

Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. Yakubu Joseph is Nigeria Country Coordinator for Mission 21, a Basel, Switzerland-based community of churches and organizations that connects people from various cultures and countries. Gopar Tapkida is the Mennonite Central Committee Representative in Zimbabwe.

Synergies towards Change in the Philippines

On Saturday morning, June 11, 2016, a panel discussion on “Mennonite Peacebuilding Approaches on the Ground: The Philippines and Grassroots Peacebuilding Efforts” took place at the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival. It created a conversation with three peacebuilders who have significant experience in the region: Myla Leguro (Program Manager, Peace and Reconciliation Program, Catholic Relief Services-Philippines), Dann Pantoja (President, PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. [PBCI]), and Wendy Kroeker (former MCC service worker in the Philippines, and current Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute facilitator).

This group of peacebuilders has intersected many times in the past decade over issues of relevant peacebuilding strategies, the role of faith in the work, and areas for change and challenge. The intent of the panel emerged as a way to struggle with foundational strategies and tools that have guided many peacebuilding efforts in the Philippines, and to ask where some of the growing edges might be for the challenges faced there. Specifically, the quest was to push at Western frameworks that have been helpful guides over the past decade and to assert insights that have emerged directly from peace work in the Philippines. The ongoing struggles of conflict due to militarization, political processes, and natural disasters have made it a significant context for examination. The panel served as a springboard for Myla and Dann (with Wendy hosting) to express the synergies of change occurring in many peace organizations and the themes that have pushed at their practice.

The three practitioners agreed, first, that peacebuilding is a “dialogue of life” and that, in the Philippine context, one does not separate one’s peacebuilding efforts into the dichotomy of the professional and personal—the kind of distinction often made in the Western context. Peacebuilding in Mindanao is an everyday reality, and requires both a vigilance and a

commitment that carries into all of life.

Second, structural analysis is paramount. The field has been built on four dimensions of Conflict Transformation (CT): personal, relational, structural, and cultural. In the Philippine context, the structural dimension is crucial, an aspect often diminished within the North American application of the CT framework. Myla's peacebuilding team regularly pursue concrete ways of engaging in structural transformation in their efforts towards integrating peacebuilding processes in local governance. The focus in community peacebuilding work is not so much on the interpersonal level but on bottom-up transformation through empowerment in order to increase participation in local governance, especially in addressing peace and security issues, strengthening community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, and creating processes engaging local government actors as stakeholders for peace.

Third is the place of the spiritual. Dann has worked to build a community of colleagues at PBCI who take seriously their theology in analyzing their peacebuilding strategies. He contended that "something in our theology" builds the capacity "to do crazy things like embracing the militant outsider-other." This theology includes a view of Jesus, of the gospel, of justice, and of peace. He summed it up in one word, "Anabaptist," and stressed that we must not be militants against militant people. This has become especially poignant, given the challenges of responding to the country's current War on Drugs and the military interventions in Marawi.

Myla concurred with the need to regard the spiritual as part of peacebuilding strategies. Her team has added the spiritual dimension to the Conflict Transformation framework. The spiritual is not simply something to be considered when working with traditional communities. Secularism might be the new norm, but Christians need to take seriously the impact of their theology for peacebuilding strategies. Rituals—both old and new—are essential aspects of connecting peoples and communities during times of conflict and reconciliation. Much work is now being done in the Philippines to build people's capacities and understanding in interreligious dialogue. Dialogue skill-building is seen as essential for civil society cohesion.

Lastly, acknowledgement of complexity is required. John Paul

Lederach's "Pyramid of Actors,"⁴ which distinguishes top, middle-range, and grassroots leadership levels, is a significant tool for peacebuilding in the Philippines. Its context of clear sectors makes its relevance vast. Philippine peacebuilders work hard on the links between grassroots and middle sector actors in building a strong base for activism and change. However, the panelists also realized that it needs an expansion. The relationships and connections at the grassroots level are complex. What has emerged in the Philippines is a discussion of "the triangle within the triangle." To plan appropriately, one must realize the myriad relationships and connections that exist among the grassroots sectors.

Years of peace education programming in Philippine communities has created a rich environment for analysis and strategizing. Peacebuilders educated in similar locales, and committed to a building a culture of peace, have created a network of energized communities with a strong vision. They will continue to push the edges of peacebuilding.

Wendy Kroeker is Co-Director, Canadian School of Peacebuilding, and an instructor in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Myla Leguro is Program Manager, Peace and Reconciliation Program, Catholic Relief Services, Davao City, Philippines. Dann Pantoja is President, PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Davao City.

Peacebuilding in the Africa Great Lakes Region

The 1994 Rwanda genocide was an African problem in need of an African response. It was a complex humanitarian crisis involving thousands of refugees from Rwanda who were welcomed in both Goma in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Bukavu in the South Kivu province of the DRC; the internal displacement of Congolese families; and unresolved historical grievances between different ethnic groups in Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC, and Uganda. Dynamics of nationality,

⁴ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.