide for their families.

A key finding of this study is a more serious domestic problem recurring within households. Janice narrated her frightening experience with her husband, “Actually, I have experienced domestic abuse from my husband. When we fight, he abuses me physically.” Janice shared that as a leader, she feels very bothered:

I am a respected leader here, and even our City Mayor knows me well, but still, my husband disrespects and abuses me...Even my daughter got raped by my husband.

This is the painful truth about myself that even RNK members are not aware of.

Janice's statement is very telling of the realities of some households in Santa Ana, Pateros. This portrays the struggle of cognitive dissonance and compartmentalization suffered by a woman as a coping mechanism, wherein she incessantly distills conflicting thoughts or emotions into distinct parts of her consciousness. This allows her to function effectively in one area of her life while remaining passive in another. In the Philippines, women may feel empowered in public spheres while being conditioned to accept subservient roles in private,

particularly being in a patriarchal society.

### ***Violence Causing Insecurity***

Esther believes that poverty is the primary culprit of insecurity. She pointed out that, “If a person is not impoverished, they will not resort to wrongdoing; poverty is always the root cause of wrongdoing.” This relates to another concern on why violence becomes prevalent. As Sandy puts it,

The root cause, in my opinion, is bad governance which occurs when laws are not followed from the President down to the lowest level of governance; also, where discipline is always lacking among the residents. This leads to a slew of malpractices and corruption, which is already systemic in the bureaucracy. This is also what is lacking in Pateros, a small town that should have been a city by now but was hindered due to poor governance and disunity among elected officials. This has been the situation since we moved in the 1990s and it still prevails.

Wendy, on the other hand, has a different take on it. She shared that it is because of *walang pagkakaisa* [no unity] and *pagiging tamad* [being lazy] among the residents that usually lead to fighting, disturbances, and violence. Mika said,

Being lazy is always a personal choice, and it is the root cause of poverty. Because of indolence and unwillingness to put in effort to work, he would rather look for easy money, such as peddling illegal drugs to get by. Even a lack of personal discipline causes other problems.

These findings both challenge and affirm conceptions of security of state, state actors, social structures, and social institutions. RNK members have different portrayals of realities in their community that may stem from their various circumstances, experiences, and perspectives. Furthermore, the socio-economic-political-gender statuses of these individuals are varying

depictions that illustrate how diverse experiences shape different realities within a community. Recognizing and understanding these nuances are crucial for fostering empathy, empowerment, inclusivity, and security.

*As They see it*

RNK continues to fight for a better future for their families and their community. For them, this is how they see a life that is secured: in the form of their dreams and aspirations for their families, their group, and their community. Janice hopes this for her family:

My dream for my family is quite simple, I just want for my children to finish their schooling because, as a mother, I only finished high school, that's why I want my children to finish so they can provide a better life for their future families, not unlike what we experience now.

Mika has a dream that is more practical. She wants to have her own house to live in.

I want to have my own house and lot, with electricity and running water. It's difficult if you don't have electricity and running water, better to have these basic needs. Like what we experience now, we don't have electricity and running water. We fetch water and charge cell phones from my stepfather's house. And for our lot, like what I said there is no guarantee that we will stay here for long. Of course, if we have our place here, we will continue to serve.

On the other hand, Sandy hopes for the group to continue loving each other, "For our group, I want to have love and harmony, and to be courageous in all the challenges that we will face. And additional strength for our bodies even though we are getting older." Furthermore, Janice shared, "I hope that our group will continue to strive and remain united, believing in one another." Diva, another RNK member, hopes for better living conditions for women,

In our community, I hope that women will be given livelihood opportunities, and that we will be able to purchase a sewing machine to make rags. Even with low income, at least we can bring home some money. As volunteers, we are not paid. I hope that we will be able to have a stable livelihood here, no matter how small, and that we will be very happy.

Sandy hopes for something systemic—a change in governance.

I want to see a change in the system for the rich and the poor in Sitio Pagkakaisa, and I want equality for all. And for the government to listen to and address the needs and concerns of the poor. Not simply empty promises. That mentality is wrong, it should be changed.

Mika aptly puts it,

Who doesn't want their community to be peaceful, so they can sleep at night at peace without worrying about someone stealing your bike? You don't have to worry about someone being raped in the street. There is peace and no chaos.

### ***For Human Security, for Development***

Janice shared her reasons for joining RNK,

I want to help stop the killings in our community caused by EJK, also known as the Bonet Gang which is notorious for killing helpless people. I want to do this for the sake of my family and my community's safety.

Mika has the same reasons, "I joined Ronda because I support their mission. Not only should people who use or sell drugs be arrested, but so should people who engage in illegal activities such as stealing, gambling, street fights, street drinking, and so on." On an individual level, there are members of RNK that affirm the dominant top-down approach to security through

"order", "law", "discipline", penal, and carceral approaches. These varying perceptions of safety stem from people's fear of the potential chaos and unpredictability that can come with a lack of state control. For them, a sense of order and discipline provide security and predictability in their daily lives. Penal approaches are often seen as mechanisms to enforce social norms and protect societal values. People are often socialized to respect authority and follow rules. This conditioning can lead to a natural acceptance of top-down narratives on law and order, where the principle of the rule of law is the central basis of a just and fair society. Furthermore, compliance with laws is often equated with moral and civic duty. Hobbes (1651) underscored that people subscribe to the idea of a social contract, where they waive certain freedoms in exchange for the security provided by the state. On the contrary, carceral means can be manipulative tools for maintaining existing social hierarchies and power structures as they can control and silence marginalized groups and prevent uprising and resistance to the status quo.

The RNK members' reasons for joining include two types of security: security for their families, and security provided by the RNK system. Janice was among the first to assist in forming RNK, and as president of the group, Janice describes her experience patrolling with the group as a memorable journey to help keep the community safe, either through community service and night patrols where she finds herself developing her leadership skills. Meanwhile, Rea enjoys the community service component of RNK, she shared, "The reason why I joined Ronda ng Kababaihan is that I want to help my community through night patrols and community service, and I want to be a volunteer." Mika joined the group out of her interest in the group's advocacy of safety for all, and no violence in Sitio Pagkakaisa. Her experiences have enhanced her personal and social skills. Mika shared, "For me, I benefited from joining the group, I gained confidence in facing people and I gained respect because of what we do in Ronda in ensuring peace and order in our community." She quipped "Ronda ng Kababaihan

serves as my second family.” Wendy said, “I was persuaded to join because I saw what they are doing and the impact it was creating in our community, such as ensuring peace and order, reducing crime, thieves, bystanders at night, and gamblers.” She describes her involvement as a chance for her to hone her social skills, make new friends, and learn more about her rights.

Three themes emerged when asked about their gains in joining RNK: personal development, social security, and women’s rights awareness. Personal development was identified as a common theme, based on participants’ perceived behavioral changes such as social skills, leadership abilities, and a stronger sense of self. Social security was derived from stories where the participants felt a stronger, more intimate bond with their fellow RNK members, often described as *nakahanap ng dagdag na pamilya* [found an additional family]. The theme that resonated the most was awareness of women’s rights—newly gained knowledge of women’s rights and their place in their community.

### **Summary**

This study explores how the gender-based and community-driven approaches intersect with security from below and/or human security. It questions the prevailing idea of security, characterized as top-down, state-centric and gender-blind, and provides an alternative, gleaned from RNK members’ shared lived experiences, which offers an examination of security agenda that is bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based.

The RNK members initiated the community services and patrolling to fulfill their domestic responsibilities as mothers and maternal figures, as well as civic duties as guardians of the community. In response to the various forms of direct, structural, cultural, and gender-based violence that they face every day, RNK members have developed local notions and actions as contextualized forms of human security. Before the conception of RNK, members were fulfilling their reproductive roles for their children, such as parenting and nurturing, as

well as productive roles for their families and future, such as household management and livelihood; but these eventually expanded to maintaining peace and order and social responsibilities. Their strong desire to protect their community serves as their rallying point primarily for the sake of family and systematic community security. They have organized themselves in the hope of shielding their own families from injustices and violence persistent in Sitio Pagkakaisa. Their stories suggest that they felt it was their duty to protect their community as they would protect their families—with a caring and motherly approach.

In most cases, cultural expectations and gendered roles surrounding Filipino women often hold them back from developing and progressing, but for RNK members, these volunteer women have been honing their inherent strength and capabilities to integrate their maternal strength and capacities into the ungendered role of protecting their community. Thus, there is an apparent correlation between their community engagements and Filipino domestic capabilities that could potentially enhance and expand maternal capacities. Another example is the creation of community pantries during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in Metro Manila as an emergency solution to starvation. It benefits the people in the community during the prolonged lockdown during the pandemic (Canceran, 2002). Also, in the civilian ceasefire in Mindanao, it is noted that women are key actors in safeguarding peace in their communities because of their inherent strengths in civilian monitoring. Since they have a tendency to listen more and listen better, stronger trust and relationships are built up. Women have taken the lead in calling for peace zones and have leadership roles in many of the important peacebuilding organizations in the Philippines (Julian et al., 2023).

Regular night patrolling serves as the main initiative of the RNK, but they were able to expand their activities to address other community concerns and problems. This has paved the way for the formation of their local notions and actions of human security in addressing direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence and insecurity in Sitio Pagkakaisa, Pateros.

The actual involvement and participation of each member, as well as seeing the positive results of their collective resolve and efforts, inspire them to excel as women and to empower other women in their community as well. Since women are considered a minority group as they do not share the same rights, privileges, and opportunities as men, it is noteworthy how a relatively small women's group in an even smaller municipality in the National Capital Region can withstand various forms of insecurity and violence, thus setting precedents for future women of Pateros.

In addition, the members of RNK's motherly approach to civilian policing ironically complements more vigorous activities such as night-watch patrolling and pursuing law-breakers, especially because most acts of direct violence seen in Pateros were committed by men, such as street fights, gambling and neighborhood disruption, and domestic abuse. While activities with a higher risk of physical harm are considered masculine and male-centered, it is worth noting that these women are always up to the task, regardless of societal standards.

One of the key highlights of this study is RNK members' re-imagination of how human security can be achieved not only at the individual level, but also extends to the community and societal level. In fact, their community recognizes RNK's success, and their local government fully supports their initiative of vigilant and motherly patrolling. This can propel the gradually growing movement of women empowerment among RNK members and the Pateros women.

### **Analysis**

This study explores the interplay of context, issues, identities and strategies of RNK in their pursuit for human security. The bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based framework allowed deeper consideration of the dynamics behind demands, identities, and

strategic choices in an urban poor community in Metro Manila; determining prevailing parameters for which issues, threats, resources, and alliances are most germane.

The conventional security paradigm fixates on the security of the state rather than individual security; whereas emerging human security paradigms challenge not only the scope of security but also its referent (Annan, 2000; Bajpai, 2000; Sen, 2000). Thus, this study attempts to redress such bias by shifting the value of human life and dignity as referent of security. A gendered human security framework focuses on security on the individual level, interrogating the constraints of solely state-centric human security perspectives, and also analyzing human security at the non-state levels—primarily in localities, communities and households. Furthermore, it elevates the discourse to expose nuances of the day-to-day insecurity faced by women who make ends meet—in the areas of health care, food, shelter, clothing, employment, finances, and peace and order.

### ***Breakdown of State and State Actors***

Human security from below asserts that peace and security cannot be realized by imposition from the top, through the law. Research findings reveal that one of the reasons for insecurity in Sitio Pakakaisa, Pateros is the local government's inadequacy to address the basic needs of their community. This inaction is apparent with their land ownership issues as there are no clear guidelines on how to process the titling of their lots and to pay arrears to concerned authorities. The existing faulty regulations cause fear among residents of being evicted from their homes at any time. On top of the residents' woes are recurring problems with electricity connection, inadequate water supply, lack of livelihood opportunities, and peace and order. These findings show that the primacy of the interests of the state and state actors (national elites) enforced through laws over the needs of the people prejudices the community (human

security).

RNK have different portrayals of their realities as they have experienced and lived with it. They vary in terms of their notions whether to cope with or against the state and state actors, social structures, and social institutions. As presented in the findings, their perceptions of safety stem from their fear of unpredictability that may come without state control. For them, a sense of order and discipline provide a sense of certainty and security in their day-to-day dealings.

On the other hand, findings also reveal that RNK members recognize that adherence to the rule of law is in accordance with moral and civic duty. Their efforts to forge partnerships with the local enforcement is an attempt to cover more ground in maintaining community peace, and order and security. With these research findings, it solidifies the premise of this research in search for supporting local notions and initiatives emanating from security from below as an alternative—one that is bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based.

### ***Maneuvering Through State and Space***

From the accounts and stories of RNK members, their understanding of human security evolves through time. The initial goal of RNK is to protect the community from subsequent killings by the Bonet Gang. Interestingly, as their understanding of human security grew, so did the scope of their concerns and needs. Recognizing that hunger, lack of livelihood, and wife beating are all human security issues, their response evolves accordingly. Every aspect has a historical, cultural, political, economic, religious, and social context. Kent (2006) proves this by arguing that security concepts are culturally embedded. The changing socio-economic and political landscape of a community consequently influences the issues and needs, values systems, plans, and actions.

RNK members see the tokhang incident as a complex thing. Even though the state is seen as an alleged perpetrator, there are many factors contributing to this notorious act. These may be police violations of human rights, but there are other factors to consider as well, such as a flawed justice system, culture of impunity, and apathy to name a few. This also applies to other types of violence that cause insecurity. In order to have a better grasp of the security situation, it is imperative to investigate the different facets of how a community operates, or even how society works. It requires a more critical approach to identify the actual conditions of the people, and the society where they live. Human security goes with its context, it is fluid—it expands and contracts in response to the social milieu where people are situated.

Should residents of Sitio Pagkakaisa have more life options and opportunities, their perception of life and human security would take a new form. If better options for taking action are made available, the community's notion and practice of human security would change accordingly. Colak and Pearce (2009) aptly state that human security is based on the community's shared values, which are central to the successful functioning of security capabilities.

### ***Latent Cost of Localized Human Security***

The inaction of the state causes a heavy toll on the lives of people. It places unnecessary burdens, particularly on vulnerable sectors such as women in urban poor communities. Janice shared her struggles with her husband, who asked her to choose between RNK or her family. She is being unjustly cornered. There is a cost to operationalizing community actions in addressing human insecurity. When the RNK members do their regular night patrols, community service, and other activities, they incur an opportunity cost (i.e. time, potential income, company) that should have been devoted to their families and loved ones.

### ***Human Security From the 'Eyes of Women'***

Galtung's (2004) Violence Triangle provided the different dimensions of violence. In Sitio Pagkakaisa, manifestations of direct violence were death, theft, coercion, disputes, and inflicting fear. On the other hand, structural violence is not simply neglect by the state, rather it is the violence brought about by social structures and social institutions not only by state or state actors. These are community issues and concerns related to shortage of electricity and water supply, land and house disputes, and peace and order. Moreover, cultural violence manifests in the dynamics of patriarchy in the community. Majority of residents in Sitio Pagkakaisa still understand women as homemakers, as subordinated to men, violence against them is private, as reserve labor force, and as sexual objects. Some women are either marginalized, discriminated against, or even exploited by the harsh realities of a patriarchal society.

Employing Galtung's (2004) Violence Triangle, violence rooted from patriarchy is considered part of cultural violence; and seemingly this already covers gendered violence. In feminist theory, there is no dichotomy in patriarchy; it manifests both in public and private spaces. However, gendered violence must be distinctly recognized in Galtung's (2004) Violence Triangle due to its complexity; it involves unique forms, dynamics, and implications that intersect with direct, structural, and cultural violence. This distinction is crucial for understanding the full scope of the problem and for developing comprehensive strategies to address and prevent gendered violence effectively.

**Figure 2**

*Human Security from the eyes of Ronda ng Kababaihan*

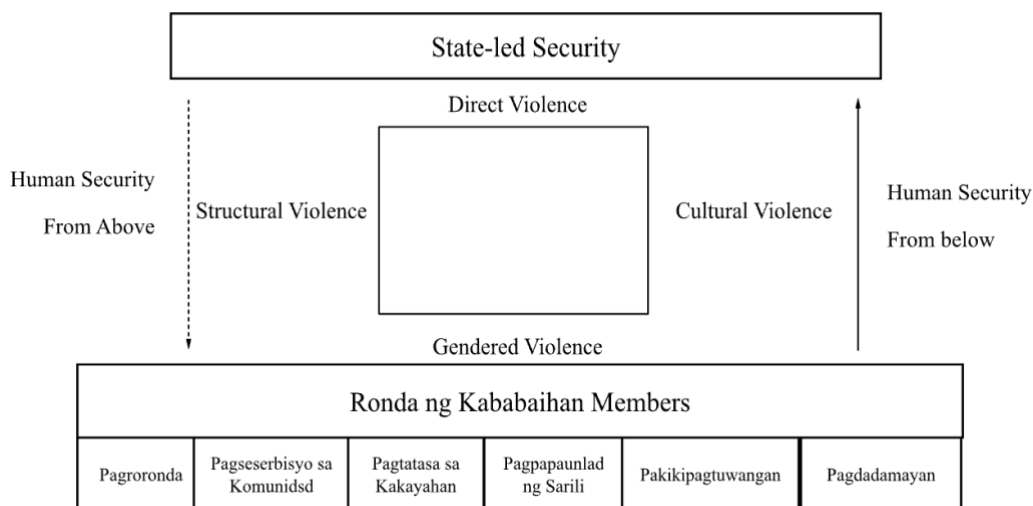


Figure 2 provides an approach to human security that is concerned with linkages between various forms of insecurity and gender-based violence among various levels of violence, from state and non-state actors to interpersonal violence at a local and household level.

Using gender theory grounds the analysis on how entrenched societal structures and dynamics of power, norms, and roles contribute to insecurity. It places women at the forefront of the human security agenda, who are often left out in the discourses. A key finding of this study is the recognition of another dimension of violence, which is gendered, provided that Galtung's (2004) concept of cultural violence has overlooked gendered violence at the personal or family level. From the shared lived experiences and stories gathered, there are RNK members who have been abused in their homes by their spouses or partners. There have been instances of men inflicting physical, verbal, or emotional harm on wives and women, but these incidents are often kept secret. Employing a gendered human security paradigm

exposes women's realities and contexts that are often overlooked and taken for granted.

Amidst the recurrence of various forms of violence in Sitio Pagkakaisa, it has paved the way for RNK to take matters into their own hands in the form of resistance and resilience. RNK challenges power structures and norms, often subtle, in their day-to-day survival. RNK has developed six localized notions, practices and initiatives that build on human security: *pagroronda*; *pagseserbisyo sa komunidad* [serving the community], *pagpapaunlad ng kasanayan* [skills development]; *pagpapaunlad ng sarili* [developing oneself]; *pakikipagtuwangan* [sharing of burden]; and *pagdadamay* [commiseration]. All these are manifestations not only of human security from below, but also human security from the eyes of women, tapping into their human agency—motherly care, purpose, and grit in order to not just survive but thrive. Their resistance and resilience are manifestations that capacitating human agency is crucial in fostering lasting human security in a community. These compelling findings validate the research premise of an appalling need for a more nuanced understanding of human security that is bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based.

The bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based human security framework has fostered a more grounded sensing of their contextual realities based on risks, threats, resources, assets, demands, identities, and strategic choices. Factoring all these ambiguities and nuances of the people, particularly women in the community, is key in the pursuit for a more humanized security agenda. The creation of RNK's local notions and actions of contextualized human security not only challenges peace and order, patriarchy, and insecurity in their community, but also incorporates their experiences, capacities and prowess as foundation for advancing human agency through women empowerment and community development.

## **Resistance and Resilience**

The plight of Filipino women have always been intimately linked with the broad, complex and deeply entrenched struggles for social justice and sovereignty. All throughout Philippine history, it offers a bewildering panoply of forms and outcomes of social resistance contra the state. The result is a spectrum of contained and transgressive, broad-based and narrowly waged, permitted and suppressed, and successful and failed uprisings. In properly elevating women in the security agenda there is a need to develop a typology of resistance and resilience. This probing in turn permits consideration of depth and breadth of socio-economic-political dimensions, of framing and brokerage, of co-optation and contestation, and collaboration and opposition.

Gleaning from the lived experiences of RNK members, their local notions, and practices of reinforcing human security can be attributed to their increased social capital. Putnam (1995) underscored that social capital is regarded as the glue that keeps society together. It necessitates the development and implementation of strategies that support social networks, build trust among members, foster respect within the community, encourage participation and engagement by people from diverse backgrounds, and develop a shared sense of belonging and future vision (UNDP, 2009). Essentially, social capital is seen as a means of ensuring community security alongside community development. Therefore, they are mutually reinforcing; secured communities are more likely to have a stronger social capital and as a result, can build stronger and developed communities. The shared lived experiences of RNK members offer an alternative outlook for human security—human security from the bottom-up, community-driven, and gender-based.

For development practitioners, the goal is not simply to broaden the scope of intervention to be more inclusive, but instead to better read the contextual realities, define

gaps, priorities, and opportunities, and work with the inherent strength of the people and the community. The goal is to foster spaces for autonomous and peripheral actions while also improving interfaces between diverse components, processes, actors, and enabling institutions. The people have the right to demand and hold the state, state actors, social structures, and social institutions accountable. Community development practitioners must ensure to hold the line for the people and devise alternative modes of intervention in system strengthening. Unless serious efforts are being made to address the vulnerabilities of the community, human security remains elusive.

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## **Tsikang Kabaklaan sa Disaster: Kuwento at Danas ng mga Bakla sa Panahon ng Disaster sa Aroma Temporary Housing, Brgy. 105, Tondo, Maynila**

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**Louis Justin “Kahel” J. Rebadolla**

### **ABSTRAK**

Patuloy na umuunlad ang mga pananaliksik at pagkilala sa mga bakla sa Pilipinas; mayroon ng mga pag-aaral tungkol sa kanilang kalusugan, pangangailangan, pag-oorganisa, karapatan, at iba pa, ngunit kaunti ang pananaliksik sa kanilang karanasan sa panahon ng disaster at sa pangangasiwa nito. Ang pag-aaral na ito ay magpapatampok ng mga kuwento at danas ng mga bakla mula sa Aroma Temporary Housing, Brgy. 105, Tondo, Maynila sa nangyaring sunog noong Abril 2020. Ang kanilang mga kuwento at danas ay nakuha sa pamamagitan ng pakikipag-tsikahan. Ilalahad ang mga tsika sa pag-angkla sa apat na aspeto ng pangangasiwa ng disaster—mitigasyon, paghahanda, pagtugon, at pagbangon at ito ay susuriin sa pamamagitan ng *intersectional analysis*. Lumalabas sa mga tsika ng mga bakla ng Aroma ang kanilang mga espisipikong karanasan at pangangailangan sa panahon ng disaster kasabay ng paghamon ng pag-aaral sa pag-unawa na ang disaster ay isang "great equalizer." Ipapakita ng pag-aaral na ito na ang mga tsika ng mga bakla ay mahalagang sangkap sa paglikha ng inklusibong pamamaraan at proseso sa pangangasiwa ng disaster na walang napag-iiwanan.

**Keywords:** *Disaster, Bakla, Karanasan, Pakikipag-tsikahan, Intersectional Analysis*

## **Panimula**

Ang Pilipinas ay kilala bilang isang bayang mapagtanggap sa mga bakla sa Asya (Chan, n.d.). Ngunit sa kabila nito, nagpapatuloy pa rin ang maraming porma ng diskriminasyon, pananamantala, at pang-aapi sa mga bakla sa lipunang Pilipino (Gutierrez, 2017). Lumalabas sa ilang pag-aaral na ang pagka-mayor ng rehiyong katoliko sa bansa (Abad, 2022) at pamamayani ng mga tradisyunal na sistema at perspektibong patriyarkal at macho-pyudal ang pangunahing dahilan ng pagpapatuloy ng diskriminasyon at pang-aapi sa mga bakla sa Pilipinas (Yarcia et al., 2019).

Kahit na tuloy-tuloy ang pamamayani ng mga atrasadong sistema at perspektibo, umuunlad naman ang mga saliksikan tungkol sa mga bakla sa Pilipinas upang tunggaliin ang mga ito. Ayon sa “Araling Kababaihan at Kasarian sa Araling Pilipino at Wikang Filipino” ni Kimuell-Gabriel (2017), dumami ang pag-aaral tungkol sa kabaklaan noong dekada 1990 para mabigyan ng boses at ipakita ang danas at pag-iral ng pakikibaka ng mga bakla. Ito ay nagsilbing paraan sa paglaban sa mga tradisyunal, patriyarkal, at heteronormatibong diskurso sa kasarian at sekswalidad. Sa kabila ng pagdami ng saliksik ukol sa mga bakla, kaunti naman ang pag-aaral sa karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster at pangangasiwa nito kahit na ang Pilipinas ay isang bansa sa mundo na lapitin at laging nakakaranas ng mga mapaminsalang disaster (ALNAP, 2010).

Nakatungtong ang pananaliksik na ito sa kakulangan ng mga pananaliksik ukol sa kuwento at danas ng mga bakla sa Pilipinas sa disaster. Kung kaya ang pag-aaral na ito ay naglalayong maipatampok ang espesipikong karanasan at pangangailangan ng mga bakla sa bawat aspeto ng pangangasiwa ng disaster. Kasabay nito ay ang pagtukoy ng kanilang bulnerabilidad na nagreresulta ng kanilang karanasang napag-iiwanan sa disaster. Mula sa kanilang mga tsika, maaaring makakuha ng magandang aral na magagamit sa paglikha ng

inklusibong proseso at pamamaraan sa pangangasiwa ng disaster ng walang napag-iiwanan. Para mailahad ang mga kuwento at danas ng mga bakla sa disaster, ang pag-aaral ay ginagabayan ng mga sumusunod na katanungan: Ano ang mga espisipikong karanasan na nagpag-iiwan ang mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster? Ano ang kanilang mga partikular na pangangailangan sa panahon ng disaster? At, ano-ano ang mga dahilan nito?

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay nakatuon sa mga kuwento at danas ng mga bakla sa Aroma Temporary Housing sa Brgy. 105, Tondo, Maynila. Ang Aroma ay isa sa mga *temporary housing* units sa Tondo na nakapalibot sa mga *dump sites* at pier na binubuo ng samu't saring klase ng taong galing sa iba't ibang probinsya para makipagsapalaran tulad ng iba pang maralitang-pamayanan sa Metro Manila (Zasso, 2018). Ayon sa Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development APWLD (n.d.) itinayo ang temporary housing noong 1995 upang ilipat ang mga residente ng Smokey Mountain nang ito ay ipinasara. Tinawag itong “temporary” dahil balak ng gobyerno na ilipat ang mga residente sa mga *relocation sites* sa labas ng Maynila. Gayunpaman, hindi lahat ay inilipat sa mga relocation sites at may iba namang bumabalik sa mga temporary housing dahil sa kawalan ng kabuhayan at pagkakakitaan kung saan sila inilipat (APWLD, n.d.). Hindi naiiba ang karanasan ng mga taga-Aroma sa karanasan ng iba pang maralitang-pamayanan sa Metro Manila. Maliban sa hirap ng buhay at kanilang kalagayan sa pamayanan, madalas rin silang nakakaranas ng disaster sa pamayanan tulad ng sunog.

Noong Abril 18, 2020, sa kasagsagan ng COVID-19 pandemic, nagkaroon ng malaking sunog sa erya at naapektuhan ang mahigit 500 pamilya na naninirahan dito (San Juan, 2020). Iinog ang pag-aaral na ito sa karanasan ng mga bakla sa nangyaring sunog noong Abril 2020. Titingnan ng pag-aaral na ito ang kanilang karanasan, pati na rin ang mga repleksyon nila sa insidenteng ito. Magsisilbi ang tsikahan bilang pangunahing metodo ng pananaliksik. Ang *tsikahan* (o *chika*) ay mula sa Filipino gay language na ang ibig sabihin ay

impormal at maiikling kwentuhan. Sa wikang Ingles, malapit ang tsikahan sa salitang *chat*. Bukod dito ang tsikahan ay isa ring pagpapahiwatig ng personalidad at karakter na natatangi sa gay community sa Pilipinas; makikita ito sa bokabularyo na bumubuo sa *gay lingo*, na siya namang malimit na ginagamit sa tsikahan (Pamittan et al., 2017). Sa kasalukuyan, masasabi na ang salitang tsikahan ay laman na ng mainstream Filipino pop culture.

Ang pangunahing kontribusyon ng pag-aaral na ito ay nakasalalay sa pagpapatampok ng kuwento at karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster. Sa pamamagitan nito, hinahamon ng pag-aaral ang pag-unawa na ang disaster ay isang "great equalizer." Samakatwid, pinapakita ng pag-aaral na ito na ang suliranin at dahilan ng pagkaiwan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster ay ang sala-salabat (*intersecting*) na mga isyu na may kinalaman sa kanilang kasarian, identidad at kahirapan.

Nagsimula ang pananaliksik sa pamamagitan ng pagpasok at pag-unawa sa sitwasyon o pagsasagawa ng *social investigation* sa Aroma. Sa pamamagitan nito, nakapagtukoy ang pag-aaral ng mga kontak sa mga residente ng Aroma, na siya namang naging susi para isagawa ang *snowball sampling approach* upang matukoy ang mga pangunahing kalahok sa pananaliksik. Ginamit ang mga sumusunod na kriteria sa pagpili ng mga baklang makakasama sa pag-aaral; ito ay binanggit rin sa mga bakla upang makatulong sa kanilang pagtukoy kung sino pa ang posibleng maging parte ng pag-aaral: (a) kinikilala ang sarili bilang bakla, (b) nasa edad 13-60 taong gulang, (c) mahigit limang taon ng naninirahan sa Aroma, at (d) nasa erya nung nagkaroon ng sunog noong Abril 2020. Ang pamamaraang ito ay nakatulong hindi lang sa pagtukoy ng kalahok bagkus nakatulong rin sa madaling pagtitiwala ng mga baklang kalahok sa mananaliksik dahil nga sa pagbanggit na mula iyong pangalan nila sa mga naunang nakatsikahan ng mananaliksik. Sa pamamagitan ng snowball sampling at ng kriteria sa paghahanap ng kalahok ay natukoy ang limang bakla na makakatsikahan tungkol sa naging karanasan nila nung nangyaring sunog at sa disaster.

Ilalahad ng saliksik na ito ang mga tsika nila:

- Dyoza, isang *transgender woman* na mula sa probinsya na lumuwas sa Maynila upang makipagsapalaran. Siya ay nagtatrabaho bilang isang *call center agent*.
- Gerald, 29 taong gulang, at siya ay lumaki sa pamayanan. Siya ay isang baklang guro na nagtuturo sa isang paaralan na malapit sa Aroma.
- Hesus, isang bakla na matagal ng naninirahan sa erya. Siya ay dating kawani ng kanilang barangay. Sa kasulukuyan, siya ay isang *senior citizen* at nakatira sa kanyang mga kamag-anak.
- Chinchin, isang lesbiyana na nagtatrabaho bilang isang *helper* ng isang karinderya sa Divisoria, matagal na sa erya at lumipat sa relocation sites, pero bumalik rin sa Aroma dahil walang kabuhayan. Kasalukuyan siyang nakikitira sa kanyang kaibigan.
- Elov, na isa ring lesbiyana na madalas rumaraket at nagdedeliver ng mga pagkain at *parcel*. Matagal na siya sa erya dahil doon siya lumaki. Sa kasalukuyan, kasama niya ang kanyang partner sa kanilang bahay.

Ang kanilang mga tsika ay ilalahad sa ibaba at makakatulong upang malawak na maintindihan at maipatampok ang kanilang karanasan at pangangailangan sa panahon ng disaster.

Pakikipag-tsikahan ang primaryang pamamaraan na ginamit sa pag-aaral upang makuha ang mga kuwento at danas ng mga bakla sa Aroma noong panahon ng sunog. Parte na ng kulturang Pilipino ang tsismis, tsika o pakikipag-tsikahan. Ito ay isang porma ng kuwentuhan kung saan nagpapalitan ng mga kuwento o karanasan ang mga tao (Suing et al., 2024). Ayon kay Cuadra (2023), sa matagal na panahon ito ay ginagamit bilang isang pamamaraan sa pakikipagkapwa na nagsisilbing daan din upang malaman ng mga tao kung ano ang nangyayari sa lipunan. Sinasabi naman ni Ferreira (1992) na ito ay isang pamamaraan

ng komunikasyon na nagpapadaloy ng pagpapalitan ng impormasyon at kaalaman. Nakikita ng mananaliksik na ang pakikipag-tsikahan ay isang pamamaraan o moda ng kuwentong buhay, labas man sa kumbensyonal at nakasanayang moda nito, naglalayon pa rin ang mga tsikahan na ginawa sa pag-aaral na maipatampok at maisalaysay ang karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster (Kimuell-Gabriel, 2011). Naging iba lang ito dahil hindi tulad ng kadalasang pamamaraan ng kuwentong buhay, nagsimula ang mananaliksik sa pagpoposisyon ng kanyang kasarian bilang bakla at kanyang mga karanasan na higit na nakatulong sa pagiging kumportable, bukas, at pagtitiwala ng mga kalahok. Nakatulong rin ang paggamit ng lente ng kasarian sa pamamagitan ng pag-angkop sa konteksto ng mga bakla sa Aroma, pag-ayon sa kung paano sila makipag-kuwentuhan at paggamit ng mga salita na kumportable sila tulad ng tagalog, *taglish* o gay lingo. Naging mahalaga rin ang pakikipagsabayan sa kanilang biro o *jokes* at pagganap sa mga ginawang pag-uusap kung asan sila at habang pinagpapatuloy nila ang kanilang ginagawa. Esensyal ang pamamaraang ito dahil naging daan ito na hindi maging mabigat ang naging kuwentuhan dahil nga sensitibo at mabigat ang usapin tungkol sa karanasan ng mga bakla sa lipunan at disaster. Ang paggamit ng pamamaraang ito ay mahalaga rin upang maangkin ng mga baklang kalahok ang kanilang kapangyarihan at boses. Maliban dito, nakikita ng mananaliksik na ang pakikipag-tsikahan bilang isang pamamaraan sa pangangalap ng datos ay higit na mahalaga hindi lang sa pagpapatampok ng kuwento ng mga bakla kundi mahalagang gamitin sa mga araling pangkasarian. Pagkatapos na makuha ang mga tsika ng mga baklang kalahok ay isinalansan ito bilang kasong aralin, sinuri sa pamamagitan ng *thematic* at *comparative analysis*, at gumamit ng mga *direct quotes* upang higit na maipatampok ang kanilang mga tinig.

Para higit na maintindihan ang karanasan ng mga Pilipinong bakla sa disaster, ang artikulong ito ay nahahati sa tatlong seksyon. Magsisimula ito sa maikling paglalahad ng naging resulta ng ginawang pagsusuri sa mga kaugnay na literatura at konseptwal na

balangkas na gagabay sa pagsusuri ng mga tsika ng mga bakla sa Aroma. Ang seksyong ito ay ipapatampok ang patuloy na pagkaiwan at pagiging imbisible ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster at pangangasiwa nito. Matatapos ang seksyon sa pagpapakita ng kahalagahan ng paggamit ng *intersectional analysis* sa sitwasyon at karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster. Ang intersectional analysis ay magsisilbing daan upang mas maintindihan ang kanilang karanasang napag-iwanan, at sa paglikha ng inklusibong pangangasiwa ng disaster. Ang susunod na seksyon ay ipapatampok ang karanasan at kuwento ng mga bakla sa Aroma nung panahon ng sunog at ang iba pang kaapihang kanilang nararanasan na nagiging dahilan ng kanilang karanasang napag-iwanan sa mga yugto ng Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM). Matatapos ang artikulo sa seksyon kung saan ilalahad ang kahalagahan ng pagtingin sa karanasan at tsika ng mga bakla sa pagkakaroon ng isang inklusibong pangangasiwa sa disaster at pagkamit ng isang lipunang pantay at malaya.

### **Resulta ng Pagsusuri ng mga Kaugnay na Pag-Aaral: Pagsipat sa Danas ng mga Bakla sa Disaster**

Sa seksyong ito ay itatampok ang maikling paglalahad ng resulta ng pagsusuri sa mga kaugnay na pag-aaral ukol sa kalagayan ng mga bakla sa disaster. Limitado ang mga literatura tungkol dito pero sinikap na maipatampok ang sitwasyon at kalagayan ng sektor sa disaster. Ang seksyong ito ay nahahati sa tatlong parte na tututok sa karanasan ng bakla sa panahon ng disaster, DRRM at ang mga bakla, at huli ay ang analitikal na balangkas na naging gabay sa pag-unawa at pagsusuri ng mga tsika ng mga bakla na nagpapakita ng kahalagahan ng paggamit ng intersectional analysis sa pag-intindi sa sitwasyon at karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster

### ***Bakla...Bakla...sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Ang disaster ay isang pangyayari na kung saan nagagambala ang mga sistemang gumagana sa mga pamayanan o isang lipunan (UNDRR, n.d.). Ito ay bunga ng iba't ibang panganib o *hazards* na maaaring natural, likhang-tao, o *technological* (UNDRR, n.d.). Ang disaster ay naglalantad ng bulnerabilidad at kapasidad ng mga tao at pamayanan (UNDRR, n.d.) na nagdadala ng mapaminsalang epekto sa mga pamayanan tulad ng pagkamatay ng maraming tao, pagkawala ng kabuhayan, at pagkasira ng kalikasan (ALNAP, 2010).

Nakakaranas ang Pilipinas ng maraming klase ng natural na hazards at disaster (Amnesty International UK, 2021). Dahil ang bansa ay nakapaloob sa *Pacific Ring of Fire* at nasa kahabaan ng *Pacific typhoon belt* kaya ito ay binansagan na *world's most disaster-prone nation* (ADRC, n.d.). Maliban sa mga natural na panganib, nakakaranas din ang bansa ng mga *anthropogenic* o *human-induced disasters*, kung saan ang mga panganib ay mula sa epekto ng mga atrasadong sistema, oryentasyon ng pamamahala, ekonomiya, kultura, at lipunan (ALNAP, 2010).

Sa laging pagkakaroon ng disaster sa Pilipinas namamayani na ang kaisipan na ang disaster ay itinuturing na “great equalizer.” Sinasabi ni Fothergill at Peek (2004) na kaya nanaig ang ganitong pananaw ay dahil nakikita ng mga tao na pareho ang epekto ng disaster sa mahirap at mayaman. Sa katunayan, sa inilabas na artikulo ng Philippine Daily Inquirer (2013, para. 7), sinasabi ng isa sa nasalanta ng bagyong Yolanda noong 2013 na “...pareho ang epekto ng disaster, walang mahirap at walang mayaman. Lahat kami ay nahirapan kaya kung anong mayroon kami sinubukan namin ibahagi sa iba pa.” Sa kabila nito, ayon kay Blanchard (2021), ang epekto ng disaster ay hindi maituturing na great equalizer dahil ang mga mahihirap ang higit na napipinsala nito. Lumalabas sa pag-aaral nila Malo at Zrinski (2022) at ng Relief Web (2020) na magkakaiba ang nagiging epekto ng disaster sa bawat

kasarian at sa sosyo-ekonomikong antas ng mga tao. Gayunpaman, patuloy ang pagbabalewala sa mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster na dahilan ng pagkakaroon ng negatibong epekto ng disaster at patuloy ng kanilang karanasan na napag-iwanan (Castro, 2019).

Higit na naapektuhan at napapag-iwanan ang mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster dahil sa pamamayani ng sistemang patriyarkal, macho-pyudal, at cis-heteroseksismong oryentasyon sa lipunan (Ariyabandu & Miranda, 2021). Ito ang gumagabay sa mga aspetong panlipunan na may malaking papel sa araw-araw na pamumuhay ng sektor tulad ng pulitika, sosyal, ekonomiya, at kultura na siyang dahilan kung bakit naisasantabi ang kanilang karanasan at pangangailangan (Castro 2019; Goldsmith et al., 2022). Sa Pilipinas, maraming kuwento ng diskriminasyon, pang-aabuso, at karanasang napag-iwanan ang sektor sa panahon ng disaster. Nananatili pa ring *taboo* at tinitignan na makasalanan ang mga bakla kaya madalas sila ang sinisisi kung bakit nangyayari ang malala at mapaminsalang disaster (Silverio, 2020). Maraming kaso rin ng diskriminasyon ang naiulat na nararanasan ng mga bakla sa mga *evacuation center* at temporary housing noong panahon ng bagyong Yolanda. Isang halimbawa dito ay may mga kabataang bakla na nakatanggap ng berbal na pang-aabuso habang nakapila sa pagkuha ng ayuda (Castro, 2019). Isang halimbawa rin ay ang kuwento ni Jean, isang transwoman na kinailangang gamitin ang kanyang *dead name* para ikonsiderang *house owner* o *head of the family* para magkaroon ng akses sa mga serbisyong panlipunan at iba pang tulong (Santos, 2022). Sa gitna naman ng pandemya na dala ng COVID-19, mayroong magkarelasong lesbiyana na nagpanggap na magkapatid sa *emergency shelter* para makakuha ng ayuda o tulong mula sa gobyerno (Romero, 2022). Kasabay nito, maraming mga bakla sa bansa ang hindi nakakatanggap ng *pandemic relief efforts* dahil ang panuntunan sa pagbibigay ng ayuda ay nakatutok lamang para sa mga may pamilya o *head of household* na kung saan ay lalaki at babae lamang ang kasarian na kinokonsidera (Ritholz, 2020). Ang buhay na karanasan at kuwento na mga ito ay repleksyon

ng nagpapatuloy na in hustisyang nararanasan ng sektor ng LGBTQIA+ sa lipunang Pilipino, may disaster man o wala.

### ***Bakla, Asan ka sa Pangangasiwa ng Disaster?***

Nagpapatuloy ang pagbibigay prayoridad sa pagpapaunlad ng mga balangkas sa mga polisiya at programa para sa paghahanda, pagtugon, at pag-ahon sa mapaminsalang disaster. Sa pandaigdigang konteksto, kinikilala ang kahalagahan ng kasarian at sekswalidad sa DRRM at maraming pandaigdigang ahensya ang may mandato na isama ito sa mga binabalangkas na proseso sa pangangasiwa sa disaster (UNISDR et al., 2009). Sa katunayan, mahalaga ang papel ng kasarian at sekswalidad sa hangarin para sa Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework, at sa Agenda for Humanity (Relief Web, 2020). Sinasabi nila Ariyabandu at Miranda (2021) na tinitignan ng mga balangkas na ito ang mga ugat ng hindi pagkakapantay-pantay sa lipunan at ang pangangailangan ng pagsama ng lente ng kasarian at sekswalidad sa pangangasiwa sa disaster at pagbabago ng klima.

Isa ang bansang Pilipinas sa nanguna sa pagpasa ng *gender-sensitive* na polisiya na magiging gabay sa pangangasiwa ng disaster at pagbabago ng klima (Leonio, 2019). Ang Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 o RA 10121 ay naglalayong mabawasan ang panganib o epekto ng disaster habang kinikilala ang kahalagahan ng usaping kasarian at sekswalidad. Ngunit, kahit na mayroon ng mga polisiya ang bansa, naisasantabi at napapag-iwanan pa rin ang sektor (Macalandag & Obenza, 2016).

Sa kabila ng hindi pantay na pagtingin at pagpapatuloy ng diskriminasyon na nararanasan ng sektor, ipinapakita pa rin nila ang kanilang mga kapasidad at kalakasan upang makaambag sa pangangasiwa ng disaster sa kanilang pamayanan (Galliard et al., 2017). Mayroong mga kabataang bakla sa Masantol, Pampanga na inutusan na bantayan ang mga bata, maglaba, at kumuha ng maiinom na tubig at panggatong sa kabila ng mataas na baha sa

kanilang pamayanan noong 2011. Ayon kay Balgos et al. (2012), ang ginawa nilang ito ay nakatulong sa pagbangon ng kanilang pamilya at pamayanan mula sa naging epekto ng disaster. Sa Sorsogon, ang mga kabataang bakla ang naglilinis ng mga bahay pagkatapos ng nangyaring baha. Maliban dito, nanguna rin sila sa pagkuha at pamamahagi ng *relief goods* sa kanilang pamayanan (McSherry et al., 2014). Kumilos din ang sektor ng LGBTQIA+ sa Quezon City noong nagkaroon ng magkasunod na bagyo noong 2009; nakipag ugnayan sila sa kanilang mga kakilala, network, organisasyon, at opisina sa paglikom ng pondo at ayuda upang maibigay sa kanilang mga kapitbahay (Balgos et al., 2012).

### ***Analitikal na Balangkas: Intersectional Analysis Bilang Pamamaraan sa Pag-unawa sa Karanasan ng mga Bakla sa Disaster***

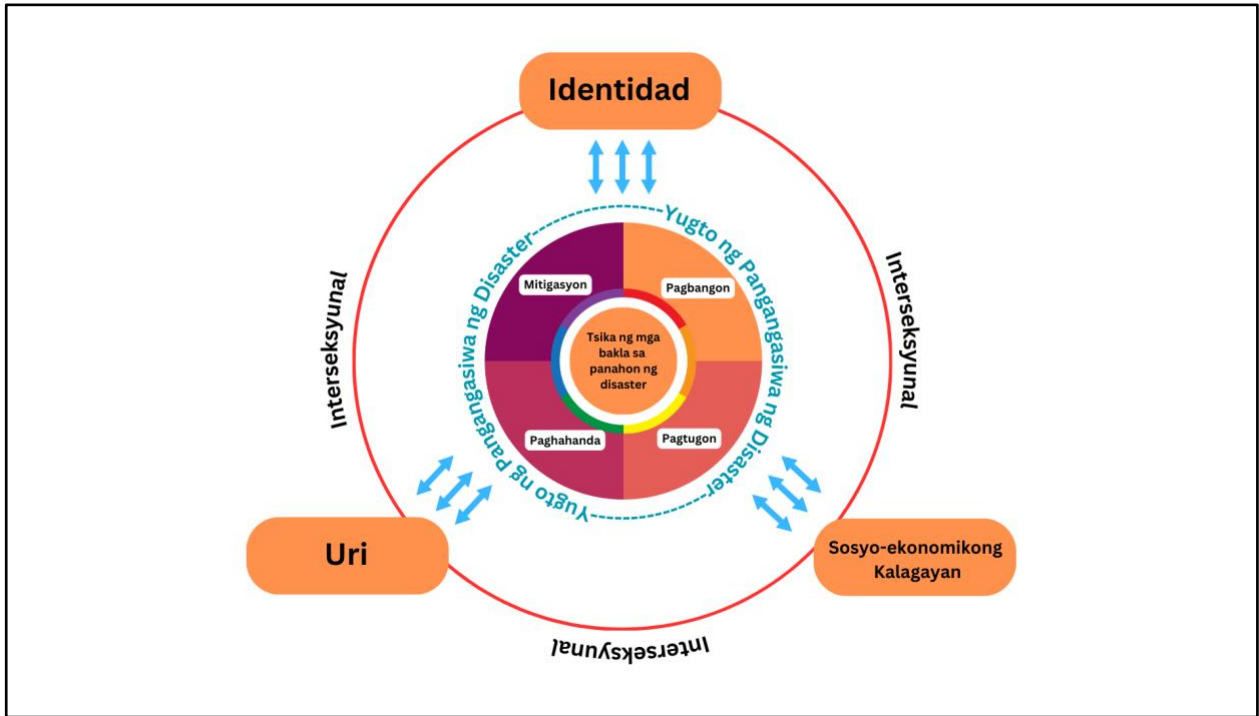
Sisiyasatin ang mga tsika ng mga bakla sa Aroma sa pamamagitan ng pagtingin sa kabuuang kuwento at danas nila sa panahon ng disaster; sa panahon ng paghahanda, pagtugon, mitigasyon at pagbangon mula sa disaster. Ngunit, upang maunawaan ng husto ang kalagayan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster, hindi sasapat ang pagtingin ng lente ng *disaster management cycle*. Ang espisipikong kontribusyon ng pag-aaral na ito ay ang paggamit ng intersectional analysis upang mapalutang ang patong-patong at sala-salabat na isyu na kinakaharap ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster (Jean et al., 2023). Ayon kay Crenshaw (1989), ang pagpapatuloy ng kaapihang nararanasan ng mga tao at pamayanan, at patuloy nilang pamumuhay sa karalitaan ay mula sa mga interseksyon ng bawat aspeto ng kanilang pagkatao: identidad, uri, etnisidad, race, sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan, atbp. Sinasabi ni hooks (1984) na ang mga aspetong ito ay nagsasama-sama, nagpapatong-patong, at konektado, na siyang nagiging dahilan ng malalang epekto at pagka-iwan ng mga bakla sa disaster.

Matingkad sa mga naunang pag-aaral tungkol sa kabaklaan at disaster na ang kanilang identidad, uri, at sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan ay nagiging dahilan ng kanilang pagka-iwan sa lipunan lalo na sa panahon ng disaster. Lumalabas sa maraming pag-aaral na ang identidad ng mga bakla ang pangunahing dahilan kung bakit sila napag-iwanan at nakakaranas ng diskriminasyon sa disaster (Castro, 2019), dahil hanggang sa kasalukuyan itinuturing pa rin itong taboo, sakit, kasalanan, kahinaan, kakaiba, at ang malala pa ay tinitignan na dahilan ng mapaminsalang epekto ng disaster (Silverio, 2020). Ang uri o *class* ay grupo o dibisyon sa lipunan na may magkakaparehong katayuan at kapangyarihan na nakabatay sa sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan at antas sa lipunan (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Sinasabi ni Andrew (1975) na ito ay hindi lang natatapos sa usaping pang-ekonomiya bagkus ito rin ay sumasaklaw sa legal, politikal, at kultural na aspeto ng lipunan. Ang mga sistemang panlipunan ay pinapatakbo ng mga tao na nasa mataas na uri na kadalasan ay nakabatay sa kanilang sariling interes na siyang dahilan ng pagpapatuloy ng kawalan ng boses at kapangyarihan ng mga nasa mababang uri at ang sistemang patriyarkal sa lipunan (Jessop, 2012). Dahil dito, ang makauring sistema ay nagpapatuloy ng pagbabalewala sa usaping kabaklaan sa lipunan (Ceperiano et al., 2016), ito ay nagpapanatili ng mababang pagtingin sa mga bakla at pananatili ng kaapihang kanilang nararanasan (Aban & Sy, 2022; Madula, 2016) na siyang nagbubunga ng mapaminsalang epekto sa kanila ng disaster. Ang sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan ay nakatuon hindi lang sa sahod na nakukuha ng mga bakla bagkus ito rin ay sumasaklaw sa kanilang *educational attainment*, kabuhayan, kakayahan o kapasidad, pribilehiyo, oportunidad, at ang pagtingin sa kanila sa lipunan (American Psychological Association, n.d.) na siyang magdidikta kung ano ang magiging epekto ng disaster sa kanila, paano nila ito haharapin, at paano sila babangon pagkatapos ng disaster (Haskell, 2014). Kung kaya, espesipikong titingnan ng pag-aaral na ito ang interseksyon ng

uri, identidad, at sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan ng mga bakla, at ang epekto nito sa panahon ng disaster.

**Pigyur 1**

*Analitikal na Balangkas sa Pagsusuri ng mga Tsikang Kabaklaan sa Disaster*



**Paglalahad at Pagsisiyasat ng mga Tsika ng mga Bakla sa Aroma sa Panahon ng Disaster**

***Tsikang Kabaklaan sa Aroma sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Hindi na bago sa Aroma ang pagkakaroon ng disaster dahil sa mahirap na kalagayan ng mga residente nito at hindi maayos na istraktura ng pamayanan. Kagaya ng iba pang maralitang pamayanan sa bansa, sunog ang pangunahing disaster na nararanasan ng mga tao sa Aroma. Sa pakikipag-tsikahan kay Dyoza, binabanggit niya na sunog talaga ang higit nilang pinaghahandaan dahil simula nung tumira siya sa Aroma ay ilang beses na siyang

nakaranas ng sunog. “Mas madalas dito [sa Aroma] ang sunog eh. Parang ilang beses na simula ng tumira ako dito, parang three times na nangyari ang sunog.”

Maliban sa sunog, sinasabi ng iba pang mga bakla na nakakaranas din sila ng ibang uri ng hazards at disasters sa pamayanan tulad ng bagyo at lindol. Nabanggit din nila na higit na nakakapinsala rin sa pamayanan ang mabilis na pagbaha kahit sa saglit na pag-ulan; nakikita nila na ito ay dahil sa hindi maayos na mga *drainage system* sa Aroma. Maliban dito, higit na itinuturing din ng mga bakla na katsikahan na mapaminsalang disaster ang mga epidemya tulad ng COVID-19 na higit na nakaapekto sa mga residente. Dagdag ni Gerald na may banta rin ng panganib ng polusyon sa hangin sa Aroma dahil sa pabrika ng uling na nakatayo sa kanilang pamayanan: “Maliban sa sunog, nababahala rin ako sa *air pollution*. Matagal na yung isyu about sa ano [pabrika ng uling] meron dito niyan. Alam ko napasara na ‘yan dahil marami ang nagkasakit, ‘di ko alam ‘bat nagbukas uli.”

Ang pakikipag-tsikahang ginawa kasama ng mga bakla sa Aroma ay tumutok sa pinakahuling nangyaring sunog sa pamayanan noong Abril 18, 2020, bago nagsimula ang pangangalap ng datos ng pananaliksik. Nangyari ang sunog noong kasagsagan ng COVID-19 pandemic; malaki ang nangyaring sunog sa Aroma at naapektuhan ang mahigit 500 na pamilya na naninirahan dito (San Juan, 2020), kasama na ang mga baklang nakatsikahan. Maliban sa kanilang karanasan sa sunog ay ilalahad din dito ang mga naging repleksyon, karanasan, at pananaw ng mga bakla sa bawat yugto ng pangangasiwa ng disaster: prebensyon at paghahanda, pagtugon, at pagbangon sa disaster.

### ***Tsika ng mga Bakla sa Panahon ng Nangyaring Sunog noong Abril 18, 2020***

Noong nangyari ang sunog, hindi lahat ng mga baklang nakatsikahan ay nandoon. Si Dyoza, bilang isang call center agent, ay nasa trabaho noong mga panahong iyon at kadalasan ay hindi siya umuwi sa Aroma dahil *live-in* sila sa kanilang opisina dahil nga sa banta ng

COVID-19. Nagulat na lang siya na may natanggap siyang chat sa Facebook Messenger na nagkaroon ng sunog sa kanilang erya at kasamang natupok ang kanyang bahay. Sa tsika ni Dyoza:

Unang beses na nagkasunog sa aming lugar na wala ako doon, simula nung tumira ako dito madalas nasa bahay ako kapag nagkakasunog pero madalas tulog ako. Nagugulat nalang ako may kumakatok at nagsisigawan. Ngayon iba ang gulat ko kasi nalaman kong wala yung bahay at gamit ko sa Messenger. Hindi tulad ng mga nauna, may naisalba pa. Ako ngayon wala na akong naisilba dahil wala ako doon, ayon ubos lahat ng pinaghirapan ko.

Tulad ni Dyoza, wala rin si Chinchin at Elov sa erya noong mga oras na nangyari ang sunog. Sabi ni Chinchin na yung mga oras na iyon, siya ay nasa Divisoria at nalaman niya nalang na nagkasunog dahil sinabihan siya ng kanyang kaibigan. Si Elov naman ay wala noon dahil bumili sila ng kanilang pangangailangan sa bahay. Nagulat na lang siya nung pag-uwi niya ay tinupok na ng apoy ang kanilang tahanan kasama ang kanilang alagang aso.

Iyong time kasi ng ano [sunog] umalis ako, hapon ‘yon nangyari. Mukhang nagsimula sa bandang taas namin. Kakagawa lang ng bahay ko at naiwan ko ‘yong aso ko, ayon pati siya nasunog. Sobrang sakit, sobrang hirap, kasi ‘di mo alam kung saan ka pwedeng makitulog, ganoon. Hindi mo alam kung paano magsimula ulit.

Si Gerald at Hesus naman ay nandoon sa Aroma nung nangyari ang sunog. Si Gerald ay agarang lumikas kasama ang kanyang pamilya at pumunta roon sa highway noong nakita na nila na malakas na ang apoy at nagsisigawan na ang kanilang mga kapitbahay. Dahil malayo sila sa pinagmulan ng sunog, hindi sila naabot. Si Hesus naman ay nagkaroon ng kahirapan sa paglikas dahil sa kanyang edad; tinulungan nalang siya ng kanyang mga kamag anak ngunit wala siyang nailikas o nadalang mga gamit.

Dahil sa edad ko, nahirapan na akong bumaba at tumakbo. Buti nalang ay nariyan ang mga pamangkin ko sa baba at kinuha agad ako. Kaso lang wala akong nadalang mga damit ko kaya tignan mo puro panlalaki na lagi ang suot ko.

Kaugnay ng nangyaring sunog, tinanong din ng mananaliksik ang mga baklang nakatsikahan tungkol sa nakikita nilang dahilan o rason sa nangyaring sunog noong Abril 2020. Kalakhan sa kanila ay nagsasabi na mula sa narinig nilang tsika na ang rason nito ay naiwang kandila o niluluto. Sinasabi naman sa report ni San Juan (2020) na ayon sa report ng mga bumbero, nagmula ang sunog sa nag-overheat na appliance. Nakikita naman ng isang bakla na posibleng problema sa kable ng kuryente sa lugar dahil sa marami ang gumagamit sa kanila ng *jumper* o pagnanakaw ng kuryente.

Halos lahat ng mga bakla sa Aroma ang nagsabi na kahit lagi ng nagkakasunog sa kanila ay mapaminsala pa rin ang epekto nito at laging napapag-iwanan pa rin ang mga tulad nilang bakla sa panahon ng disaster tulad ng sunog. Sa katunayan, sinasabi ni Elov na higit silang nahirapan noon dahil ang sunog ay nangyari sa panahon ng pandemya. Binibigyan diin naman ni Dyoza na kahit anong disaster ang mangyari sa kanilang lugar hindi naman binibigyang pansin ang pangangailangan ng mga bakla. Sa palagay niya, ito ay dahil sa patuloy na pag-igting ng diskriminasyon na higit pa nilang nararanasan sa panahon ng disaster.

Noong panahon ng sunog, napansin ko napag-iiwanan talaga kaming mga bakla kasi mayroon pa ring talagang discrimination sa amin. Kasabay pa nung sunog ay COVID, ‘eh lahat ng programa roon di naman kinikilala ‘yung mga bakla kaya nga kuwento ko nga sayo may kakilala akong magkarelasyon na tomboy na ‘di talaga nabigyan ng relief goods.

### ***Tsika Tungkol sa Kanilang Ginagawang Prebensyon at Mitigasyon sa Disaster***

Pagkatapos ng pagbabalik tanaw sa nangyaring sunog, tumungo na ang tsikahan sa kabuuang karanasan ng mga bakla sa yugto ng pangangasiwa ng disaster. Ilan sa kanilang tsika ay mula sa sarili nilang mga repleskyon at natutunan sa mga nangyari sa mga nakaraang disaster na naranasan nila sa kanilang erya. Halos lahat ng mga nakausap na bakla ay nagsasabi na naging mahirap ang kanilang karanasan bago at pagkatapos ng disaster. Tinanong ang mga bakla kung ano ang kanilang ginagawa upang maiwasan ang malalang pinsala ng disaster tulad ng sunog. Sinabi ni Dyoza na naging mahirap sa kanya ang laging pagkakaroon ng sunog sa Aroma. Gustuhin niya man lumipat, hindi niya ito magawa dahil ang sabi niya ay ibinigay na sa kanya ang lupa na kinatatayuan ng kayang bahay. Ang ginawa niya na lang upang makaiwas sa malaking pinsala ng sunog ay pagpapasemento ng kanyang bahay na ginagawa rin ng iba pang residente sa Aroma.

Sobrang hirap masunugan since light materials lang ang bahay ko noon, madaling natupok. Tapos yung mga pinagpaguran, pinag-ipunan, nawala. Hindi kasi ako makaalis kasi binigay na sakín ito, ang mahal ng renta sa labas nito [Aroma]. ‘Di ko alam kung may prebensyon ba na nagaganap, ang sa akin kasi inanticipate ko na lagi ng nagkakasunog dito. So, ang ginawa ko na lang ay ipinasemento ko ang bahay ko para nasunog man, di masyadong malaki ang impact man sa akin.

Dagdag pa, ayon kay Gerald, maliban sa pag-konkreta ng mga bahay, pinapatayuan din nila ng ikalawang palapag ang mga ito dahil na rin sa mabilis na pagbaha sa Aroma dahil sa hindi maayos na mga kanal at malapit sila sa dagat. Itinatali nila ang kanilang bubong upang hindi tangayin kapag may bagyo. Halos pareho lang ang naging tsika ng iba pang mga bakla ukol sa kanilang ginagawang pamamaraan sa pag-iwas sa malalang pinsala ng disaster.

Gayunpaman, binabanggit ni Elov na lahat ng ginagawa nila ay galing sa sariling bulsa, dagdag niya na tumigil na siya sa paniniwala na may ibibigay pang tulong ang gobyerno.

Bagong semento lang ‘tong bahay namin...sariling sikip at sariling gastos ko ‘to. Tuwing nagkakasunog, tupok lagi itong bahay namin dahil gawa sa kahoy...nawalan na ko ng gana na mag-antay pa ng tulong sa gobyerno, kakarampot ang binibigay ‘tas para pa kaming namamalimos.

### ***Tsika sa mga Paghahandang Ginagawa ng mga Bakla Bago ang Disaster***

Dahil nga palagi ng nagkakasunog sa Aroma, halos magkakapareho na ang naging tsika ng mga bakla kung paano ang kanilang ginagawang paghahanda bago ang disaster. Lumalabas na mayroon na silang nakahandang mga personal na pangangailangan tulad ng damit, pagkain, at *emergency lights*. Binabanggit ni Chinchin na maliban sa personal na pangangailangan ay palagi rin niyan inihahanda ang kanyang mga importanteng dokumento. Dagdag niya na “...nasunog kasi dati birth certificate at mga ID ko. Ngayon ito, una kong sini-save ‘to kasi mahirap at magastos mag-ayos, nadala na ko.”

Maliban sa mga gamit at pangangailangan, lumabas rin na isa sa ginawa nilang paghahanda ay ang pag-oorganisa kung paano lumikas. Sinabi ni Hesus na dahil nakasama siya sa mga pagsasanay noon tungkol sa disaster at matagal na siyang naging volunteer sa kanilang barangay, tumulong siya sa pag-aayos ng pagmamapa ng mga lugar na paglilikasan at pamamaraan kung paano lumikas.

Matagal akong volunteer noon sa barangay, senior citizen na ko kaya retired na ko. Kasama ako noon sa training, si Erap pa noon. Nag gawa kami dito ng proseso kung paano lumikas, kung saan punta at kung saan dadaan. Shinishare ko rin sa kanila mga natutunan ko roon kasi gusto ko ligtas kaming lahat.

Tinanong rin ang iba kung mayroon silang alam na ginagawang pagsasanay tungkol sa disaster. Mayroong isang nagsabi na “Madalas may training pero pili lang naman pinapapunta nila.” May nagbanggit naman na “Paulit-ulit naman ‘yan, nagkakasunog naman lagi rito. Kesa pumunta ako edi magtrabaho nalang ako para may pagkain kami.” Maliban sa walang mga pagsasanay, lumalabas rin sa tsikahan na walang mga sapat na impormasyon at mga *early warning system* ang erya. Sinubukan kong itanong sa kanila kung may ginagawa ang barangay ukol rito, sabi ng isa ay “Malayo yung sirena, roon pa sa barangay di namin marinig dito.” Binaggit naman ni Dyoza na kapag may sunog “Magugulat ka na lang kapag may nagsisigawan, alam mo na [sunog]. Kaya takbo nalang kami.”

### ***Tsika Tungkol sa Pagliligtas ng Sarili, Mahal sa Buhay, at Pamayanan sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Kalakhan ng mga baklang nakatsikahan ang nagsabi na kapag nagkakasunog sa kanilang lugar, inuuna muna nilang iligtas ang kanilang sarili at mga mahal sa buhay. Sinasabi ni Hesus na “Noong nangyari yung sunog, inuna ko muna sarili ko kahit hirap na hirap ako kasi ayon ang turo ‘eh.” Tulad ni Hesus, ganito rin ang ang naging sagot ni Gerald pero dagdag niya, maliban sa sarili niya, mas inuuna niya na iligtas ang mga bata at matatanda sa kanilang pamilya. “Yong nangyari ang sunog, inilikas muna namin yung mga pamangkin ko at mga matatanda, dinala namin sa highway. Tapos sinunod namin yung mga kayang bitbitin, kayang ilabas.”

Mayroon ring masalimuot na tsika ang mga bakla sa Aroma sa panahon ng pakikiisa nila sa pagtugon na ginagawa sa disaster. Tulad ng naging tsika ni Dyoza, patuloy pa rin talaga ang pamamayani ng stigma, diskriminasyon, at *stereotype* sa mga bakla sa kanilang pamayanan. Sa katunayan, ayon kay Dyoza na noong mga nakaraang sunog, sinubukan

niyang makiisa sa pag-apula nito ngunit hindi siya pinasama ng ibang residente sa Aroma dahil ang tingin sa kanya ay mahina siya dahil nga bakla siya.

Hindi ako pinapasama [sa pag-apula ng sunog at pagligtas], isa pa yan sa discrimination. Ang feeling kasi ng mga tao pag bakla ka mahina ka. ‘Yong parang doon ka lang sa isang tabi tapos mga lalaki lang ang mag-iinitiate ng ganun kahit gustuhin ko man.

Lumabas sa mga tsika ng mga bakla na kinikilala pa rin nila ang kahalagahan ng pakikipagkapwa at pagkakaisa lalo na kapag mayroong disaster sa kabila ng nararanasan nilang diskriminasyon at stereotype sa erya. Na-tsika ni Chinchin na bagamat inuuna nila ang kanilang sarili at pamilya, hindi nila nakakalimutan na tulungan ang kanilang mga kapitbahay.

Sa kabila ng diskriminasyon, ilan sa mga kalahok ang kumilos at nagsimula ng inisyatibo para matulungan ang kanilang mga kasama sa pamayanan. Si Gerald, kasama ng kanyang mga kaibigan ay nagsimula ng *donation drive*. Kaparehas ng kay Gerald, si Dyoza naman ay nagtayo ng tinatawag niyang *roving community pantry* na kung saan iniiba nila ang pwesto kada araw. Nakuha niya ang mga ipinapamigay na pangangailangan sa kanyang pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga kakilala. Naging dahilan ito kung bakit siya nakilala sa kanilang pamayanan.

Nakita ko na grabe yung gutom ng mga kapitbahay ko lalo na yung mga bata, ako kasi may ipon. Kaya nakipag usap ako sa company ko at mga hotel, pagtapos nun gumawa kami ng roving community pantry. Dahil dito nakilala ako sa Aroma, nakuha ko yung respeto.

Kahit na matanda na si Hesus, nakiisa pa rin siya sa ginagawang pagkilos at aktibidad na ginagawa ng barangay para sabi niya “Matagal na kong volunteer, kaya kahit nasunugan ako at matanda na, siyempre tutulong pa rin ako.”

### ***Tsika ng mga Bakla sa Aroma Tungkol sa Ayuda at mga Tulong na Ibinibigay sa Kanila sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Lumilitaw sa tsika ng mga bakla na ilan sa kanila ay hindi nakatanggap ng ayuda o tulong na ibinibigay. Sinasabi ni Hesus na “Nakatanggap ako kasi dati akong BHW [Barangay Health Worker] kaya kilala ako ng mga coordinator.” Ayon naman kay Gerald, pinipili rin ang mga naisasama sa listahan; mas nanaig pa rin ang sistemang padrino at palakasan. Dagdag rin niya na iyong mga bakla na nasa looban ay hindi rin naisasama dahil hindi napupuntahan at hindi umaabot sa kanila ang mga impormasyon tungkol dito.

Marami akong kaibigan na hindi nakakatanggap, minsan kasi namimili sila. Sabihin na natin na kunwari may ganitong listahan, may nauna na ‘di umabot ang iba. Hindi talaga well distributed yung information kaya pagdating sa ano [ayuda], even mayroon ng organization ang city hall para sa LGBT, naalarma kami ng friends ko kasi ilan lang ang nasa listahan, wala kami doon. So parang, mga kaibigan lang nila nakalista, parang padrino system talaga, palakasan. Kapag hindi ikaw ang focal person o hindi ka kilala walang aabot sayo.

Ayon naman kay Elov, matagal na siyang hindi nakakatanggap ng ayuda at nakikita niya na ito ay dahil hindi kinikilala ang mga bakla sa kanilang barangay at walang batas. Na-tsika naman ni Dyoza na may kaibigan siya na magkarelasyong bakla na nagpanggap na magkapatid para mabigyan lang sila ng ayuda.

Mayroon nga akong kilala dito malapit sa amin na magkarelasyon tapos parehas na babae. Hindi talaga sila binigyan ng tulong kahit na tupok talaga bahay nila. May

COVID tapos nasunugan pa, syempre gutom na, nagpanggap na mag-ate para mabigyan ng ayuda.

### ***Tsika ng mga Bakla Tungkol sa Kanilang Karanasan sa Evacuation Center***

Gayunpaman, sinasabi ng iilang bakla na naging mabuti ang kanilang karanasan at pagtanggap sa kanila sa evacuation center. Sa katunayan, nagagalak si Gerald sa pagtsika niya dahil napansin niya na bihira na ang pang-aapi at diskriminasyon sa mga bakla sa evacuation center noong panahong iyon. Dagdag niya na “Hindi na inisip ng mga tao ‘yon, wala na talagang kaartehan. As one yung turingan kasi lahat naman ay nasunugan.” Sa usapin naman ng palikuran sa evacuation center, ayon kay Dyoza, mayroon pa ring kaunting stigma na nararanasan ang mga bakla sa Aroma. Sinabi niya na “Ang stigma kasi pag bakla ka maninilip ka, ‘di ka pwedeng sumabay sa lalaki pati sa babae kasi iniisip nila maninilip ka.” Napapansin naman ni Gerald na kaunti na lang ang diskriminasyon na natatanggap ng mga bakla sa Aroma dahil nga magkakakilala na sila. Pero may iilan pa ring nakakaranas ng diskriminasyon lalo ang mga transgender sa erya. Dagdag niya, “Minimal nalang yung napapansin kong discrimination sa mga CR kasi magkakakilala naman kami, ‘yon ang observation ko. Siguro hindi talaga maiwasan ng iba na ganoon lalo na sa transgender kasi pumapasok siguro sa preferences at privacy ng iba.”

### ***Tsikang Pagbangon ng mga Bakla Pagkatapos ng Sunog***

Lumalabas sa tsika na mas nakasandig ang mga bakla sa Aroma sa kanilang mga sariling kakayahan at kapasidad sa pagbangon nila sa naging epekto ng disaster. Mayroong pagkakaparehas ang sinasabi nila Elov at Dyoza na kinakailangan ang sariling pagsisikap upang makabangon sa nangyaring disaster. Hindi rin nila nakikita na sapat o angkop ang ginagawa at binibigay ng gobyerno sa kanila. Binabanggit ni Dyoza na “Aasa talaga ako sa

sarili ko kasi wala naman magtataas o tutulong sakin kundi sarili ko lang. Sinisipagan ko talaga para maka-recover.” Ayon naman kay Elov,

Matagal na ko dito, ‘di naman sapat binibigay nila [gobyerno] hindi rin ok sakin kasi kung totoo talaga sila sa pagtulong gagawan nila ng paraan para wala ng sunog dito. Ginagawa ko nalang trabaho, nagdedeliver ako tas ipon ko pinapagawa ko ng bahay. Work lang ng work, ahon-ahon lang basta makaangat uli.

Kinikilala naman ni Gerald ang mga binibigay ng mga non-governmental organization (NGO) at gobyerno sa kanilang pamayanan para makabangon pero malinaw rin sa kanya na naiwan pa rin ang mga bakla kasi hindi nabibigyan. “Malaking tulong rin ang binibigay ng NGO pati ng LGU dito kasi nagbibigay sila ng materyales, unti man pero malaking tulong na rin. Ang problema nga lang hindi talaga nabibigyan ang mga bakla kasi per household nga.”

Nakikita rin ng ilan sa mga baklang nakatsikahan ang papel ng pagkakaisa at pagtutulongan ng mga residente para makabangon. Sinasabi ni Hesus na “Tinulungan ako ng mga kapatid ko at mga kapitbahay para magawa bahay ko, mahirap na kasi sakin senior na, malaking bagay na ito.” Nabanggit naman ni Chinchin na sanay na ang mga tao rito sa sunog kaya natural na sa kanila ang pagbibigayan. Dagdag pa ni Gerald, naging malaking parte rin ang pagtulong ng mga hindi nasunugan at nakatira sa labas ng Aroma sa nangyaring pagbangon sa epekto ng sunog. Sabi niya na kapag ang kapwa residente ang tumulong walang pinipili kahit ano pa man ang kasarian.

### ***Tsika ng mga Bakla Ukol sa Kanilang Pangangailangan sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Kinikilala rin ng mga bakla na ang mga espesipikong pangangailangan nila ay may malaking papel sa kanilang pagbangon. Halos pareho ang naging tsika ni Elov at Chinchin nung tanungin sila. Sinabi nila na tulad ng ibang kasarian, kagyat na kailangan rin ng mga

bakla sa panahon ng disaster ay pagkain, tubig, tirahan, damit, at serbisyong medikal para makabangon. Nakikita naman ni Hesus na mahalaga ang pagbibigay rin ng *hygiene kits* lalo na sa kanilang pamayanan. Maliban rito, binigyang diin ni Dyoza na may partikular na pangangailangan pa ang mga bakla na hindi pinapansin at binibigyang pansin. “Maliban sa mga pagkain, mayroon pang kailangan rin ng mga LGBT individual. Madaming transwomen dito tulad ko na kailangan rin ng hormonal pills. Siyempre kailangan rin ng condom o maybe gamot sa HIV.”

Nababanggit din sa tsika nila na bukod sa mga pisyolohikal na pangangailangan, nakikita ng mga bakla na mahalaga ang pagbibigay ng *psychosocial* at *emotional support* hindi lang sa mga bakla pati na rin sa mga nasunugan. Nakikita naman ni Chincin na “Maganda siguro kung bibigyan rin kami ng kabuhayan at trabaho para kami ay may kakayahan na at di na aasa sa bigay.” Naniniwala rin sila na maliban sa relief goods na naglalaman ng bigas, de-lata, kape at iba pa, mahalaga ring bigyan sila ng boses at isama sa pangangasiwa sa disaster.

### ***Tsikang Kabaklaan Tungkol sa Pagkakaiba ng Kanilang Karanasan sa iba Pang Kasarian sa Panahon ng Disaster***

Isa sa primaryang layunin ng pananaliksik na ito ay makita at maipatampok ang espesipikong karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster. Kaya sa nangyaring tsikahan kasama ng mga bakla sa Aroma ay tinalakay ito. Halos lahat ng mga bakla na nakatsikahan ay nagsabi at binigyang diin na malaki ang pagkakaiba ng kanilang karanasan kumpara sa babae at lalaki. Kahit na lahat sila ay sumasang-ayon dito, mayroon pa ring pagkakaiba sa kanilang karanasan at dahilan kung bakit ito naiiba. Sinasabi ni Chinchin na iba ang karanasan ng mga bakla sa babae at lalaki sa panahon ng disaster dahil ang mga bakla ay hindi kinikilala ng mga batas sa bansa. Dagdag pa niya na kahit patuloy na naapi pa rin ang mga babae sa

lipunan, mayroong mga batas ang kumikilala sa kanila na nagiging daan kung bakit sila nirerespeto at pinoprotektahan. “Yong pagkakaiba kasi, ang mga babae ay nirerespeto at naiintindihan ang kanilang pangangailangan dahil sa mga batas. ‘Eh kapag bakla, wala ‘yan, di na nga nirerespeto, pinapabaya pa.”

Mayroon ding pagkakaparehas ang naging tsika ni Dyoza kay Chinchin. Binabanggit niya na hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay nagpapatuloy pa rin ang malalang diskriminasyon sa bakla sa lipunang Pilipino dahil sa kawalan ng batas na kumikilala sa mga bakla sa bansa. Dagdag pa ni Dyoza na,

In a way meron talagang pagkakaiba, yung sa strength at capacity ng babae at bakla ay laging kino-compare kahit hindi dapat. Kasi kapag babae tanggap na iba ang lakas na mayroon sila pero kasi kapag LGBT ka parang iniisip nila at ini-implicate ng mga tao na mahina ka by choice kasi nga bakla ka nga.

Naniniwala siya na hindi dapat tinitignan ang pagkakaiba ng mga tao sa kalakasan, kapasidad, at kahinaan nito. Tinitignan dapat ang espesipikong karanasan lalo na kapag pinag-uusapan ang epekto ng disaster.

Ayon naman kay Elov, naiiba ang karanasan ng mga LGBT sa babae at lalaki dahil sa mga paniniwala, pagtingin, at kultura na mayroon ang lipunang Pilipino. Napapansin niya na sa mga nangyaring disaster sa kanilang lugar, maraming papel at ginagampanan ang mga bakla lalo na sa loob ng kanilang tahanan. Sinabi niya na “Iba ang karanasan naming mga LGBT sa mga babae at lalaki, kadalasan kami ang breadwinner dito kaya kapag may disaster, sa amin umaasa mga kamag anak namin.” Dagdag pa niya na “Kapag babae kasi, sa bahay lang, kapag lalaki naman nag-work. Kaming mga bakla dito, simula sa paglikas, pag-aalaga ng mga bata, paglinis ng bahay, at paghahanap ng pera para maitayo ulit ang bahay namin, samin lahat umaasa.” Kahit na malinaw ang pagkakaiba ng karanasan ng mga bakla kay

Hesus, sinasabi niya na dapat sa panahon ng disaster walang pinag-babasehan na kasarian kung sino ang ililigtas at binibigyan ng ayuda dahil napansin niya kapag may disaster laging nahuhuli at napapagiwanan ang mga bakla.

Sa tagal ko na dito sa Aroma, napansin ko na malaki ang pagkakaiba ng epekto niyan [disaster] sa mga tao lalo na sa bakla. Mayroong pagkakaiba pero ang ano ko dun ay hindi dapat pinag-babasehan ang kasarian mo. Kasi pagdating sa sitwasyon na ‘yon lalo na kapag emergency, wag tayong mamili ng tao. Hindi porket babae ‘yon lang ililigtas mo, kapag bakla ka kapwa bakla lang ililigtas mo, parehas dapat sila.

### ***Tsikang Kabaklaan Tungkol sa Epekto ng Pagiging Bakla sa Kanilang Karanasang Napag-iiwanan sa Disaster***

Pinag-usapan rin sa nangyaring tsikahan kasama ng mga bakla sa Aroma kung nakikita ba nila na mayroong epekto ang kabaklaan sa kanilang karanasang napag-iiwanan sa panahon ng disaster. Ilan sa mga bakla na nakatsikahan ang sumang-ayon dito at naniniwala na dahilan ng karanasang napag-iiwanan sa panahon ng disaster ay ang kanilang pagiging bakla. Ayon kay Dyoza, isa sa nakikita niyang halimbawa nito ay kapag may sunog o bagyo sa kanilang lugar, inililikas ang mga tao sa evacuation centers, at ilan sa mga kakilala niyang mga bakla ang nakakaranas ng stigma at diskriminasyon sa mga evacuation center na nahihirapan na gumalaw at nakakaramdam na hindi ligtas rito.

For me, nakakaapekto talaga ang pagiging LGBT. Kasi, tulad halimbawa pag may bagyo kasi rito o sunog, nire-require kami ng barangay na magpunta sa evacuation centers o sa barangay mismo. May impact ang pagiging LGBT kasi sa mga tent o sa common toilets, mayroong stigma kasi laging iniisip ng tao kapag bakla ka maninilip ka, hindi ka puwede sumabay sa lalaki o babae kasi kala nila maninilip ka, ilan sa

kakilala ko hindi na nag-CR doon at nag-stay kasi feel nila hindi sila ligtas, marginalized kasi lagi pag LGBT.

Binabanggit naman ni Hesus na matagal na niyang napapansin sa kanilang lugar na hindi pinapakinggan at ikino-konsidera ang mga bakla dahil nga mababa ang pagtingin sa mga bakla. Dagdag pa niya na “Kapag bakla ka, mahihirapan ka mabuhay sa lipunan lalo na rito kasi iniwan ka talaga lalo na kapag may sakuna.” Ganito rin ang pakiramdam ni Elov. Nakikita niya na papabayaang ka talaga sa panahon ng disaster dahil bakla ka at dahil wala ngang polisiya ang kumikilala sa mga bakla, ang tingin niya ay kapag bakla ka maiwan ka talaga sa disaster.

Alam mo, dahil tomboy ako kaya hindi ako pinapakinggan ng barangay. Unang-una, kasi barangay ang namamahala dito kasi kung tanggap ka ng barangay ay tanggap ka ng lahat. Alam mo policy talaga nila ‘yan ‘eh. Sa pakiramdam, ang pagtingin ng barangay sa amin ay “bakla lang ‘yan, tomboy lang ‘yan” kaya naniniwala ako dahil LGBT kami, hindi kami naisasama.

Parehas rin ang paniniwala ni Dyoza kay Elov. Ayon sa kanya, “Kasi yung batas sa barangay at sa buong bansa ay naka-design na i-discriminate ang mga LGBT. Naka-specify kasi ‘yan sa lalaki at babae lang walang LGBT.” Ayon naman kay Gerald, tinitignan lagi na ang mga bakla ay mayroong kakayahan na umahon sa disaster dahil nga sila ay likas na ma-diskarte at dahil doon hindi na kinakailangan ng tulong o suporta sa panahon ng disaster.

Pag tinatamaan tayo ng calamity o sakuna, pantay-pantay kayong mapipilayan kahit iba ang epekto nito sa bawat isa. Nagkakaroon talaga ng diskriminasyon sa mga bakla dahil laging sinasabi na “Oh may trabaho na ‘yan” o “may kaya naman ‘yan bakit pumipila pa din ‘to.” Nakakalungkot dahil lahat naman ay naapektuhan ng sakuna pero bakit kailangan magkaroon ng pangmamata o paghihiwalay? Hindi naman

kasalanan ng mga bakla dahil laging may expectation sa mga LGBT, kailangan may patunayan para matanggap ng lipunan.

Dagdag pa ni Gerald na nakikita niya na ang pagiging bakla rin ay rason kung bakit hindi pinapakinggan ang mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster, sinasabi niya na

Parang tingin kasi nila na kapag LGBT walang magagawa 'eh. Akala nila wala tayong alam na parang bang baby na dapat alagaan. Kaya ng mga bakla na maging part ng response, hindi naman nag-cause ang pagiging gay sa pagkakaroon ng malalang sakuna.

### **Intersectional Approach: Tungo sa Malalim na Pag-unawa ng Karanasang Napag-iwanan ng mga Bakla sa Disaster**

Makikita sa mga tsika ng mga bakla sa Aroma ang iba't ibang karanasang napag-iwanan sila sa bawat yugto ng pangangasiwa ng disaster. Ang kanilang kwento at danas ay buhay na ebidensya na ang mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster ay nanatiling imbisibol at higit na nakakaranas ng negatibong epekto ng sakuna. Kahit na itinuturing na ang Pilipinas ay isang bansa na mapagtanggap sa mga bakla, ayon kay Garcia (2008), nanatili pa ring walang batas na kumikilala sa karapatan at nagbibigay proteksyon sa kanila at patuloy pa rin na isinasantabi ang kanilang espisipikong pangangailangan. Nanatili rin ang mababa, mahina, at masamang pagtingin sa bakla na nagreresulta sa patuloy na paghihirap nila sa panahon ng disaster at sa pang araw-araw nilang buhay (Botocabe, 2011). Sa pagpapatuloy ng ganitong pagturing at pagtingin sa mga Pilipinong bakla mananatili silang bulnerable at makakaranas ng mapaminsalang epekto ng sakuna (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016). Ang karanasan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster ay hindi lang dahil sa kaapihan na nakadikit sa kanilang kasarian at sekswalidad bagkus ang karanasang ito ay pinapalala pa ng maraming klase ng kaapihan

(Dominey-Howes et al., 2018). Binabanggit sa pag-aaral ni Jayakumar (2017) na ang mga kaapihang nararanasan ng mga indibidwal tulad ng mga bakla ay nagpapatong-patong at nagbabagan na siyang ugat ng patuloy nilang paghihirap. Ilalahad sa seksyong ito ang kaapihang nararanasan ng mga bakla sa Aroma sa panahon ng disaster batay sa kanilang identidad, uri at sosyo-ekonomikal na sitwasyon.

### ***Identidad***

Malaki ang nagiging papel ng identidad ng isang tao sa kung paano siya mabubuhay sa lipunan. Ayon kay Garcia (2008), ang mga bakla ay patuloy na tinitignan na mababa at hindi pinapakinggan dahil lamang sa kanilang identidad. Nanatili rin na hindi kinikilala ang mga bakla at nanatiling imbisibol sa lipunang Pilipino dahil hindi sila pasok sa cis-heteronormatibong kategorya ng kasarian at sekswalidad (Aban & Sy, 2022). Ang ganitong pagtingin ay nagdudulot ng paglala ng diskriminasyon at stigma na siya ring ugat ng pagkaiwan ng mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster. Sa mga tsika ni Dyoza, sinasabi niya na mayroon pa rin siyang diskriminasyon na nararanasan tulad ng kanyang karanasan sa pagresponde sa nangyaring sunog sa kanila. Nais niya sanang tumulong sa pagpatay ng sunog ngunit hindi siya isinama ng mga kalalakihan dahil nga ang tingin sa kanya ay mahina. Dagdag pa niya na kahit parehas na mayroong kaapihang nararanasan ang mga babae at mga bakla, iba pa rin ang karanasan ng bakla dahil ang mga babae ay may respeto at pagkilala at sa bakla naman ay walang pagkilala at respeto. Higit sa lahat, mayroong pagtingin na bilang isang bakla, pinipili mo na maging mahina.

Tuloy-tuloy ang discrimination. Ang feeling kasi ng tao kapag bakla ay mahina, doon lang sa isang tabi hindi kaya na magbuhat ng balde at mga kalalakihan lang ang mag-iinitiate ng ganyan...Ang mga babae kasi ay tanggap na at nirerespeto sila kahit ang

tingin sa kanila ay mahina. Sa mga bakla kasi ini-implicate ng mga tao na mahina ka by choice kasi bakla ka nga.

Sinasabi naman nila Mcsherry et al. (2015) na sa bagyong Yolanda nakaranas ng dobleng kaapihan ang mga bakla dahil sa kanilang identidad. Sila ay hindi nakatanggap ng ayuda dahil nga wala silang dokumento na susuporta sa kanilang pagkilala sa kanilang sarili, kung mayroon namang dokumento mabibigyan sila ng ayuda ngunit kasabay nito ay negatibong pagtrato sa kanila dahil sa kanilang identidad.

Maliban sa mahina at ibang pagtingin sa mga bakla mayroon ding maling pananaw sa kanila tulad ng sa paggamit ng mga palikuran sa mga evacuation center. Lumabas sa tsika ni Gerald at Dyoza na hanggang sa kasalukuyan, nanatili pa rin ang stereotypes sa mga bakla na kapag bakla ka, hindi ka pwedeng sumabay sa mga lalaki o babae dahil iniisip nila na sisilipan at babastusin sila. Nanatili ring nakadikit sa identidad ng mga bakla na kailangan laging patunayan ang sarili para matanggap ng lipunan, iba pa ang pagtingin na sila ay mapera o *breadwinners*. Ayon kay Gerald, dahil sa ganitong pananaw hindi na napapansin na may pangangailangan din ang mga bakla lalo na sa panahon ng disaster, at ang ganitong pananaw ay nagreresulta ng hindi pagbibigay ng ayuda sa mga bakla.

Sa lipunan natin ang tingin kasi sa mga bakla ay likas na madiskarte. Dito sa amin, breadwinners ang tingin sa mga bakla kasi sa sitwasyon namin na ito, hindi ka pwedeng paupo-upo lang, kailangan ay magsipag ka kasi kailangan may patunayan. Ayon ang expectation na binigay sayo ng komunidad na parang dahil part ka ng LGBT hindi pa rin nawawala yung pag-kwestiyon sa pagkatao mo kaya kailangan patunayan mo yung sarili mo. Kaya dahil tingin nila mapera ka, 'di ka na nila bibigyan ng ayuda.

Lumalabas din na ang tradisyonal na pagtingin sa pamilya ang siyang nagiging dahilan rin ng pagka-iwan nila sa panahon ng disaster kadikit ng kanilang identidad. Sinasabi ni Elov na

“May concern ako about sa pagtingin ng family ‘eh. Pakiramdam ko, ito pa rin ang dahilan kung bakit di kami naisasama sa mga ayuda.” Dagdag niya na mahalaga ang pagkilala sa kasarian at sekswalidad para walang mapag-iwanan sa disaster. Ayon kay Elov, hindi lang dapat tinitignan na “Bakla ka lang, tomboy ka lang...Kasi nagugutom at nangangailangan din kami.” Maliban sa epekto ng identidad sa disaster, ang negatibong epekto rin ng sakuna ay naging hadlang sa pagpapakita sa kung sino ka. Sa karanasan ni Hesus, natututo siyang magsuot ng mga damit ng panlalaki dahil lahat ng damit niya ay natupok ng sunog. “Nakasanayan ko na magsuot ng pambabae dahil doon ako komportable. Nitong nasunugan kami, natuto akong magsuot ng panlalaki...Alam ng mga kapitbahay ko rito kung paano ako manamit parang akala nila nasa fashion show ako lagi.”

### ***Uri***

Sa matagal na panahon, maraming mga bakla ang patuloy na nakakaranas ng pananamantala at diskriminasyon. Sinasabi ni Madula (2016) na ang karanasan ng mga Pilipinong bakla ay nagmumula sa malakolonyal at malapyudal na sistema ng lipunang Pilipino na siyang nagreresulta sa makauring sistema ng lipunan na siyang nagdudulot ng mababang pagtingin sa mga bakla. Ang uri ay may malaking papel sa nagpapatuloy na tunggalian sa sekswalidad at kasarian sa Pilipinas (Ceperiano et al., 2016). Sa makauring sistema ng lipunan nanatili ang kaapihan at pagsasamantala sa mga homosekswal habang ang mga kinikilala lang ng mga sistemang panlipunan ay ang heterosekswal (Aban & Sy, 2022). Ang makauring sistema ng lipunang Pilipino ang siya ring nagdudulot ng negatibong epekto sa mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster at ng kanilang karanasang napag-iwanan (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016). Sa pangangasiwa ng disaster nanatiling walang boses ang mga bakla. Ang tsika ni Gerald ay “Nanatiling ‘di kami pinapakinggan dito. Parang tingin sa amin ay bata palang.” Nabanggit naman ni Chinchin na “Iba ang karanasan ng mga LGBT pero parang wala naman silang pake, hindi kasi nila naiintindihan pero kapag lalaki at babae nirerespeto

nila.” Tinitignan naman ni Dyoza na may magkakaibang epekto ang disaster depende kung anong uri ang kinabibilangan mo. Sa kanila na nakatira sa maralitang-pamayanan, mapaminsala na nga ang epekto ng disaster, hindi pa sila sinasama sa pagpapalano ng pangangasiwa ng disaster at hindi pa pinapakinggan ‘yung boses nila.

Hindi naman parehas ang effect sa mga bakla lalo na kapag nasa higher class. Kasi kapag nasa condo ka o subdivision, may trabaho ka, mabilis kang makakabangon at papakiggang ka pa. Kami, nahirapan kami dito sa Aroma, hindi pa pinapakinggan.

### ***Sosyo-ekonomikong Kalagayan***

Malaki ang epekto ng sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan ng isang bakla sa karanasang napag-iiwanan at nagiging kahirapan nila sa panahon ng disaster. Ang kahirapang panlipunan at pang-ekonomiko ng Pilipinas ay nagpapahirap sa mamamayan nito, ano man ang kanilang kasarian at sekswalidad (Madula, 2016). Ang pagbubukod, kawalan ng oportunidad ng mga bakla kaysa sa mga lalaki at babae, at walang maayos na kabuhayan ang nagiging dahilan ng hindi pagkamit ng kanilang pangangailangan at patuloy na pagiging bulnerable sa panahon ng disaster (Aban & Sy, 2022). Ayon kay Haskell (2014), bago pa dumating noon ang bagyong Katrina, bulnerable na ang mga bakla. Ito ay dahil sa kawalan ng mga polisiya na kumikilala sa sektor na nagdudulot ng patuloy nilang paghihirap. Dagdag pa niya na mahalagang maayos ang sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan ng mga bakla dahil ito ay may malaking papel sa pagharap at pagbangon nila kapag nagkakaroon ng disaster (Haskell, 2014).

Lumalabas sa mga tsika ng mga bakla na mahalaga ang pagkakaroon ng trabaho at kabuhayan dahil ito ay nakakatulong sa kanilang pagharap sa negatibong epekto ng disaster. Na-tsika ni Chinchin na “Karamihan ng bakla dito walang trabaho kaya naghihirap kami kapag may sunog.” Sinasabi ni Gerald na “Dito kasi sa community kapag mahirap ka talagang

malala epekto ng sunog. ‘Yong ibang bakla kasi dito nag-work sa labas, yung iba sa mall o call center. Kaya nung nagkasunog mabilis sila naka-recover kasi may ipon sila.’” Dagdag pa niya na laging tinitignan ang mga bakla na nakakaangat-angat na sa buhay kaya hindi na sinasama sa kung ano mang tulong na ibibigay. Tulad ng mga naunang tsika ni Dyoza binabanggit niya ang malaking pagkakaiba ng nararanasan ng bakla depende sa antas o klase ng kanilang pamumuhay. Sinasabi ni niya na “Malaki epekto dito samin kasi wala na nga kaming trabaho, hindi pa maayos ang sitwasyon namin...Yung mga nasa subdivision andon na sa kanila lahat, nakakakain pa sila ng tama.” Dagdag pa niya na, “Yung mga bakla doon handa sila kapag nagkasunog tas ‘di naman sila babahain kasi maayos ang bahay nila.” Ipinapakita lang ng tsika ni Dyoza na kahit na pare-pareho ang identidad, nagkakaiba pa rin ang epekto sa mga bakla ng disaster dahil sa kanilang sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan.

Maliban sa mga kaapihan ng mga bakla na mula sa identidad, uri, at sa kanilang sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan, lumabas rin sa mga tsika ng mga bakla sa Aroma na may papel rin ang edad, kalusugan, at ang lokasyon kung saan sila naninirahan sa karanasang napag-iwanan sa sakuna. Sa tsika ni Hesus na isang senior citizen, sinasabi niya na nakaranas siya ng kahirapan sa paglikas nung nangyaring sunog dahil sa kanyang edad at problema sa kalusugan. Maliban dito, dahil sa walang trabaho o kabuhayan dahil rin sa kanyang edad nahirapan siyang bumangon pagkatapos ng mga disaster.

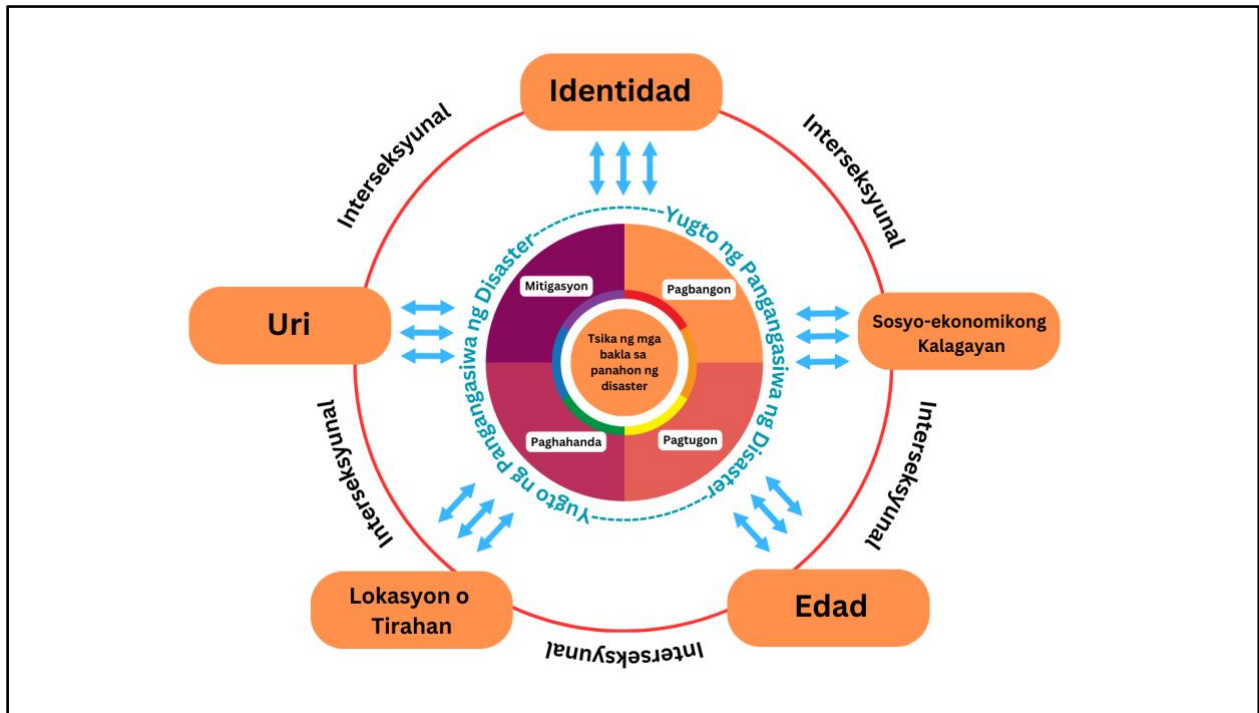
Nung nasunugan kami rito buti nalang pumunta yung apo ko, nahirapan ako maglakad dahil sa edad ko tapos may sakit pa ako...Wala rin akong trabaho kasi tinanggal ako ng barangay bigla-bigla. Hindi ko tuloy alam saan ako kukuha ng pera pambili ng foods at pampanggawa ng bahay ko.

Tulad ng nasabi ni Dyoza ukol sa kung saan nakatira ang mga bakla, na-tsika ni Elov na mayroong magkakaibang karanasan ang mga bakla sa disaster kung saan ito nakatira. Ayon

sa kanya, “Mahirap dito samin pero ‘di ko alam sa ibang bakla, nakakaranas kasi ng iba-iba kung saan nakatira ang tao. Kaya depende ‘yan eh.”

## Pigur 2

*Modified na analitikal na balangkas base sa mga tsikang kabaklaan sa disaster ng mga bakla sa Aroma*



## Konklusyon: Tsikang Kabaklaan sa Disaster Tungo sa Inklusibong Pangangasiwa ng Disaster

Ang mga tsika ng mga bakla sa Aroma ay nagpapatunay na ang disaster ay hindi maituturing na “great equalizer.” Makikita sa kanilang mga tsika na mayroong espisipikong karanasan at pangangailangan ang mga bakla ngunit lagi itong naisasantabi sa mga polisiya at programa sa pangangasiwa ng disaster (Larkin, 2019). Kahit na ang Pilipinas ay isang bansang mapagtanggap sa mga bakla, nanatili pa rin silang imbisibol at napag-iwanan lalo na sa panahon ng disaster (McSherry et al., 2014). Lumalabas sa mga tsika ng mga bakla sa

Aroma na ang kanilang karanasang napag-iiwanan sa disaster ay mula sa mga kaapihang kanilang nararanasan sa pang araw-araw tulad ng mga kaapihang nakadikit sa kanilang identidad, uri, sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan, edad, at sa lugar kung nasaan sila. Ang mga kaapihang ito ay nagpapatong-patong o nagsasama-sama na nagreresulta ng pagpapatuloy ng kanilang bulnerabilidad, kahirapan, at pagka-iwan sa panahon at pangangasiwa ng disaster (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016; hooks, 1984). Kung kaya upang mas lalong maintindihan ang kanilang karanasan sa disaster at makapaglikha ng isang inklusibong pamamaraan ng pangangasiwa, kinakailangan ang paggamit ng intersectional analysis. Ang pamamaraang ito ay makakatulong upang higit na maintindihan ang kuwento at bulnerabilidad na mayroon ang mga bakla sa panahon ng disaster na makakatulong sa pag-intindi ng kanilang espesipikong karanasan at pangangailangan na magagamit sa paglikha ng isang inklusibong pamamaraan sa pangangasiwa sa disaster na nasasaklaw lahat, ano pa man ang kasarian ng mga tao at higit sa lahat ay walang mapag-iiwanan (Jean et al., 2023). Mahalaga ang pagsama sa kuwento at danas ng mga bakla upang maiwasan ang diskriminasyon at ang kanilang karanasang napag-iiwanan sa disaster (Reid & Ritholtz, 2020). Ang pagkilala sa kanilang karapatan, tinig, at danas ay magsisilbing daan upang makamit ang isang lipunan na inklusibo, pantay, walang napag-iiwanan, at tuluyang paglaya sa isang patriyarkal, macho-pyudal, mala-kolonyal, at mala-pyudal na sistema ng lipunan (Garcia, 2008; Madula, 2016).

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## **Indigenous People's Participation: A Case Study on the "Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching" Community Project**

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**Leizl Pautan Agad**

### **ABSTRACT**

The case study on the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project explores Indigenous People's participation and the processes that facilitate or hinder participatory development. The study was conducted to identify the context and manifestations of Indigenous People's participation in the context of a development project, and to identify the factors that facilitate or hinder participatory development. The study assumes that Indigenous Peoples can make informed decisions according to what they have decided will contribute to the development and sustainability of their community and processes, such as community organizing and development partners are facilitating or hindering factors. The study collected primary data through key informant interviews and focus group discussions among Mangyan community members and project implementers who were directly engaged in the project. Community immersion and integration were also conducted, and secondary data came from a review of documents regarding the project. Based on the results of the study, Indigenous Peoples aspire to preserve their land, protect their language, and promote their culture for generations to come and this is where they are coming from in planning, organizing, and participating in development projects. Development partners facilitate participatory development practice through their years of constant engagement with community stakeholders, organizational structures and processes that allow participation, and championing the voice of the community.

*Keywords: Indigenous Peoples, participation, participatory development practice, preservation of culture*

## Introduction

*Mangyan* is the collective name for the Indigenous communities living in Mindoro. There are eight Indigenous communities and each has its name, language, and customs. These are Iraya, Alangan, Tadyawan, Tau-buid, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunuo, and Ratagnon. According to Philippine Statistics (n.d.), the Mangyan comprise about 20% of the total inhabitants of Mindoro. They are one of the ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines. The Mangyans originally lived on the coast of Mindoro, but they were forced to retreat in the mountains by Spanish colonizers, and then by succeeding settlers and developers. Like most Indigenous Peoples in the world, the Mangyans are discriminated against and marginalized. Non-Mangyans believe in myths that aim to picture them as “inferior citizens” or make fun of them as human beings. There are those who believe that the Mangyan’s agricultural practice of *kaingin* or swidden farming destroys the environment, but in fact, Indigenous Peoples are noted for their respect to nature and their land. The Mangyan also experience land grabbing of their ancestral land. Other negative stories about them portray them as beggars, they have “tails” (which is the loose end part of their *ba-ag*), and they are illiterate. The last one ignores the fact that the Mangyan have their own script and poetry which continue to thrive up to this day.

The Hanunuo-Mangyan live in the southern municipalities of Oriental Mindoro, namely Roxas, Mansalay, and Bulalacao. The word *Hanunuo* means genuine in the Hanunuo-Mangyan language. They have a syllabic writing system that dates to the pre-Spanish era called *Surat Mangyan*, and *Ambahan* is their traditional poetry written in Surat Mangyan. The Surat Mangyan and *Ambahan* have complemented each other, contributing to their continued existence (Mangyan Heritage Center, n.d.). Further, they have a peoples’ organization called PHADAG or the *Pinagkausahan sa Hanunuo Daga Ginurang* which is their representative institution that they empower to decide on matters that affect them collectively.

The Mangyan Heritage Center (MHC) is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro “engaged in the preservation and promotion of the Mangyan cultural heritage” (MHC, n.d., Section About). It was established to preserve and make available to the public the Mangyan collections and documentations of anthropologist and former Dutch Missionary Priest Antoon Postma. Today, MHC is not only functioning as a library of Mangyan-related documents but also as a display center of artifacts and products. It has expanded its work to conducting Mangyan exhibits to local and international schools, churches, and institutions. MHC also conducts community projects with the Mangyan, one of which is the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching. MHC is registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and an accredited NGO by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) and National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). It is also a member of the Association of Foundations, a network of NGOs.

The Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project stems from the request of leaders and elders of the Hanunuo-Mangyan through PHADAG to preserve the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan, which are in danger of disappearing because of the strong influence of lowland culture and discrimination to the youth and the whole Mangyan community. By teaching it to Mangyan youth and communities, it hopes to keep their Indigenous writing system and poetry alive, and recognize the contribution of the Mangyan in cultural preservation.

This study, focused on Indigenous People's participation in project planning and implementation through the community project Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching, explores how and why Indigenous Peoples participate in projects, and what are the factors that facilitate or hinder participatory development. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Present an overview and identify the context and manifestations of Indigenous People's participation;
2. Describe the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project;
3. Identify the factors that facilitate or hinder participatory development in relation to the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project; and
4. Draw lessons on the case study and its implications for community development practice.

The study used a case study approach to gather data on the project. The primary data-gathering methods included interviews with key informants and focus group discussions (FGD). Community immersion and integration were also fundamental in the study to gain a deeper understanding on the overall situation of the Hanunuo-Mangyan and the implementation of the project. Review of documents related to the project was also done to look at the process of how the project was developed, managed, and implemented through the years. Key informant interviews were conducted with Hanunuo-Mangyan elders and cultural bearers,<sup>1</sup> the Executive Director, and the Head Researcher of MHC. Two FGDs were organized: one with the leaders of PHADAG and the other with the staff of MHC. Prior to the data collection activities, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) was solicited and granted by the Hanunuo-Mangyan through PHADAG, in coordination with MHC. Data gathering was conducted in Mansalay and Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro, and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines. Data collected from interviews and FGDs were transcribed and coded along with other textual data, such as observation notes and documents. Themes

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural Bearers are the Hanunuo-Mangyan volunteers who implemented the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching community project as teachers.

were then generated by identifying common responses or insights pertaining to the implementation of the project and on how various actors participated in it.

For the sake of transparency, it must be declared that this article is drawn from the author's unpublished Master's thesis, completed in 2020. However, the author became involved in the project in 2012 when she assumed the position of Assistant Project Officer at the MHC through the Jesuit Volunteers Philippines. This position allowed the author to have an intimate knowledge of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Project which, at that time, was in its preliminary stages. The author left the MHC in 2013, but remained in touch with the key stakeholders of the project until the completion of her thesis.

Through this study and the researcher's privileged position, this article provides a unique account on how the Hanunuo-Mangyan participated in the conduct of the project and engaged with various actors in the process. As the article will show later, the experiences of the Hanunuo-Mangyan demonstrate their determination to protect their way of life through community organizing and participation. Apart from this, the author also hopes that this article could provide some guidance or a point of reflection for development practitioners (i.e., civil society organizations, government agencies, other support groups and the academe) engaged with Indigenous Peoples, in terms of fostering a relationship that encourages participatory, culture-sensitive, and empowering development processes and strategies.

### **Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework**

Participation and empowerment are interconnected principles of community development. According to Chambers (1995), there are at least three definitions of participation. First, is a cosmetic label attached to projects to make them look good. Second, a co-opting practice to mobilize local people into providing labor and reduce costs. Finally,

an empowering process that lets local people analyze, plan, and implement their projects. In general, participation is understood as both a means and an end of development. Through people's participation in all aspects of their lives, development and transformation of unjust structures may be achieved. It is the transformative potential that participation allows that connects it with empowerment; a concept which Lane (1995) defines as "the ability of individuals to influence all decisions taken at all levels and in all spheres which affect their lives, and their capacity to initiate action to enhance their quality of life" (p. 188).

Participation as a means to achieve empowerment became the foundational claims of participatory approaches to development. According to Duraiappah et al. (2005), participatory approaches to development emerged from the realization of decision-makers to include the perspectives and priorities of local communities in decision-making, policy development and project implementation, and aspiration of local communities for bottom-up, community-level interventions. These participatory approaches to development became widely adopted, which demonstrate the growing acceptance of the idea of participation as a means for the meaningful involvement of the poor and vulnerable to the development process. In general, participatory approaches adopt the following principles (Eggers and Majeres, 1998, as cited in Duraiappah et al., 2005):

- Inclusion: All or representatives of all groups who have an interest or concern should be included in the process.
- Equal partnership: Everyone has an equal right to participate in the process regardless of his or her status in the community.
- Transparency: Processes encourage open communication and building dialogue between and among stakeholders.

- Power sharing: Everyone engaged in the process or project has equal authority and power, and no individual or group shall dominate the process or project. In the same way, responsibility and accountability is shared.
- Empowerment: All are encouraged to contribute according to their capacity; and all are engaged to foster mutual learning and empowerment.
- Cooperation: divides the group's weaknesses while sharing everybody's strength.

### ***Degrees of Participation***

While people's participation is widely seen as indispensable and its principles essential in any development endeavor, realities on the ground suggest that it is useful to think of participation in terms of degrees rather than an ideal. In seeing the degrees of participation, a differentiated perspective on who, why, and in what ways people participate can be presented. Duraiappah et al. (2005) presents nine degrees of participation ranging from manipulation to self-mobilization.

**Table 1**

#### *Degrees of Participation*

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*1. Manipulation*

Participation is undertaken in a manner contrived by those who hold power to convince the public that a predefined project or program is best.

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*2. Passive participation*

Participation by the local people consists of them being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is based on information provided, shared, and assessed by external "experts." Therefore, the information being shared belongs only to external experts.

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*3. Participation in information giving*

This is a one-way approach to participation whereby participation is by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. Participants are informed of their rights, responsibilities, and options, but are not given the opportunity to influence proceedings as the findings are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.

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*4. Participation by consultation*

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This is a two-way flow of information in which local people participate by being consulted and external agents listen to their views. Although participants have the opportunity to provide suggestions and express concerns, their input may or may not be used at all or as originally intended. The external agents define problems and solutions, both of which may be modified in light of the information provided by the participants. Such a consultation process does not concede any share in decision-making and professionals are under no obligation to take on people's views.

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5. *Participation for material incentives*

People participate by providing resources, for example, labor, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls into this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in experimentation or the process of learning. In this type of participation, people have no stake in prolonging activities once the incentives end.

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6. *Functional participation*

People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the initiative. Local people's involvement, however, occurs after major decisions have been made rather than at an early stage in the project cycle. The established groups are dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but over time may become more self-sufficient.

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7. *Interactive participation*

People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. As local people take control of the decision-making process, they gain a greater stake in maintaining the structures and practices they have established. A common drawback is that vulnerable individuals and groups tend to remain silent or passively acquiesce.

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8. *Partnership*

Through negotiation, power is redistributed between local people and power holders in an equitable manner. Decision-making takes place through an exchange between equally respected participants who are working towards a common goal and seeking to optimize the well-being of all concerned. There are mutual responsibilities and risk-sharing in the planning and decision-making process.

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9. *Self-mobilization/active participation*

People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice that they need but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge the existing inequitable distribution of wealth or power.

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*Note.* From "Have participatory approaches increased capabilities?" by Duraiappah, A., Roddy, P., & Parry, J., 2005. Copyright 2005 by the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

According to Duraiappah et al. (2005), what mediates the degrees of participation (from manipulation to self-mobilization) is power; specifically, how much power traditional decision makers have over peoples or communities that will be impacted by or have a direct stake on a policy, program, or project.

### ***Indigenous People's Participation***

The Indigenous Peoples' experience illustrates how their degree of participation is often indicative of the power and influence they have on development policies, programs, or projects. As Bawagan et al. (2009) has shown, government-led literacy programs—which are often blind to the needs and demands of Indigenous Peoples—had negative impacts. Bawagan et al. (2009) argued that formal education exposes young Indigenous Peoples to perspectives that could alienate them from their Indigenous culture. Meanwhile, the Department of Education (DepEd) Order 32, s. 2015 Adopting the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework, a policy which advocated for the integration of Indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices (IKSP) in formal education settings was forwarded by Indigenous Peoples themselves. Similarly, Bawagan et al. (2009) showed how Indigenous Peoples, specifically the Aeta Mag-antsi, were able to adopt and appropriate participatory planning processes by using elements that are important in their lives (i.e., ancestral domain and oral histories).

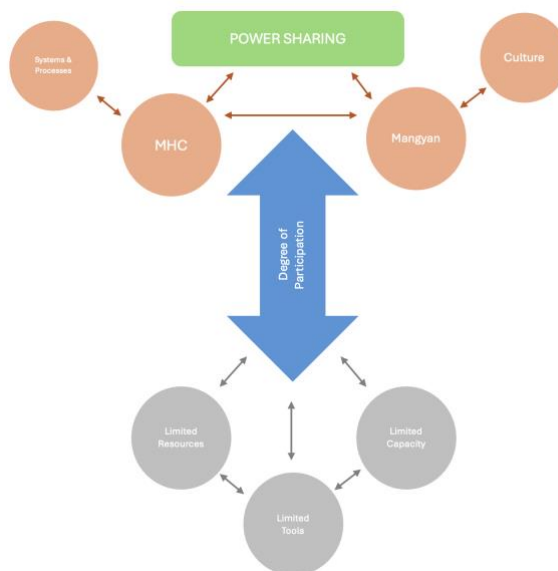
### ***Factors That Facilitate or Hinder Participatory Development***

The study of Bawagan et al. (2009) also identified intermediate processes as facilitating/hindering factors that include NGOs, whose development initiatives could either help or hinder Indigenous Peoples. NGOs are organizations that focus on social change for development. They work mainly through community organizing, advocacy, and provision of support services to the community. These development organizations are determined either as a facilitating or hindering factor by their participatory development practice. Chambers

(1995) defined the practice of participatory development as a shift of power relations, whereby traditionally dominant groups become facilitators of learning while communities are empowered to gain confidence and lead their lives. This paradigm shift has several implications for development organizations to allow for the participatory process. First is the change of culture and approaches to development organizations on participatory management and decentralization, especially prioritizing field workers. Second, community projects should emphasize processes of learning, enabling and empowering, which means that time frames of development organizations should be flexible to allow participation and change to happen. Third, Indigenous People should be the ones to lead and carry out research relating to them and the results of these research should be owned and shared by Indigenous People instead of development organizations monopolizing the information and using the people as reference. Fourth, development organizations should give way to Indigenous People to decide on the development agenda through their experiences. Finally, development organizations should refrain from using lectures in capability-building sessions for Indigenous People. Instead, processes of shared learning, peer instruction, problem-solving, and social settings should be maximized.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*



The review discussed how participation is interconnected to empowerment. It is both a means and an end towards the transformation of unequal structures in society. While participation is essential, this review also noted how participation is often elusive, largely because of power relations between and among actors. As the Indigenous Peoples experience has shown, top-down development projects without their participation became possible due to the power traditional decision makers have, and this often had negative effects. Thus, a paradigm shift towards a participatory process is required in development organizations that claim to support Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized and vulnerable groups. This study will look into the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project by looking at how the Mangyans participated. Specifically, the study will examine the degrees of participation of the Mangyans in the development and execution of the project. As mentioned earlier, the degrees of participation are directly related to the power and influence actors (in this case the Mangyans) have in the overall process. Using Chamber's (1995) participatory development, the study will look into the factors that may influence the degrees

of participation in the context of the structures, processes, and approaches of the Mangyans and MHC, as the project was implemented through their support, as well as relations between key actors.

### **The History of Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project**

This section presents the history of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project. The section also presents how the project contributed to the preservation of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan tradition. It ends by discussing the roles of the Hanunuo-Mangyan, PHADAG, and MHC, who are the primary actors of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project.

The project has two main phases as shown in Figure 2, with the end goal of preserving the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan. The first phase was when Surat Mangyan and Ambahan were taught in DepEd schools for one hour once a week in every class of Grades 1 to 6. The second phase spans five years and covers three main components, namely, documentation, material development, and teaching in Mangyan communities by members who participated in the documentation and material development.

The project stems from the request of leaders and elders of the Hanunuo-Mangyans, through PHADAG, to preserve the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan by teaching it in Hanunuo-Mangyans schools and communities, which are in danger of disappearing because of the strong influence of lowland culture and discrimination on the youth and the whole Mangyan community.

According to PHADAG,

*Ang proyektong pang tribong Samahang PHADAG, pinagsamang proyekto ng MHC para maisagawa 'yung pagdokumento ng Surat Mangyan. Pero ang katunayan, ang Surat Mangyan ay talagang, nung una pa man ay kaalaman na mga Mangyan 'yan ang Surat Mangyan. Nagkataon na kailangan ng ma-i-dokumento sa pamamagitan ng tulong ng MHC, pumayag naman 'yung Tribong Hanunuo, lahat kami at tsaka sa pamumuno po ng Samahang PHADAG [The project is a joint endeavor of PHADAG and MHC in documenting the Surat Mangyan. In fact, in the first place, Surat Mangyan is an Indigenous knowledge of the Mangyans. It is just that we need to document it with the help of MHC. We, Mangyans, all agreed to the project].*

The project has its roots in the initiative of Antoon Postma or Bapa Antoon, as he was known. He saw the significance of the Indigenous script to the history and culture of the Mangyan and the Filipinos in general, and the need to preserve it. Bapa Antoon created a Primer on Surat Mangyan, and personally taught the script to the Mangyans along with Mangyan companions but only in limited areas. It was stopped because of limited resources and Bapa Antoon's old age. The Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project is seen as a continuation of Bapa Antoon's initiatives. As one Mangyan Cultural Bearer recalls,

*Ang alam ko nagsimula talaga yan kay Bapa yung nagtrabaho pa siya bilang misyonero. Tinuturo niya naman dito dati sa mga schools dito sa elementary schools. Isa din ako sa mga naturuan. Tapos yun yung nawala na si Bapa, parang natigil yun. Tinuloy ulit ng Mangyan Heritage [What I know is that Surat Mangyan teaching started with Bapa when he was still working as a missionary. He taught it in elementary*

schools here before. I was one of the learners. Then, he lied low and it was stopped. Mangyan Heritage Center is continuing it now].

**Figure 2**

*Phases of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project*



***Phase one: Teaching in DepEd Schools***

MHC attends the regular monthly meetings of PHADAG to be updated on their activities and endeavors. These meetings are attended by officers and community members. It is through one of these meetings that PHADAG expressed their desire for Surat Mangyan to be taught to the Mangyans, similar to the early initiative of Bapa Antoon, and hoped for MHC's support. MHC worked on this request and PHADAG greenlit the project by giving their consent.

PHADAG identified the Hanunuo-Mangyan communities and consequently, the schools where the project will be implemented. MHC sought the endorsement of DepEd for the identified public schools to accommodate the teaching of Surat Mangyan and Ambahan during regular class hours. Thus, young Mangyans who are mostly going to school are assured of being taught. The US Embassy, Manila and Ala-Ala Foundation provided the initial grant for the implementation of the project, and an additional grant was given by the NCCA under

its School of Living Traditions (SLT) program. The teaching started in the second half of 2012 to 2015.

Meanwhile, several teaching applications with recommendations from PHADAG came to MHC as well. The Mangyan cultural bearers or teachers were selected based on several qualifications, including prior knowledge of the Surat Mangyan and proximity to the covered schools. The selected cultural bearers participated in a training workshop on the principles of Indigenous Peoples' education facilitated by DepEd and Mangyan Mission, which also has an education program. The cultural bearers prepared their modules, validated and approved by elders in their communities and other cultural bearers. MHC provided for their honorarium, transportation allowance, and resource materials.

In their assessment, the first phase of the project was implemented well because of the full support of DepEd and the Indigenous Peoples Education Office who facilitated the implementation of the project. The teachers were also vital in the early success of the project. Choosing teachers who knew Surat Mangyan and Ambahan, and were living close to schools meant there were less interruptions in teaching, even during the rainy season. Teachers were also given support in terms of providing them with resource materials, and validated and approved modules which went through the scrutiny of Mangyan leaders. However, despite its initial success, the project had a major weakness in its monitoring and evaluation (M&E), mainly due to limited human and financial resources of the MHC. This meant that M&E activities were not conducted on a regular basis, especially in communities situated in far flung areas. Funding was also limited and provided on a short-term basis. This meant that the project was implemented on a limited scale while simultaneously sourcing funds (mainly done by the MHC) so that the project can continue for another school year. There were also logistical issues. For the cultural bearers, the rainy season prevented them from going to

meetings and other project-related activities as they had to walk through difficult terrain to get to the schools.

***Phase two: Documentation, Material Development, and Teaching in Mangyan Communities***

The project's second phase was launched after the culmination of the first phase in 2015. One of the main assessment points of Phase 1 was that the material used for teaching—the Primer developed by Antoon Postma—needs updating. Further, this updating required the validation and approval of the Mangyan leaders and elders as there are different forms of the Mangyan script being used by community members. In the case of the Hanunuo-Mangyan, it is important that the scripts that are going to be taught reflect their identity and history. The Head Researcher, who is also a linguist, explained the documentation process of the project:

*Even as a writing system...So ang writing naman ay representation lang ng speech, ng spoken language. So even naman sa spoken language, kahit parehas kayo nagsasalita ng, halimbawa, Tagalog, how you use Tagalog is different. You have different preferences sa words, different preferences sa sentences...So sa case yun nga sa documentation part, ina-acknowledge namin yung inherent diversities. So hindi kaagad namin in-assume na porket ito yung well documented form na dapat lahat sila ganun at the rest ay mali. So noong una naming meeting, hinighlight namin na yung other forms hindi po siya mali. Yun po ay akma sa konteksto ng gurangon or ng elder na gumagamit sa sitio niya at sa panahon ng ginagamit niya. Hindi po rin na sinabi nila tama nga na—kaya nung meeting na nagko-correct kami, hindi nila sinasabi na mali si ganitong elder. Kasi sa konteksto ng elder na iyon, tama siya. So ang ginagamit nila, mas gusto namin ito, so parang preference siya [Writing is just a representation of speech, of spoken language. So in spoken language, even if you*

speak the same language, for example, Tagalog, how you use Tagalog is different. You have different preferences in words, different preferences in sentences...Thus, each individual manifests a different style of a particular writing system. In the case of the documentation process [of the Mangyan scripts], we acknowledge the inherent diversities. We did not immediately assume that because this is a well-documented form, the rest is wrong. During our first meeting [with the Mangyans], we made it clear that the other forms are not wrong. They are appropriate according to the context of the elder—where and when he/she uses it. We did not say that this elder is wrong because according to the context of that elder, he/she is right. In the end, the Mangyan elders choose which form they like; it became a matter of preference].

Phase 2 of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project got support from the US Embassy Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Immediately after, a head researcher was hired to lead the documentation and primer development. For the documentation, Mangyan field researchers were chosen by the Hanunuo-Mangyans themselves then they were trained. These field researchers met with various elders and cultural bearers one-by-one to explain the project and collect data on the Surat Mangyan. When the initial set of data were ready, the elders and cultural bearers were invited to validate them. A series of meetings followed where elders and cultural bearers finalized the content of the primer. During the last validation meeting for the primer, the Hanunuo-Mangyans decided on the communities where the teaching will be implemented, as well as the cultural bearers who will teach. The cultural bearers were chosen among the community members who participated in the documentation and primer development.

Phase 2 was remarkably different from Phase 1. Unlike Phase 1, teaching was implemented in a communal setting where everyone can learn, as compared to teaching Surat Mangyan and Ambahan in a formal setting, limited only to Mangyan pupils. The selection of

teachers was also different. In Phase 2, the teachers were selected by the Mangyans themselves, and were often those who participated in the documentation and primer development process. Thus, the Mangyans had a significant role in decision-making in Phase 2 of the project. As the Head Researcher commented, “*The difference ngayon na lahat ng decision ay communal. Lahat ng changes communal. So yun yung isang mahalagang difference doon sa second part ng project* [The difference now is that all decisions [in the documentation and primer development] are communal. All changes are decided by the community. So that’s an important difference in the second phase of the project].”

### ***The Preservation of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan***

The phases of the Community Project help the Mangyans in preserving the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan by teaching it to the Mangyans, especially the youth so they could appreciate and contribute to its preservation. Additionally, the documentation made the Surat Mangyan become clearer and preserved. According to PHADAG:

*Sa tingin ko, malaking pakinabang ito sa komunidad lalo higit sa pagsasalibro ng Surat Mangyan. Bagamat ang aming mga anak ay nag-aaral na sa paaralan ng mga Damoong (Tagalog) ay 'yung aming Surat Mangyan sa ganitong sistema tulungang hindi mawala kasi nga ay ang aming mga kabataan, may anim na taon pa lang, ay pinag-aral na sa paaralan ng Kristyano. Kung baga, ang ibig kong sabihin, hindi roon sa Surat Mangyan nag-aaral 'yung mga day care, kinder, kundi nandoon na sa paaralan. Ganoon man ay malaking tulong ang pagdodokumento ng Surat Mangyan sa komunidad lalo na higit sa mga matanda sa ganoong pamamaraan ay hindi malimutan ang aming kultura at aming batas—ang aming Surat Mangyan* [In my opinion, the project is a great benefit to the community especially in documenting the Surat Mangyan into a book. Our children, at the early age of six, go to the schools of

the Tagalogs and Christians. What I mean is they are not taught with Surat Mangyan. Thus, it is a great help to the community to document the Surat Mangyan especially for the adults in order for our culture and laws to never be forgotten—our Surat Mangyan].

A Mangyan Elder also said,

*Ang tingin ko bukod sa makaka-interest yung iba pa, dahil malinaw na kasi pag may ganitong proyekto, nagiging malinaw. Hindi pabago-bago eksakto ang mga bagay-bagay sa Surat Mangyan. Katulad noon, hindi pa masabi kung saan ba yung tama. Eh kung may tumututok sa mga nanaliksik at sa mga sumasagawa. Nagiging permanente kumbaga. Hindi pabagu-bago. Walang duda kumbaga* [For me, other than people will be interested [of the Surat Mangyan]; through this project, it (Surat Mangyan) becomes clear and exact unlike before when we could not tell which is correct (form). Since there were researchers who focused (on the documentation); thus it became permanent and consistent].

### ***Roles of Hanunuo-Mangyans and MHC in the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project***

The project was initiated based on the request of Hanunuo-Mangyans, to which the MHC responded. This has led to the development and implementation of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project in two phases. As discussed earlier, the Mangyans assumed different roles and had varying degrees of participation throughout the first and second phases of the project. In the first phase, the participation of the Mangyans was limited and their decisions coursed through PHADAG. PHADAG was consulted on which schools the project will be implemented at and on the recruitment of the Mangyan cultural bearers who will teach the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan. Following the definition of

Duraiappah et al. (2005), the participation of the Mangyan in Phase 1 could be described as passive. Meanwhile, the cultural bearers who implemented the project participated in a functional way, mainly through teaching the Mangyan script following the principles of Indigenous People's education.

However, the participation of the Mangyans became more significant in the second phase as they participated in the documentation of the Surat Mangyan either as participants or by becoming field researchers. The Mangyans also assumed a significant role in the validation and approval of the results of the documentation and primer development process. Using Duraiappah et al. (2005), the participation of the Mangyans in this phase could be described as a partnership where Mangyans and the MHC are involved in the decision-making processes and have their own responsibilities.

It must be noted, however, that throughout this process, the MHC assumed a facilitative role. The MHC performed this role by adopting a community-based approach where the Head Researcher advocated for making and utilizing spaces for the Mangyans to participate in. In general, the role of MHC in the community project is to provide support in terms of administrative, logistics and coordination with external partners and the Mangyan. The Mangyans, on the other hand, are the decision-makers of the output, which is the primer, and where and who will implement the teaching of the community project.

### **Analysis: Factors That Facilitate or Hinder Participatory Development**

In the previous section, this study presented the implementation of the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project, and how the Mangyans participated throughout the process. This section briefly discusses the various factors that facilitated or hindered the participation of Mangyans in the project.

To ensure the survival and way of life of their community, the Mangyans initiated the revival and participated in the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Community Project. Their intention to participate comes from ensuring their Indigenous knowledge systems and practices are sustained and their Indigenous identity is upheld well into the next generation. The Mangyan, feeling the increasing influence of lowland culture on their youth and the whole community, to which they are regularly exposed to, decided that promoting and preserving their Indigenous script and poetry through teaching is an urgent issue. According to one PHADAG representative,

*Sa tingin ko, malaking pakinabang ito sa komunidad lalo higit sa pagsasalibro ng Surat Mangyan. Bagamat ang aming mga anak ay nag-aaral na sa paaralan ng mga Damoong (Tagalog) ay 'yung aming Surat Mangyan sa ganitong sistema tulungang hindi mawala kasi nga ay ang aming mga kabataan, may anim na taon pa lang, ay pinag-aral na sa paaralan ng Kristyano. Kung бага, ang ibig kong sabihin, hindi roon sa Surat Mangyan nag-aaral 'yung mga day care, kinder, kundi nandoon na sa paaralan. Ganoon man ay malaking tulong ang pagdodokumento ng Surat Mangyan sa komunidad lalo na higit sa mga matanda sa ganoong pamamaraan ay hindi malimutan ang aming kultura at aming batas—ang aming Surat Mangyan [In my opinion, the project is a great benefit to the community especially in documenting the Surat Mangyan into a book. Our children, at the early age of six, go to the schools of the Tagalogs and Christians. What I mean is they are not taught with Surat Mangyan. Thus, it is a great help to the community to document the Surat Mangyan especially for the adults for our culture and laws to never be forgotten—our Surat Mangyan].*

PHADAG performed an instrumental role as it facilitated the development and implementation of the project. PHADAG also highlighted the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to organize, and act on matters that affect the Mangyans collectively. While the Hanunuo-

Mangyans have community leaders and elders who decide on the immediate concerns of their communities, PHADAG is their people's organization and representative institution with leaders and systems to guide how they would conduct their responsibilities. Through PHADAG, discussions on the community project between and among the Mangyans, and between MHC and the Mangyans were facilitated.

The Mangyans were motivated to participate because of their Indigenous planning process, leadership structures, culture and identity. Through their Indigenous knowledge and practices, the Mangyans were able to engage in project design, planning, and implementation, emphasizing that consultations with fellow Mangyans is an indispensable process. As such, community members should express their opinions and suggestions during planning and reflect on whether the project will truly benefit the community. Similarly, community leaders are made accountable and are expected to attend regular meetings to contribute to the decisions made by PHADAG, and subsequently cascade them to the Mangyan at large.

However, they have inherent challenges, such as their limited tools for self-understanding and resources. For instance, although they saw the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan as important parts of their culture and identity, the Mangyans lacked the technical know-how to preserve them. Bapa Antoon initiated the preservation systematically through modern methods, formal education, and documentation through a primer. He taught the Surat Mangyan in elementary schools within the Mangyan community to reach the youth, ensuring that the next generations will still be able to know them. Building on Bapa Antoon's initiative without this technical knowledge and external resources would have been very challenging for the Mangyans.

Besides these technical limitations, participation was also affected by the project's perceived importance in relation to other concerns or issues in the community. As shown in

Phase 1 of the project, this led MHC to take on a more active role. According to one Mangyan elder,

*Mas active po yung MHC kung tutuusin kasi ang mga Mangyan, parang hindi naman ganoon katutok. Kung sa kanila pa ay parang yung ang [interest] kulturang sa sulat ay baka kung paano gamitin, baka kung ganyan-ganyan at mga duda-duda lang. Yung interest talaga ang kanilang culture na baka sabihin nito ay magamit lang ng ilan o sila-sila lang. Yung pagtuturo mismo, hindi pa ganon sila [I have observed that MHC is much more active (in the project) than the Mangyan as it seems that the latter is not as focused on it. The Mangyan are more mindful of how the script is being used; there are some doubts perhaps. The interest of the Mangyan is for our culture to not be used by some only. As for the teaching itself, I think the majority is not concerned].*

PHADAG explained their limitations,

*Ay, mayroon pa po. May mga kakulangan talaga ang Samahang PHADAG una nga ay hindi trabaho kundi ay sakripisyo sa aming tribo. Kasi ang lahat ng pamunuhan dito ay kusang tumataya ng kanilang sarili para lang magkaisa kaming tribo sa pamumuno ng kaukulang walang bayad. Nagtitiis kaming itaguyod ang lahat ng aming katribo sa Samahan [PHADAG lacks in many ways especially because this is not a job but a sacrifice of the leaders for the tribe. All leaders are willing to risk themselves so that we, as a tribe, can unite. We are committed to encouraging all our community members to the organization].*

With the learning from the earlier initiative of Bapa Antoon and the consistently increasing influence of lowland culture on their youth and the whole community, the Mangyans sought the support of MHC, which has been a constant presence among the Mangyans through its various projects and activities with them through the years. Bawagan

et al. (2009) described NGOs and other support groups as intermediate processes that either facilitate or hinder Indigenous Peoples planning processes. To describe whether they facilitate or hinder Indigenous Peoples, Chambers' (1995) definition of participatory development and its implications for development organizations provide useful insights.

In the project, the strength of MHC as a partner organization of the Mangyan comes from its organizational mission, and systems and processes that allow it to tap and provide resources and technical support to the project through its networks and accreditation from different government bodies supporting its legitimacy. MHC has its years of engagement with the Mangyan as well, through constant consultations, regular attendance in the meetings of the peoples' organizations, and actual fieldwork which established trust and partnership between them, resulting in various culture-based programs and projects.

Another facilitating factor underscored in the project is the champions of participatory development. They are the figures with expertise and experience, as well as the influence to spearhead projects and ensure its success. If the earlier initiative had Bapa Antoon and his Mangyan companions, in this project, these are the Head Researcher, who advocated for a community-based approach in the research of Indigenous languages influencing MHC to take a more facilitator role in the second phase of the project, and MHC Mangyan staff, who provided the context of the programs and projects, and ensured their relevance to the community. The Mangyan staff also work on MHC's community organizing efforts. At the same time, they encourage the Mangyan to give their buy-in on the programs and projects of MHC. The staff members were at the forefront of the implementation of the project as direct implementers, whether as cultural bearers, field researchers, or in-charge of administrative and logistical support. From the perspective of the Mangyan, these staff members represent the community to the organization. The Mangyan staff of MHC embodies empowerment as they are members of both the community and the organization that aims to support the

development of their own community. With this, they become the bridge that connects the NGO to the communities. According to PHADAG:

*Ang MHC po ay, nung una pa lang, ay kasama na sa pagpupulong kasi nga po ang manggagawa ng MHC ay... sila po may dugong Hanunuo rin kaya po sila po ay iniimbata namin tuwing magka-regular meeting ang PHADAG. Kaya kung ako ang tanungin, parang kasama sa pagpakabalantas ang proyekto na 'yun kasi kasama sila*

[MHC has consistently been present to us since the beginning because of the staff who are Hanunuo-Mangayans. We would invite them to every meeting of PHADAG. So if you ask me, we are included in the project because of them].

All these echo Chamber's (1995) insights that for development organizations to be facilitators of participatory development, there should first and foremost be an intentional culture and approach towards it, by placing organizational structures and processes that facilitate participation of community stakeholders, albeit at varying degrees, in different aspects of the organization.

Nevertheless, NGOs, especially small and local like MHC, require capacity building and resource support to implement their work. Technical, human, and financial resources are needed to implement projects. From research and documentation, to teaching and publication, they all require hiring people and incurring different expenses, especially a participatory development process that takes time and numerous activities. This is where MHC's organizational systems and processes, otherwise known as professionalization, come to their advantage. MHC has policies on human resources, finance, and administration needed in managing the organization, which also results in accountability and transparency. These comply with government reportorial requirements, and allowed MHC to build its credibility

and network, which resulted in partners and donors supporting its programs and projects ultimately benefiting the Mangyan. Nevertheless, they need ongoing capacity building and resource support to continue improving their organizational systems, processes, and capacity, such as project monitoring and evaluation to strengthen effectiveness and sustainability, and improve the quality and outcomes of projects. The process is iterative and is mutually enforcing to other factors on participatory development.

Hence, revisiting Chambers' (1995) definition of participatory development as a shift of power relations; whereby traditionally dominant groups become facilitators of learning while communities are empowered to gain confidence and lead their lives. In the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project, we see that both Mangyan and MHC actors have innate structures, processes, and approaches that facilitate their participation and empowerment, though both are in need of continuous capacity building and improvement in understanding to allow for an increasing degree of participation resulting to shared power. MHC already has a base from their mission and years of engagement with the Mangyans that facilitates trust and partnership. However, they need a consistent learning process and further capacity building to allow for the active and increased degree of participation of the Mangyans in their projects and organization. For the Mangyans, it is through the iterative process of learning by participating coupled with their Indigenous processes and capacity building to increase their tools for self-understanding so they can push for an increased degree of participation in projects, activities, and initiatives that impact them. Perhaps, it is the varying degree of participation by both actors in different phases and activities of the project that contribute to its effectiveness and sustainability supported by its various strengths.

## **Conclusion**

This study on the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan Teaching Community Project hopes to understand Indigenous People's participation and the factors that either facilitate or hinder participatory development.

The goal of development is to build empowered and self-reliant communities. The rights of Indigenous Peoples remain unsecured even with international and national instruments. Indigenous Peoples continue to face serious threats in their lives, such as underdevelopment, discrimination, and exploitation. Overall, Indigenous Peoples aspire to preserve their land, protect their language, and promote their culture for generations to come. The project confirms the capability of Indigenous Peoples to make informed decisions and organize for the sustainability of their community (i.e., PHADAG as their people's organization where discussions between and among community members and external actors take place). The Mangyan felt the increasing influence of lowland culture and discrimination on their youth and the whole community that promoting and preserving their Indigenous script could not be less than urgent if they are to keep alive their Indigenous culture and community for generations to come. The project hopes to encourage appreciation and recognize the contribution of the Mangyan in cultural preservation, challenging the discrimination against them and their marginalization as "illiterate" and "inferior" human beings.

The study also highlights good practices of participatory development by NGOs: years of constant engagement with community stakeholders, organizational structures and processes that allow participation, and the preferential option to the voice of the community. All of these develop an NGO practice that is rooted in the context and perspective of

communities, and continuous organizational development and strengthening help NGOs become a facilitating factor of community development.

The study contributed literature in understanding Indigenous People's participation and has provided insights on development work with Indigenous Peoples. The good practices of participatory development that were shared are relevant not only to NGOs, but also to the government and other support groups working with Indigenous Peoples.

Moving forward, this study proposes similar research focusing on government, private organizations or international development organizations or mechanisms working with Indigenous Peoples to supplement the literature on participatory development practice. The study also suggests an evaluation of the community project including the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of teaching the Surat Mangyan and Ambahan in a formal school setting compared to in communities, as well as the role and function of PHADAG and MHC. Further studies on Indigenous Peoples such as community dynamic and structures of power vis-à-vis participation, and the process of identity construction among its youth that considers not only thoughts and experiences on lowland culture and discrimination, but also sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression also adds in understanding intersectionality in development and gender equality and social inclusion.

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## **Deepening Divides: The Marginalization of Non-Moro IPs in BARMM**

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**Jennie Lyn C. Reyes**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the marginalization of the Tëduray, one of the 18 major non-Islamic Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) in Mindanao, at the crossroads of the formation of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), two watershed legislation aiming to address the rights to self-determination of ICCs/IPs in the Philippines. The paper seeks to uncover the invaluable contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the rich tapestry of Mindanao and the nation despite the historical, political, and cultural narratives that have perpetuated their cycle of marginalization further in the periphery. Through an exploration of historical and contemporary political economy, key legal frameworks, and the role of identity where it competes, overlaps, or coexists, this paper aims to shed light on the opportunities for and evolving challenges that hinder the empowerment and inclusion of non-Moro Indigenous communities in the process of state formation in the Philippines.

*Keywords: Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples, Bangsamoro, marginalization, Mindanao, structural inequality, internal colonization*

## Introduction

In 2018, following the conclusion of two landmark peace agreements between the central Philippine state and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF),<sup>1</sup> Congress passed Republic Act (RA) 11054, known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which outlines the foundation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), an autonomous entity located in the southernmost Philippine island of Mindanao and the adjacent Sulu archipelago. It supersedes the geographic area of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) created under RA 6734, as amended by RA 9054, and comprises the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, and Lanao del Sur in central Mindanao; Basilan and Tawi-Tawi in the Sulu archipelago;<sup>2</sup> the cities of Cotabato and Marawi; and a Special Geographic Area encompassing 63 villages in eight municipalities in Cotabato province that joined the autonomous setup through a referendum.

The ratification of BARMM, with a huge voter turnout (87.8%, 1.738 million voters) had an overwhelming yes vote (88.57%) in 2019 (Revelli, 2020). This represented a watershed moment in the nearly six decades of armed conflict and peace negotiations between the GPH and MILF, which splintered from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the first Moro rebel movement in Mindanao. In waging war against the Philippine state, the separatist movement has called for establishing an independent *Bangsa Moro* (or Moro nation or homeland), highlighting Mindanao's unique identity and historical background. At the heart of the conflict are struggles among the people in Mindanao for greater participation in

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<sup>1</sup> Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPH-MILF).

<sup>2</sup> After the province of Sulu rejected the law's ratification through a plebiscite in 2019 and the petition filed by the governor of Sulu, the Supreme Court, while upholding the validity of RA 11054 that created the BARMM, declared in a unanimous decision on September 9, 2024, that the Province of Sulu is not part of the autonomous region.

governance, equal recognition for their cultural and religious identities, and social justice dating back to the Spanish and American colonial periods. The impact of Western colonialism that took possession and control over lands under principles of the colonial domain (*jura regalia* or the Regalian Doctrine and the Torrens land system, [i.e., all lands of the public domain are owned by the state]), resettlement policies favoring lowland Christian migrants, and capitalist interests later adopted and extended by succeeding state regimes led to the dispossession of Indigenous lands and decades of marginalization in the southern islands (Abinales & Amoroso, 2017; Alamon, 2017; Alejo, 2002; Noble, 1976).

Literature on Mindanao has consistently acknowledged rapid economic change, and communal and religious distinctions as primary factors contributing to separate communities (Majul, 1973; Rodil, 1994; Tan, 1977, as cited in Abinales, 2020; Tadem, 1980, as cited in Abinales, 2020). Considerable attention has been given to the Muslim insurgency as they have struggled for independence against colonial and post-colonial governments, united under religious and ethnic banners (Majul, 1973). Rather than being caused by a singular watershed event, other scholars point to the rise of separatist sentiment and conflict in Mindanao as being triggered by the evolving dynamic between the Philippine central state (and its colonial predecessors) and the local Moro population (Abinales & Amoroso, 2017; Abreu, 2008; Charbonneau, 2020). For Coronel-Ferrer (2012), the contemporary Moro resistance constitutes a nationalist struggle aimed at liberating Muslims and their asserted homeland from a dominant Christian state. This nationalist struggle took form during the Marcos dictatorship when it initiated a campaign to suppress the Muslim community in the name of national security; the Moros saw state suppression as a threat to their identity, historical claim, and ultimately, Islam (Tan, 1977, as cited in Abinales, 2020).

Meanwhile, hostility persisted amid generational conflict and violence, notwithstanding various attempts to engage in peace talks. This hostility is founded not only

on historical injustices suffered by the Moro people but also on the process of state formation, led and dominated by the imperial power-holding elites in Manila through the brokering of local Muslim leaders (Abinales, 2020). This left the Moros voiceless in matters relating to their futures, which, in turn, fed into an already tense political situation. Adding to the complexity of the conflict in Mindanao is the prevalence of inter- and intra-clan and tribal conflicts resulting from informal transactions in secondary markets. These conflicts underscore the relationship between the “shadow economy, poverty, and insecurity that provoked conflict a century earlier” (Lara & Schoofs, 2016, p. 312).

Amid the fragile peace and the ongoing political transition with the creation of BARMM, there is reason to inquire about how the status of the different non-Muslim ethnolinguistic groups within the autonomous region as a unique identifier (i.e., non-Moro Indigenous Peoples [NMIPs]) take shape in Mindanao. The NMIPs are Indigenous cultural communities in the Bangsamoro region with their own political structures, territories, and ethnicities. They assert their identity as non-Moro Indigenous Peoples, or *Lumad*, to distinguish themselves from other Islamized indigenous communities.<sup>3</sup> The NMIPs have long stressed that the Bangsamoro is not the only group in Mindanao with claims to self-determination (Alamon, 2017; Paredes, 2017; Rodil, 1994). The desire, if not a necessity, to assert their recognition as distinct from their Moro brothers and sisters (and even from one another), despite their shared histories and cultural identities,<sup>4</sup> has become increasingly significant, considering that they have historically been neglected when speaking about the separatist conflict in Mindanao and largely ignored in political negotiations over their

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<sup>3</sup> Outside of BARMM, the Ata, Bagobo, Mamanua, Mandaya, Kamayo, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Matigsalog, Subanun, Tagakaolo, Tala-andig, T'boli, and Ubo also self-ascribe as NMIPs.

<sup>4</sup> Mamalu and Tabunaway are common figures in Mindanao's indigenous oral history, both among the Moro and *Lumad* communities. In the myth, the two were brothers whose separation by converting to Islam (Tabunaway) and choosing to follow the indigenous ways and beliefs (Mamalu) is often seen as the symbolic origin of the divide between the Moros and *Lumad*.

homeland, a mere “footnote within a footnote” in traditional Philippine history (Dizon, 2014, as cited in Perez, 2019).

Scholars, including Rodil (1994), contend that the NMIPs have, in fact, a long history of resistance by refusing to acknowledge the legitimate existence of the colonial Philippine state or the Maguindanao and Sulu Sultanates. However, the absence of an organized movement against state forces, mainly because NMIP communities were usually small, clan-based groups that relied on hunting, gathering, and shifting agriculture as their primary means of livelihood, makes them particularly vulnerable to continuing state-sponsored violence and marginalization (Alamon, 2017; Rodil, 1994). Further, the NMIPs’ struggles have scantily garnered public attention due to their generally nonviolent and non confrontational responses when interacting with outsiders or their Moro and Christian neighbors (Paredes, 2013, 2017).

### **Research Question**

Despite the passage of notable pieces of legislation recognizing Indigenous Peoples rights, including the IPRA and the BOL that claims to promote peace, justice, and inclusiveness in spirit and intent, the NMIPs still find themselves in a precarious situation. Historically marginalized since colonial times, the NMIPs continue to face similar issues and challenges, albeit this time at the hands of the newly instituted Bangsamoro state. This article asks: How did the formation of BARMM affect the NMIP’s ancestral lands, representation and empowerment, social justice and human rights, and their rights to self-determination? To address this question, this article will look into the situation of the Tëduray, one of the 18 major ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao that self-ascribe as NMIPs. Tëduray ancestral lands

are in the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, and Lanao del Sur,<sup>5</sup> resource-rich albeit conflict-ridden areas that the state now sees as ripe for resource exploitation.<sup>6</sup> The article also rests on the assumption that while all Indigenous Peoples are equally recognized and protected under key legislative safeguards, the Tëduray are marginalized in BARMM. Their application to acknowledge their ancestral domains, crucial for their identity as Indigenous Peoples, has remained pending and still caught in administrative limbo. This is at a time when the state grants mining exploration permits and mineral production-sharing agreements, along with logging operations in part of these areas, to revitalize these industries and boost the economy. Furthermore, their identity is being increasingly obscured due to political exclusion and challenges in securing representative positions within local governance structures, the non-recognition of their Indigenous governance systems, and the lack of implementation and access to basic social services. This situation is further exacerbated by human rights violations, which include the loss of life and displacement resulting from land-related and politically motivated violence.

The article argues that the marginalization of the Tëduray reflects the colonial relations it has with the powerholders of the Bangsamoro state, which have since crystallized since the peace negotiations and the passage of the BOL. Borrowing from Dizon's (2014, as cited in Perez, 2019) observation that NMIPs are a "footnote within a footnote" in history, this article asserts that NMIPs are the subject of a colonial subject. This assertion highlights the dominance of the imperial power situated in Manila, while acknowledging the considerable power that the Moros in the Bangsamoro region has now attained with the

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<sup>5</sup> Outside of BARMM, Tëduray ancestral domain claims also span across parts of the Province of Sultan Kudarat.

<sup>6</sup> A USAID scoping study (no date) on extractive industry governance and transparency in the Bangsamoro region notes that the provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, and Sulu all had known and potential reserves of nickel, copper, gold, silver, magnesium, zinc, iron, coal, limestone, sand and gravel, among others (LRC, 2024).

passage of the BOL. This is not to say that despite attaining relative autonomy, the Moros have escaped the clutches of state domination. Instead, it underscores the legacy of Western colonialism that still persists today. When the Republic of the Philippines gained independence, the subsequent regimes not only retained what the colonial powers had established but also entrenched ongoing internal colonial dynamics. Following the steps of labeling groups, homestead movements that displaced Indigenous Peoples, and changing land ownership laws, among others that marginalized the people of Mindanao, the perpetuation of internal colonial relations in the process of achieving political settlements and, later, its institutionalization in governmental structures through legislation also manifests not only in the passage of BOL but in the subsequent actions of the Bangsamoro government that succeeds it.

This article expands on existing studies that analyze the Mindanao Indigenous Peoples and the evolving political economy, which influences the distribution of power in the Bangsamoro homeland (Abinales, 2020; Alamon, 2017; Lara, 2019; Lara & Franco, 2022; Paredes, 2013, 2015; Perez, 2019, 2021). It contributes to the limited knowledge that privileges and amplifies the voices of the NMIPs as a unique community within the Bangsamoro, often overlooked in discussions about the Mindanao conflict. By examining the experience of the Tēduray context through the lens of internal colonization, this article reveals how governmental structures have systematically marginalized them, during both colonial times and in the contemporary Philippine state, and by design under the autonomous Bangsamoro state. This viewpoint uncovers the layers of structural inequality and the historical background that resulted in the marginalization of NMIPs.

This article is divided into four main sections. It begins with a brief review of internal colonization as the article's conceptual framework. It will be followed by a general overview of the status of Indigenous Peoples, the majority of which are found in Mindanao, and the

various aspects of how they are marginalized from mainstream Philippine state and society. The article will then narrow in on the experiences of the Tëduray, one of the major ethnolinguistic groups that self-ascribe as NMIPs, whose lands, political processes, and social systems remain contested in BARMM. Juxtaposing the experiences of the Tëduray, the article will discuss and analyze systemic issues of land dispossession and political exclusion masked by key legal instruments affirming Indigenous Peoples' rights and the autonomy structures of BARMM. Lastly, the final and concluding section will delve into how these systemic issues, which embody internal colonial relations, perpetuate the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples.

### **Internal Colonization: A Brief Review**

This article adopts internal colonization as an analytical framework to explain a system that produces and reinforces marginalization through conditions that disadvantage certain groups, in this case, the NMIPs in BARMM. Rooted in theories that originated from postcolonial and sociological studies, internal colonization generally refers to the processes by which a dominant group within a state subjugates, exploits, or culturally assimilates certain regions or populations (often based on race, ethnicity, or class). The concept highlights the parallels between the traditional notion of colonial relations between nations and power dynamics within a nation-state, when “with the disappearance of the direct domination of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerged” (Casanova, 1965, p. 27). This article adopts Casanova’s (1965) concept to explain his exploitation theory within the context of cultural heterogeneity and national development in Latin America (i.e., Mexico). It also establishes a theoretical and applied understanding of internal colonization, which has been used and expanded upon by scholars who problematized the phenomenon, including Barrera et al. (1972) and Blauner (1969).

Accordingly, internal colonization can be broadly understood as a system of marginalization in which certain groups or regions within a single nation-state are treated as subordinate by the dominant group or the central government. This includes systemic oppression, economic exploitation, cultural and identity suppression, and entrenched power hierarchies, among others. Colonial powers often portrayed subordinate subjects as wild or primitive to justify their domination and use of force. For instance, American politicians and their propaganda machines depicted Indigenous populations in Mindanao as inherently resistant to civilization and prone to violence, painting them as physically powerful but intellectually inferior. Others justified these remote regions' perceived "backwardness" as a pretext to justify interventions aligned with the colonial power's vision of cultural transformation and national glory. These depictions, including the absurd notion of physical otherness, reinforced colonial narratives that depicted Indigenous and marginalized groups as needing to be "civilized" or assimilated into the dominant national culture. By labeling these areas as "undeveloped" and Indigenous populations as "uncivilized," colonial powers and their local elite counterparts sought to legitimize initiatives aimed at reshaping local traditions, economies, and social structures, often prioritizing modernity and state-building over the preservation of Indigenous ways of life. In the case of Mindanao, this rationalized the treatment of the Moros as inferior subjects, legitimizing the US colonial government's policies of land appropriation, forced ("benevolent") assimilation, and the erasure of cultural identities (Casanova, 1965; Charbonneau, 2020).

According to Casanova (1965), internal colonialism, at its core, is driven by economic exploitation, where marginalized communities are systematically relegated to roles that sustain the economic interests of the dominant region or group. This exploitation manifests in multiple ways, most notably through the extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of labor within these territories. Lands rich in resources, often inhabited by Indigenous or

minority groups, are targeted for large-scale logging, mining, and agricultural expansion, with little to no regard for the environmental degradation or cultural dislocation that these activities may cause. These resources are extracted and processed to fuel the economic growth and wealth accumulation of dominant regions or elite classes in the state capital, leaving local populations with minimal benefits.

Ultimately, Casanova's (1965) analysis reveals how governmental structures are complicit in perpetuating inequality and exploitation. Legal and administrative systems entrench this subordination by promoting national development goals and the interests of political and economic elites. These systems often frame subordinate territories as underutilized or undeveloped, justifying state intervention through laws and programs to reclassify, redistribute, and exploit these territories. Far from being neutral or benevolent, these structures serve as instruments of domination, ensuring that the benefits of economic development, political power, and cultural authority flow to the dominant group.

As such, the state's sovereignty has long been a cornerstone of internal colonialism in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao. At the heart of this process is the possession and reclassification of Indigenous lands as public domain, a practice rooted in the Regalian doctrine introduced during Spanish colonization. As a result, laws like the Public Land Act (1903) allowed the US colonial government to allocate lands in Mindanao to settlers or private entities legally. The subsequent introduction of the Torrens system to streamline land ownership through a centralized registry and titling system also dispossessed Indigenous populations that depended on oral traditions and communal governance of land when these communities were unable to meet the legal requirements for ownership. Similarly, Marcos Sr.'s administration amplified these processes through resettlement programs that sought to address landlessness and rural stagnation in Luzon and the Visayas by promoting mass migration. These programs not only displaced local populations but also favored crony

capitalist interests, with large tracts of land converted into agro-industrial plantations, logging concessions, and mining sites. The militarization of Mindanao, particularly during martial law, further enabled land acquisition by branding local resistance as subversive, which allowed military-backed settlement schemes to take root. The legacy of these processes is evident in the enduring land conflicts and economic marginalization in Mindanao, fomenting the Moro separatist movement and the birth of the Bangsamoro.

### **Current Status of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines**

The Philippines is a composite of 182 ethnolinguistic groups, 110 of which are classified as Indigenous Peoples (Reyes et al., 2017). They are heterogeneous, representing various ethnicities, and are often clustered due to their strong ties to specific territories. Indigenous Peoples or IPs is the official term the United Nations (UN) uses to refer to populations that preceded colonial invasions and have retained their social, economic, cultural, and political structures distinct from the prevailing or dominant society. In our context, Indigenous Peoples are groups who were not Islamized nor Christianized during the coming of these two major religions, although there have been Indigenous Peoples who eventually converted (Camagay et al., 2018). On the other hand, a minority, as defined by the UN, refers to a group that is numerically inferior to the rest of the state's population, holds a non-dominant position, and, as nationals of the state, possesses ethnic, religious, or linguistic distinct from the majority. Members of such groups implicitly express a sense of solidarity directed toward preserving their culture, traditions, or language (UNHR, 2010). With many ethnolinguistic groups, there is no single dominant ethnic group in Philippine society, although collectively, a broad Christian majority (or lowland Christians) represented by 19

ethnolinguistic groups who are neither categorized as Indigenous Peoples nor Muslims comprise about 86-87% of the country's population (Reyes et al., 2017; Tan, 2016).

Different sources estimate the country's Indigenous Peoples between 9-15% of the population, or about 9.4 million (World Bank, 2024), 13 million (PSA, 2014, as cited in Reyes et al., 2017), or 15 million (Cariño, 2012; Duante et al., 2022; PSA, 2023). Geographically, Indigenous Peoples are distributed at 49% in Luzon, 47% in Mindanao, and 4% in the Visayas. Within the different regions, Mindanao's Region XI (Davao) and Region X (Northern Mindanao) represent the highest Indigenous People concentrations, with 13.8% and 10.4% of the national Indigenous Peoples population, respectively. In Luzon, 15.1% of Indigenous Peoples are in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), 13.2% in Cagayan Valley, and 9.7% in MIMAROPA. Western Visayas (Region VI) has the largest Indigenous People population at 3.2% in the Visayas (World Bank, 2024).

Globally, Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities often face high poverty rates, poor living conditions, and limited access to basic services, even in economically growing nations. In the Philippines, while economic growth has reduced national poverty from 49.2% in 1985 to 16.7% in 2018, inequality remains high, and progress is uneven, especially in IP-majority areas (World Bank, 2024). A recent study estimates that more than half of Indigenous Peoples belong to the poorest quantile, or 20% of the Philippine population, while a further 20% belong to the second poorest quantile (Duante et al., 2022; LRC, 2023). Their plight is characterized by higher rates of poverty, poor health, illiteracy, and, consequently, unemployment compared to the general population. The study notes that most Indigenous People households were food-insecure, which implies that Indigenous Peoples are also prone to a higher incidence of morbidity, mortality, and malnutrition. Furthermore, the study finds that Indigenous Peoples have more significant difficulties accessing culturally responsive primary education and, therefore, would have difficulties completing secondary and tertiary

education, with less than 10% being able to graduate with a college degree. Their settlements are primarily situated in remote areas with very limited to no access to essential public services like primary health care, electricity, potable water, and sanitation systems (Cariño, 2012; Duante et al., 2022).

Significant disparities exist between and among Indigenous People groups, which are concentrated in both poor and better-off regions. Ethnographic regions with Indigenous populations in Luzon (e.g., CAR and Cagayan Valley) exhibit lower poverty incidence than the national average (10.9%). On the other hand, Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao are spread across regions and provinces with poverty incidence surpassing the national average by significant margins, with Western Mindanao (Zamboanga Peninsula) and BARMM as the two poorest with more than double the average incidence among families (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Estimate Poverty Incidence Among Families in Select Ethnographic Areas (2023)<sup>7</sup>*

<b>Major Ethnographic Area</b>	<b>Poverty Incidence Among Families (%)</b>
Cordillera Autonomous Region	4.4
Cagayan Valley (Region II)	7.2
Western Mindanao (Zamboanga Peninsula)	24.2
Northern Mindanao (Region X)	18.4
Davao (Region XI)	11.3
Central Mindanao (Soccsksargen)	14.0
BARMM	23.5
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>10.9</b>

<sup>7</sup> The IPRA identifies seven ethnographic regions, namely: Region I and the Cordilleras; Region II; the rest of Luzon: Island Groups including Mindoro, Palawan, Romblon, Panay, and the rest of the Visayas; Northern and Western Mindanao; Southern and Eastern Mindanao; and Central Mindanao.

*Note.* Adapted from *State of Indigenous Peoples Address 2023 Report*. Copyright 2023 by Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center and *Ethnicity in the Philippines* by Philippine Statistics Authority (2020 Census of Population and Housing) released in 2023.

Another study on inequality also shows significant disproportions in accessing essential services within and among ethnic groups (i.e., Muslim, NMIPs, and non-Muslim/non-IPs). In general, Muslims, particularly the Indigenous groups, as well as among a few of the NMIP groups, are the most disadvantaged, with a higher existence of group inequalities compared to the non-indigenous/non-Muslim groups. However, while gaps among groups have generally narrowed in the past decades, the results showed limited improvement across outcome variables when disaggregated for Mindanao (Reyes et al., 2017).

The dearth of IP-specific data due to the lack of official figures to confirm their exact demographics highlights their social, economic, and political exclusion.<sup>8</sup> It speaks volumes about the underlying disparity in the Indigenous Peoples' ability to access essential services and participate meaningfully as citizens. Lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data regarding age, gender, or ability severely hampers efforts to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, especially within Indigenous communities. Women, children and youth, the elderly, or persons with disabilities remain invisible from key policy areas and political decision-making processes when they are viewed homogeneously rather than as sectors with distinct needs and roles that further compound their situation as Indigenous Peoples. For instance, a review of the extractive industry's effects in Indigenous communities highlights

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<sup>8</sup> The ethnicity variable has not been factored in earlier national census instruments and was only included in the national census on population and housing conducted in September 2020.

the dangers women face in defending their rights and the environment when they are targeted not only as rights defenders but also for challenging gender norms through their leadership roles. The review shows that women face overlapping challenges such as poverty, lack of education, land encroachment, displacement, and conflict, further intensifying their struggles (Velasquez et al., 2020, as cited in LRC, 2023).

### ***The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act***

Acknowledging the histories of colonization and the process of state formation that have marginalized ethnic minorities and Indigenous communities, international human rights law provides a specialized protection regime to recognize Indigenous Peoples' rights. Building on the principles contained in mainstream human rights treaties (i.e., UN Convention for the Prevention of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples are included in Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO 169), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution and national laws guarantee Indigenous Peoples' rights, particularly Republic Act 8371, or IPRA, enacted in 1997. Internationally recognized as one of the most progressive domestic Indigenous Peoples' rights and land tenurial laws, IPRA was landmark legislation to recognize Indigenous Peoples and set the path for formal recognition of their customary rights over their ancestral domains. The IPRA defines Indigenous peoples as:

A group of people or homogeneous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or

who have, through resistance to political, social, and cultural inroads of civilization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains. (Chapter II, Section 3 [h])

The IPRA extends beyond contract-based management agreements between the state and Indigenous communities by acknowledging the right of Indigenous Peoples over their ancestral domains, encompassing land, bodies of water, and all other natural resources within these territories. It provides for four bundles of rights: the right to ownership and stewardship of ancestral domains (the right to indigenous territory); the right to freely govern themselves according to customary laws and traditions (right to self-governance and empowerment); the right to social justice and human rights; and the right to determine the best path to the development of their ancestral domains that preserve their culture and resources for unborn generations (or right to self-determination).

One of the IPRA's most vital features is the requirement compelling foreign or domestic enterprises and investors venturing into agribusiness, energy, and mining to obtain the "free, prior, and informed consent" (FPIC) from Indigenous Peoples in possession of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) before engaging in any activities related to the utilization, transactions, management, or physical intervention in developing and exploiting these areas. The IPRA gave the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), comprised of representatives from Indigenous communities, jurisdiction over all

ancestral domain claims, including those previously awarded and all future claims that shall be filed.

### ***The Bangsamoro and the Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples***

While both are indigenous to Mindanao, the Moros and NMIPs represent two distinct but overlapping categories in the Bangsamoro and as far as IPRA is concerned. The term *Moro* refers to the collective identity of the local population in Mindanao who converted to Islam. Indigenous Muslims who resisted Christianity and the imposed integration into the colonial state were pejoratively referred to by the Spanish as Moros after the Muslim Moors who invaded Spain. The Americans continued using the label, which the Muslims rejected until the formation of the MNLF in 1972. Muslims began to adopt the Moro ascription as a vital aspect of their heritage and identity, symbolizing their resistance against Western colonialism and continuing struggle for rights and recognition in the Philippines. The Moros have also refused to be labeled as “indigenous” due to its political connotation of small-scale, scattered tribal minorities in contrast to their unique history of forging sultanates in Mindanao (Paredes, 2015; Perez, 2019). The appropriation continued with the emergence of *Bangsamoro*, which now carries multiple meanings referring to a territory, people, and identity.

According to the NCIP, Indigenous Muslim ethnic groups are those who embrace the Islamic faith and, at the same time, continue to practice their own culture and tradition as Indigenous Peoples. In contrast, the non-Indigenous Muslim ethnic groups are not classified as Indigenous Peoples but profess the Islamic faith. The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) identifies Muslim ethnic groups, including some Indigenous Peoples identified by the NCIP, to be approximately seven million, with the Maguindanao (2.02

million), Maranao (1.80 million), and Tausug (1.62 million) comprising more than 80% of the ethnic Moro population (PSA, 2024).

**Table 2**

*List of Muslim Ethnic Groups*

Indigenous Muslim ethnic groups	Non-indigenous Muslim ethnic groups
Badjao	Maguindanao
Iranun/Iranon/Iraynon	Maranao
Jama Mapun	Palawani
Kalagan	Sangil
Kalibugan/Kolibugan	Tausug
Sama Badjao	Yakan
Sama Bangingi	
Sama Laut	
Sama/Samal	

*Note.* From the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (2010) as cited in “Inequality of Opportunities Among Ethnic Groups in the Philippines by C.M. Reyes, C.D. Mina and R.D. Asis, 2017, Discussion Paper Series 2017-42, Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

Meanwhile, the Lumad, or NMIPs, make up a significant minority within the Bangsamoro population. They constitute about 2% of the predominantly Muslim autonomous region (Muhs, 2022). *Lumad* is a Bisayan term meaning native or Indigenous. In June 1986, 15 of the 18 major Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao adopted the term in their Cotabato Congress to distinguish themselves from other Mindanaons, whether Moro or Christian, as a unifying response to defend and reclaim their ancestral rights (Alamon, 2017; Perez, 2021). Lumad was also used in RA 6734 (Article XIII, Section 8) to distinguish these Indigenous communities from the Bangsamoro. It represents not only the collective identity of

Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao but also their shared struggles for their ancestral domains, a fundamental aspect of their identity, against a backdrop of state-sponsored militarization, human rights abuses, poverty, land appropriation, multinational interference, and governmental neglect, which heightened during the Marcos Sr.' dictatorial regime.

The NMIPs in BARMM include the Tëduray, Lambangian, Menubu Dulangan, Blaan, Higaonan, and Erumanen ne Menuvu. They are mainly concentrated in Cotabato province, where some municipalities (or a part thereof) fall within the autonomous region's territorial jurisdiction. Among the NMIPs, the Tëduray have vast ancestral domain claims at the heartland of the Bangsamoro and coastal waters in Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Lanao del Sur, and also in Sultan Kudarat (LRC, 2023). For the Tëduray, the land that stretches across the highlands of North Upi to South Upi, portions of Datu Blah Sinsuat, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Datu Hoffer, Datu Unsay, Ampatuan, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Talayan, Guindulungan, Datu Abdullah Sangki all in the provinces of Maguindanao and a portion of Lebak in Sultan Kudarat have always been their ancestral territory, as families own parcels of land inherited across generations or shared communally among the Tëduray and the Lambangian. The Tëduray (and collectively with Lambangian) are referred to as *Kësëfanangguwit Timuay* (Timuay Justice and Governance [TJG]), which also describes their system of government.

Like other Lumad, the Tëduray are confronted with similar issues, such as re-tagging, dispossession due to armed conflicts and evacuation, land grabbing by corporations and migrant settlers, and the issuance of land titles (e.g., CLOAs) within their ancestral domains (LRC, 2023). Since the 1950s, more than 10,000 Tëduray families have been internally displaced at the height of the government's state-sanctioned resettlement programs and development aggression to give way for mining activities, quarrying, logging, and agricultural plantations. Following the passage of the IPRA, the Tëduray applied for CADTs

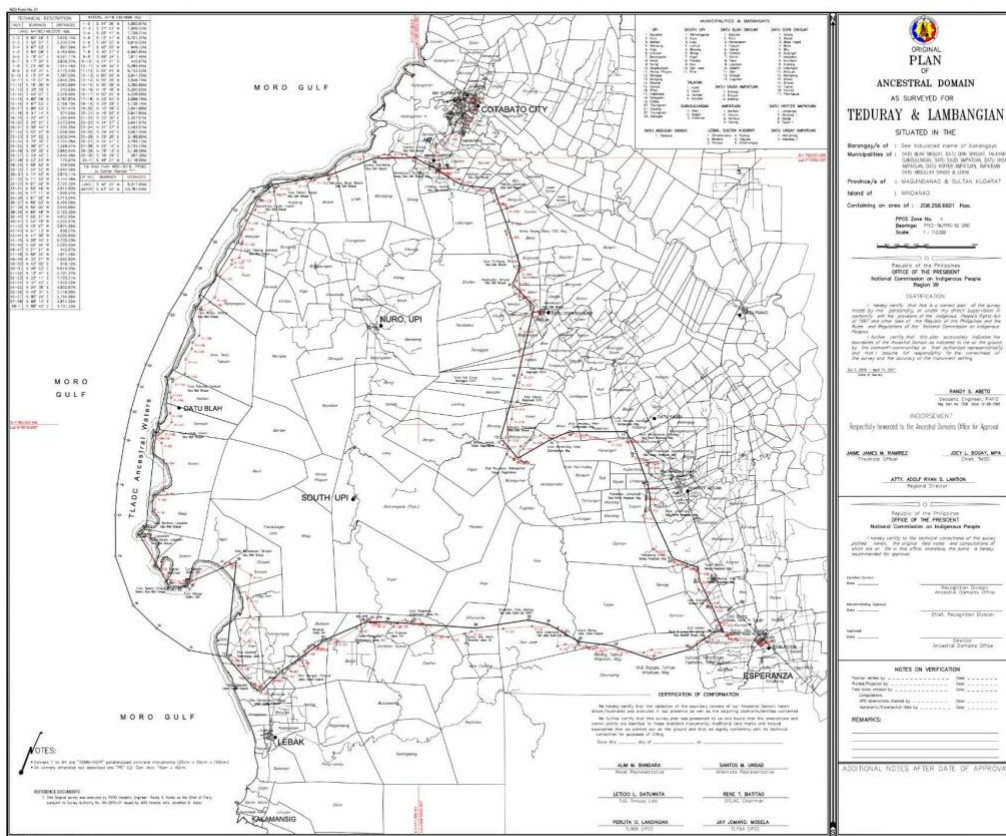
at the NCIP in 2005 to obtain official government recognition of their ancestral lands (LRC, 2023). Under the law, the Indigenous Peoples' legal basis in claiming ancestral territory is the native title, *Fusaka inged* (in Tëduray) or ancestral domain, which refers to:

Pre-conquest rights to lands and domains which, as far back as memory reaches, have been held under a claim of private ownership by ICCs/IPs, have never been public lands and are thus indisputably presumed to have been held that way since before the Spanish Conquest. (RA 8371, Section 3 [L])

However, the IPRA has never been implemented in formerly ARMM due to judicial ambiguities regarding its applicability within the autonomous region and the hesitancy of national and regional state bodies to take a definitive position amid the ongoing peace negotiations at the time (Muhs, 2022; Paredes, 2015). To date, the ancestral domain claims of the Tëduray span 295,779 hectares, including ancestral waters covering 86 barangays in 11 municipalities in the provinces of Maguindanao and six in Sultan Kudarat (TJG, 2019). After almost 20 years, the Tëduray's claim to their ancestral domain has not been delineated, and their CADT application remains unresolved (LRC, 2023).

Figure 1

Tëduray-Lambangian Ancestral Domain Claim



Note. From the “Tëduray-Lambangian Ancestral Domain Claim Report” by Timuay Justice and Governance, 2019.

The provinces of Maguindanao and other areas adjacent to it have continued to be hotspots of violence against Indigenous Peoples, where land grabbing and land conflict are the most common causes for the greatest number of Tëduray killed (See Tables 2 and 3). Violent land conflicts have ensued with the Maguindanao group, who have claimed and been issued CLOA titles within the Tëduray’s contested ancestral domain areas (Lara, 2019; LRC, 2023).

**Table 3**

*List of Documented Killings of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIP) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) by Year (2018-2024)*

Year	Number of Individuals
2018	7
2019	10
2020	7
2021	19
2022	7
2023	16
2024	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>

*Note.* From the “List of Documented Killings of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIP) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)” by Timuay Justice and Governance, 2024.

**Table 4**

*List of Documented Killings of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIP) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and Adjacent Provinces by Locality*

Location (Municipality)	Location (Province)	Number of Cases
Datu Odin Sinsuat*	Maguindanao del Norte	12
Upi*		8
Buldon*		1
Datu Blah Sinsuat*		1
Datu Hoffer Ampatuan*	Maguindanao del Sur	3
Guindulungan*		1
Ampatuan*		3
South Upi*		20

Location (Municipality)	Location (Province)	Number of Cases
Datu Odin Sinsuat*	Maguindanao del Norte	12
Upi*		8
Buldon*		1
Datu Blah Sinsuat*		1
Datu Saudi Ampatuan*		1
Lebak**	Sultan Kudarat	3
Cotabato City*	Cotabato City	2
Carmen***	North Cotabato	1
Senator Ninoy Aquino***	Sultan Kudarat	1
Unknown		1
<b>TOTAL NO. CASES</b>		<b>58</b>

*Note.* \*Part of BARMM; \*\*Adjacent Province from BARMM; \*\*\*Municipality Part of BARMM. From the “List of Documented Killings of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIP) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)” by Timuay Justice and Governance, 2024.

Currently, two MILF camps are situated within the Tëduray-Lambangian ancestral domain areas. A significant portion of Camp Bader overlaps 2,819 hectares with the ancestral domain claim. At the same time, Camp Omar is located within the Firis Complex, regarded as one of the Tëduray’s most sacred sites. These camps are designated to support major development initiatives, such as road construction and housing infrastructure, in line with the comprehensive war-to-peace transition or normalization process outlined in the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB). This transition includes the decommissioning of combatants and rendering their weapons unusable, as well as converting six MILF camps into peaceful, resilient communities. The establishment of these MILF camps during the height of conflict has led to the displacement of the indigenous Tëduray and

Lambangian residents. This situation still poses a potential risk for conflict and violence if challenges with current occupants, including armed groups linked to former MILF rebels and their families, are not effectively addressed.

## **Discussion**

### ***Land Rights and Ancestral Domains Under IPRA***

The NMIPs have been advocating for the recognition of their rights, as guaranteed by international legal frameworks and national laws, particularly the IPRA. However, despite the robustness of these international conventions and the IPRA itself, challenges persist in its internalization, adaptation, and application, as noted in various studies (Buxton, 2012; Doyle, 2020, as cited in Lara & Franco, 2022; MacInnes et al., 2017; Simbulan, 2016). A significant critique revolves around the conflict between the principles of Indigenous sovereignty and state-centric rules of eminent domain, emphasizing how Indigenous Peoples' participation in lawmaking effectively contests the dominant state-centric nature of international legal frameworks (Lara & Franco, 2022). For instance, the Regalian Doctrine remains heavily entrenched even in the 1987 Constitution, where a provision can easily nullify the intention of state recognition of ancestral lands. It states that lands classified as alienable and disposable may be owned privately by individuals or corporations. Moreover, lands categorized as inalienable and non-disposable, such as "all lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources" (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987, Article XII, Section 2), are state-owned and not available for private ownership but can be leased for a specific period.

For this reason, IPRA's constitutionality has been challenged in the Supreme Court on legal grounds that some of its provisions, including recognition of Indigenous Peoples' land rights, violated the Constitution. According to the petitioners, IPRA unlawfully deprives the state of ownership over public domain lands, minerals, and other natural resources, violating the state sovereignty doctrine. In a split decision, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of IPRA because it does not grant ownership of natural resources to Indigenous Peoples; instead, it recognizes their rights to manage, conserve, benefit from, and negotiate terms for resource exploration (Cruz and Europa v. Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources, 2000). This means that while IPRA does not infringe upon the state's ownership and control over lands of the public domain and natural resources, the state's power and supervision over resource exploration, development, and utilization remain intact. Thus, bound by the state sovereignty doctrine, the NCIP and its implementation of IPRA remain subject to the authority of state laws (Lara & Franco, 2022).

Moreover, institutional overlaps exist among different government agencies and the NCIP. State laws mandating the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Land Registration Authority (LRA), the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and the NCIP have overlapping jurisdiction, operational issues, and conflicting claims in implementing their respective programs over agricultural, public, and/or ancestral lands. The DENR, which promotes resource use, albeit generally extractive (e.g., mining, logging), and the NCIP require agreement between all agencies involved in contested areas and joint boundary delineation efforts (NCIP, 2012). This has resulted in significant delays in the ancestral land titling procedures throughout the country.

Another point of tension in IPRA's implementation is a considerable overlap of environmentally critical projects (ECP), or projects assessed to pose significant risks of adverse environmental impacts (e.g., mining, dam/hydropower plants, fossil fuel), with 83

out of a total of 410 ECPs listed by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) under the DENR. As of June 2022, more than half a million hectares of landscapes with registered CADT, or ancestral domains, are at risk of massive disturbance and pollution of land, vegetation, waterways, air, climate, and biodiversity, among others (LRC, 2023).

To compound the matter, House Bill (HB) No. 9608, filed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, proposes transferring the CADT application processing altogether from the NCIP to the DENR.<sup>9</sup> Different Indigenous Peoples groups have opposed the proposed bill because it may refer to the mandatory requirement that both government agencies and private corporations expedite securing the FPIC once development projects, including mining activities, are undertaken within ancestral domains or ancestral lands, which requires companies to adhere to customary Indigenous Peoples laws (Cabreza, 2024).

Without definitive rights over their ancestral lands and the undermining of IPRA's protective mechanisms raises fear among Indigenous Peoples in the context of the current policy regime of the Marcos Jr. administration to revitalize the mining industry, which continues to be a significant driver of human rights violations among affected communities, primarily targeting environmental defenders and Indigenous leaders. Mining and quarrying activities, land grabbing, and conflict with ancestral domains have been linked to significant cases of extrajudicial killings, displacement, red tagging, and other human rights abuses among Indigenous communities (Alamon, 2017; LRC, 2023 and 2024).

### ***NMIP Rights Under BOL***

The enactment of the BOL is intended to remedy the prejudicial status of the NMIPs in BARMM. It contains 13 provisions related to the non-Moro Indigenous Peoples, the

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<sup>9</sup> Sponsored by Camiguin Rep. Jurdin Romualdo.

creation of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MIPA), and the development of a regional Indigenous Peoples' rights law or an IP code, which would mirror the national IPRA but will be implemented regionally (Muhs, 2022). Under BOL's definition, those who, at the advent of Spanish colonization, were considered natives or original inhabitants of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and its adjacent islands, whether of mixed or full blood, have the right to identify themselves, their spouses, and descendants, as Bangsamoro (RA 11054, 2018, Article II, Sec. 1). Thus, the term encompasses not only the Islamized ethnic groups within the autonomous region but also all the native inhabitants of Mindanao including the NMIPs.

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) serves as the interim parliament and government of BARMM. It extended its term from 2022 to 2025 due to the election postponement following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and, consequentially, the absence of an electoral code.<sup>10</sup> Currently, BTA is composed of 80 appointed members nominated by the MILF and the Philippine central government, mainly comprising MILF-allied Tausug and Maguindanao ethnic groups, with significant fiscal autonomy and more control over natural resources within its political territories. In this structure, only two parliamentary seats are reserved for the NMIPs as sectoral representatives.

In 2018, the BTA issued Resolution No. 38, ordering the NCIP to cease further delineating land and issuing CADTs in BARMM. This undermining of the ancestral domain claims of the NMIPs, particularly the Tëduray, has been viewed as a clear case of interference by the regional government in recognizing, delineating, and awarding the NMIPs' ancestral

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<sup>10</sup> House Speaker Martin Romualdez led the filing of House Bill (HB) 11034, which proposes postponing the first general elections in the BARMM from May 12, 2025, to May 11, 2026. This is in accordance with the BTA's formal request for additional time and with the SC's decision to remove the Province of Sulu from the BARMM.

domain claims. This situation remains a legal blind spot regarding protecting and promoting Indigenous Peoples' rights within the autonomous region.

Under Parliament Bill No. 273, the BTA also introduced the Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples Development Act (BIPDA) of 2024, which “seeks to protect, promote, and preserve the collective rights of IPs in the region” (Section 2). The bill covers all Indigenous Peoples in BARMM, including but not limited to the Tëduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, Erumanun Ne Menuvu, Higaonon, B’laan, Sama Dilaut, Sama Jama Mapun, Sama Bangingi, Sama Pangutaran, and other minorities recognized by the MIPA (BTA, 2024). As of September 2024, the bill has been approved on a second reading through viva voce voting and will undergo a third and final reading before being signed into law.

Despite the draft bill’s extensive coverage, the current version raises concerns about potential misrepresentation and inadequate protection for the NMIPs in remedying their lack of political participation and overlapping ancestral domain delineation. Instead of explicitly indicating its applicability to “non-Moro Indigenous Peoples,” it removed the specific qualifier “non-Moro” and broadly designated its beneficiaries as “Bangsamoro Indigenous peoples,” contrary to the NMIP’s right to self-asciption. The proposed bill also empowers the MIPA to recognize additional groups as “Indigenous,” potentially broadening the law’s beneficiary base. The modification blurs the distinction between the NMIPs and the Moro ethnic groups (who may not be Indigenous) and expands the law’s coverage to three additional Moro ethnolinguistic groups. This prompts a discussion on whether various Islamized groups in Mindanao fall under the definition of “Indigenous.” This issue has intensified as some Moro ethnolinguistic groups have asserted their “indigenusness” to benefit from IPRA provisions. While some Moro and members of Muslim ethnic groups tend not to call themselves Indigenous Peoples, the definition of who is and is not an Indigenous becomes more fluid under the proposed law. Failing to categorize the NMIPs’ right to self-

ascription undermines their legal recognition and distinction, which are essential prerequisites for establishing a specialized rights protection regime aimed at preventing further marginalization of vulnerable groups. If the NMIPs are grouped under a single classification, they are likely to continue being marginalized without the protective mechanism if their rights are also unequivocally applied to other groups.

Additionally, the BIPDA (2024, Section 4, [K]) proposal designates the entire Bangsamoro territory as the “shared ancestral domain of all native inhabitants of the Bangsamoro region pursuant to their common ancestry and pre-colonial history.” This lumps all Bangsamoro lands into a solitary ancestral domain, challenging the established and disputed ancestral domain claims of the NMIPs within Bangsamoro. Juxtaposed with the principles of the “common good” to resolve possible conflicts, the bill also allows the use of expropriation (Section 73), illustrating the state’s power to legally encroach and sacrifice the rights of NMIPs despite their native titles.

### ***Internal Colonization and the Marginalization of the NMIPs***

Colonial legacies and their role as agents of political and social change can explain the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, internal colonization highlights how certain groups within a nation may be systematically marginalized and exploited by the state or other groups. It draws parallels between the traditional notion of colonial relations between nations and power dynamics within a nation-state, when “with the disappearance of the direct domination of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerged” (Casanova, 1965, p. 27). In explaining his exploitation theory in the context of cultural heterogeneity, Casanova (1965) illustrated how internal colonization permeates post-colonial societies and manifests in different ways, including unequal distribution of wealth and resources, assimilation, or political disenfranchisement. These

dynamics often result in structural inequalities, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization for the subjugated groups or regions (Chaloult & Chaloult, 1979). In BARMM, the complex dynamics between NMIPs, the Bangsamoro, and state structures reflect this concept's core aspects and layers.

One of colonization's structural impacts was the forced introduction of state sovereign and private property relations into local economies, fundamentally altering the existing Indigenous and communal systems of land ownership and governance. This legacy has enduring effects that continue to shape patterns of inequality, land disputes, and socio-political dynamics in post-colonial societies vis-à-vis customary rights of Indigenous populations. For example, the actual implementation of IPRA has illustrated the limitations of Indigenous Peoples' rights under the current governance frameworks. On the one hand, although the law intends to secure ancestral domains, its influence is constrained by constitutional doctrines and state sovereignty principles, which hold Indigenous lands and resources as assets under state control. The encroachment of mining and other extractive industries, facilitated by the state's development agenda and the overlapping jurisdictions between state actors that have resulted in large-scale environmental degradation and displacement of many Indigenous Peoples, further illustrate this. On the other hand, with the creation of the autonomous region, IPRA's implementation and the processing of CADT in the autonomous state remain in limbo. The NMIPs are also governed by the BARMM regional government, which operates within a framework dominated by the Moro majority and state interests. This preserves the status quo of power imbalance where the NMIPs are governed not by their own systems but by frameworks that prioritize political and economic agendas, effectively placing the NMIPs under the control of the very forces that have historically marginalized the Bangsamoro.

The link between Mindanao and “Imperial Manila” also foregrounds the hallmarks of internal colonization, from forced demographic changes to resource extraction and political domination. It describes the actual and perceived concentration of political, economic, and cultural power in the state capital, Manila, to the detriment of other regions. To recall, the onset of the secessionist movement in Mindanao had much to do with the resistance to the central Philippines state’s disproportionate control over decision-making, resource allocation, and development priorities. Mindanao was historically less populated than the islands of Luzon and Visayas but was often seen as a last frontier due to its rich natural resources, cultural diversity, and ecological wealth. In the 20th century, a wave of lowland Christians migrated to areas traditionally inhabited by Indigenous populations. American colonial authorities initially promoted this migration policy, further accelerated by the central Philippine state after independence, to support the state’s development agenda and other market interests. Plantation agriculture, logging, mining, and energy projects (such as hydroelectric dams) have been developed to supply the capital and other urban centers. However, these projects rarely had commensurate benefits to the local population, instead leading to displacement, environmental degradation, and state-sanctioned conflicts and violence. For decades, Mindanao hosted one of Southeast Asia’s longest-running armed conflicts fueled by this long history of marginalization and grievances over land dispossession and political exclusion.

The precarious position of NMIPs in BARMM also illustrates the extension of the colonial legacies of “Imperial Manila” and its role in Muslim Mindanao’s political and social transformations. As Casanova (1965) explains, the origins of internal colonization stem from the independence struggles of former colonies, where achieving political freedom frequently results in exploitation and internal control. This indicates a continuity in governance and power relations, with post-colonial regimes often adopting systems and practices akin to their

predecessors. In this sense, the formation of the Bangsamoro as a product of the peace process can be viewed as Muslim Mindanao's successful assertion of its political autonomy from the imperial state capital.

In this context, the NMIPs have struggled to assert themselves in autonomy negotiations and have turned to political concessions to Moro interests, hoping to assert a minimum standard of recognition for their rights in the GPH-MILF peace agreement alongside the IPRA and the UNDRIP prior to the passage of the BOL. However, despite the pivotal role played by NMIP leaders in advocating for peace and contributing to the success of the ongoing political transition in BARMM, they have generally been excluded from the peace negotiations as the relationship between Moros and the other Indigenous groups is often based on the notion of the political superiority of the Moros in the peace process (Paredes, 2015; Perez, 2021). Within the current BARMM structure, largely composed of Muslim ethnic groups, the NMIPs are also limited to two sectoral representation seats.

The introduction of BIPDA, which aims to safeguard the rights of all Indigenous Peoples in BARMM, tends to deny the NMIP's assertion for historical differentiation and the right to self-ascription by omitting the specific term "non-Moro" and broadly designating all beneficiaries as "Indigenous Peoples." The failure to recognize the distinct identity of NMIPs has already raised concerns about their potential assimilation and increased domination by the Moros by undermining their unique identities (Alejo, 2002; Paredes, 2017). Without recognition of their distinctiveness, Indigenous governance structures (i.e., *Kesëfanangguwit Timuay* for the Tëduray) that govern the economic, political, and cultural affairs of the NMIPs are also sidelined. Hence, despite the "tri-people approach" in which Moros, Lumads, and lowland Christian settlers were to coexist and acknowledge each other as equal partners in the collective future of Mindanao, the NMIPs continue to experience bureaucratic neglect,

political inferiority, and state favoritism in Mindanao but also from their Moro counterparts who hold sway over them at various levels and stages of decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

Despite a common history marked by oppression and dispossession, the Moro and Lumad of Mindanao have followed distinct trajectories. The conclusion of the peace negotiations and formation of the autonomous state underscores the effective assertion of the Moros' right to self-determination and the ultimate affirmation of their identity from the central Philippine state. Conversely, the NMIPs also actively claim their identity by asserting their rights, which are deeply rooted in their governance structure, ancestral domains, and territory.

The Philippine Constitution and international law, particularly the UNDRIP, as operationalized by IPRA, guarantee the rights of all Indigenous Peoples. In parallel, the BOL affirms the four bundles of rights provided in IPRA (i.e., right to ancestral domain, right to self-government and empowerment, right to social justice and human rights, and cultural integrity) to ensure the Indigenous Peoples' economic, political, and cultural well-being. However, due to compounding reasons, little progress has been made in protecting, promoting, and recognizing these rights, which remain largely subject to the state. This shows that the mere existence of legal frameworks does not ensure the security and realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights. It also illustrates how legal frameworks, typically seen as instruments of justice in both form and intent, function as tools for the state that reinforce systemic inequalities and marginalize vulnerable populations. Often, these laws prioritize the interests of those in power.

With its establishment, the political and social structures of the autonomous state reflect the distortions of imperial Manila, where the state and its institutions do not always

act as neutral and rational entities and seldom benefit fragmented and marginalized minorities at the expense of power-wielding elites on whom it depends for support. As a result, although the Moro secessionist movement espoused grievances against the central Philippine state for land dispossession, greater political participation, and social equity, in practice, upon attaining political autonomy, its social and political structures also perpetuate the same patterns against the NMIPs. As Abinales (2020, p. 13) further explains,

Despite the anti-colonial rhetoric intrinsic to nationalist movements in post-colonial societies, in reality, after gaining power, new leaders patterned the ideas, structures, and even routines of new states on colonial prototypes. The curse of the modern post-colonial state is that it is the progeny of its vanquished opponent.

The exclusion of the NMIPs from the political processes of state-building and the diminution of their rights in the evolving political landscape of Bangsamoro and the Philippine central state underscores their marginalization. As the NMIPs contend with two layers of governance, they continue to face marginalization due to the state and its market-driven interests' persistent encroachment on their ancestral territories, even though legal frameworks are supposedly meant to protect their rights. While the state benefits from exploiting Indigenous lands in the guise of national development, Indigenous communities are left to deal with the negative consequences such as higher poverty rates, environmental destruction, displacement, and some of the lowest levels of human development still evident today. This marginalization is neither exclusive nor unique to the Tëduray and other NMIPs. It reflects the broader structural inequality experienced by Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities in how they are excluded from the benefits of development, which reinforces the cycle of poverty and marginalization. It reflects these communities' continuing struggle to collectively confront the market-driven forces fully backed and in the complicity of the Philippine state.

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