



# RP in the midst of Political and Economic Crisis

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With President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo emerging victorious in the May 2004 national elections, this has sparked public controversy and protest rallies from the opposition camps claiming an incumbent President massively cheated them and allegedly misused government funds to bankroll her campaign projects (see *Table 1*).

**Table 1. Alleged Election-Related Government Expenditures**

Projects	Implementing Agency	Amount
Greater Medicare Access (GMA) Program Health Cards	Phil Health and PCSO	3,000,000,000
Students Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic (SAFE4SR) 2004	CHED	200,000,000
<i>Kalsada Natin, Linisin Natin</i> Program (from road users tax), involving 150,000 workers	DPWH	1,600,000,000
Campaign materials allegedly paid for by PAGCOR most likely taken from its intelligence and discretionary funds	PAGCOR	256,920,000
Public relation & advertising funds for activities & projects meant to promote PGMA's candidacy (for 2002, PR & advertising expenses of PAGCOR	PAGCOR	430,112,000
Agriculture funds for farm inputs	LGU	728,000,000
Agriculture funds for farm inputs	MM Congressmen	1,100,000,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>7.315,032,000</b>

Source: IBON Economic and Political Briefing, 15 July 2004, p.25

According to the members of the People's Congress for Authentic Democracy (PCAD), our nation is in deep crisis because the credibility of the electoral process has been totally undermined by the ease with which the Arroyo administration has used the whole bureaucracy and state resources to perpetuate itself in power.

Indeed, PGMA outsmarted the opposition by utilizing government resources to sustain the momentum of her election campaign. The government's "priority" projects to the urban and rural poor communities ranging from Students Assistance Funds for Education for a Strong Republic, "*Kalsada Natin, Linisin Natin*" program, distribution of Greater Medicare Access (GMA) Phil Health cards and land titles, agriculture funds for farm inputs combined with advertising funds for media mileage, De Castro's wide popularity ratings, Ms. Luli Arroyo's charm to win the hearts of the Cebuanos, support from OFW's plus the Iglesia-Ni-Cristo factor have all worked wonders in favor of PGMA.

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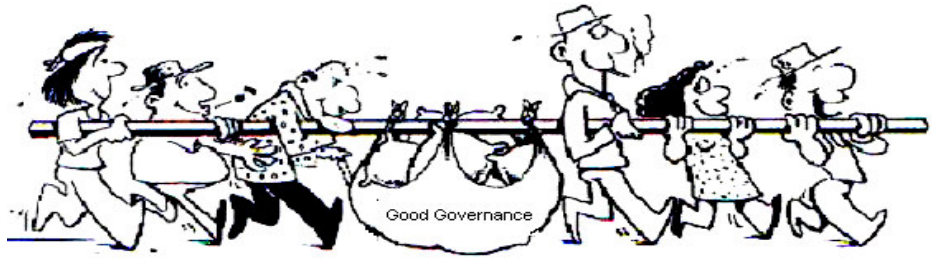
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**"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good men to do nothing."**

**Edmund Burke**

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# Editorial



Developing countries such as the Philippines aim for sustained economic growth and good people's welfare – a situation where the essential basic human services are provided for, where there is increasing per capita incomes, where the people's standard of living is improved. The burden and challenge posed by attaining these targets are obviously passed on to the government – on how governments manage its economic, political and social affairs; on how governments attempt to govern its constituency.

It is a question of governance. But governance is not just an improved administrative system, it is not just a pool of civil servants with technical capacity, and it is not just institutional strengthening. Governance also constitutes the interplay of politics and managing state affairs; of state institutions and political processes.

Inspired by Adrian Leftwich's article, entitled, "***Development and Democracy in the Third World,***" Dr. Anna Marie Karaos of the Urban Research Consortium, leads us to "*look beyond the formal institutions of the state and the political system and inquire into the power relationships that influence policy making and the ability of the state to effectively govern.*" It is in essence an expanded concept of governance as it delves into the interaction between the government and the different interest groups.

This concept of governance requires not just managerial and administrative skills but more so of facilitating and political skills. It entails leadership with a deep understanding of the country's problems, with a clear vision and targets, with political will to implement plans, with the ability to apply principles of equity and justice in balancing various interests and the capacity to manage political processes.

The question now is: ***Do we have such kind of leadership?***

The country is in deep crisis. This critical condition is being linked by some groups with corruption and the lack of credibility of the 2004 elections (People's Congress for Authentic Democracy, 2004). Others, however, attribute it with the failure of the tax structure and bureaucracy and inefficiency and the lack of accountability on the part of the public (Dr. De Dios, et al, 2004).

The Arroyo government is bold enough to admit that the country is indeed suffering from fiscal crisis. Although it keeps on boasting about the country's GNP growth of 6.2%, it acknowledges that there are a number of factors that continue to threaten the economic situation. The Economic Report and Policy Insights of the Senate Economic Planning Office identified four economic factors, namely, higher world oil prices, high fiscal deficits, hike in US interest rates and domestic inflation, and low investments.

**Higher World Oil Prices.** The report states that oil prices have been increasing at an alarming rate since the start of the year. Increases represent a jump of about 20%. Increases have been attributed to the rising world price of crude oil. The expected higher demand for oil by China and the US, due to increased economic activities, continue to drive up oil prices in the world market. And the OPEC imposed a production cut last April 2004 to keep price levels bet US25 and US35 per barrel. The prices increases were aggravated by the delicate situation in the Middle East, which has raised concern over the security oil reserves in the future.

**High Fiscal Deficit.** The report shows that the national government fiscal deficit in May 2004 rose to PhP12.7B from PhP7.8B in April 2004. This brought the government's 5-month budget deficit top PhP77.3B. The report warned that at this rate the government is spending, the government will likely to overshoot its budget deficit target of PhP197.8B at the end of the year. The situation according to this report would result to macro-economic risks. It gives a negative signal to the country's creditors as it will raise doubts on our capacity to pay our debts. Furthermore it also stated that Private Rating Agencies have downgraded Philippine Sovereign Credit Ratings, which has raised the spread of Philippine bonds. And accordingly, this means higher interest expense for government debt. Consequently, higher interest rates may affect private investments.

**Low Investments.** The report states that the country recorded a drop in direct investments. The investment climate has not improved yet, especially now that there is still an unfavorable peace and order situation in the country.

**Hike in US Interest Rate and Domestic Inflation.** According to the Senate Planning office report, the US in June 30, 2004 hiked its interest rate and a quarter percentage post to 1.25% (Federal Reserves). This will lead to increased borrowing costs as future loans/bonds will have to increase yields. The higher US interest rates will add to the country's cost of borrowing and the BSP may raise interest in tandem with the US rates. If inflation costs rise, there may be more pressure on the BSP to raise interest rates. The higher costs of oil, increase in wage and hike in power costs will put further the pressure on inflation.

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Unlike the 1998 national elections where the people voted for former President Estrada on the basis of his popularity, the May 2004 Filipino voters put premium on the "benefit factor" which basically demand concrete and tangible proof of the candidate's sincerity and capability to solve their problems (IPER, 2004). According to some political analysts, this explained why President Arroyo won the votes from classes ABC, D (except UNSP) and E over FPJ and other presidential candidates as reflected on the SWS Exit Polls Survey published in the Philippine Star, May 12, 2004 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: SWS Exit Polls**

Candidate	Total	ABC	D	D1	D2	D (UNSP)	E
<b>Arroyo, Gloria Macapagal</b>	<b>40.84</b>	<b>41.49</b>	<b>39.79</b>	<b>39.20</b>	<b>42.07</b>	<b>31.27</b>	<b>42.98</b>
<b>Poe, Fernando, Jr.</b>	<b>32.26</b>	<b>20.75</b>	<b>32.29</b>	<b>31.86</b>	<b>31.29</b>	<b>44.86</b>	<b>35.40</b>
<b>Lacson, Panfilo</b>	9.00	10.93	9.80	10.69	8.87	4.78	6.69
<b>Roco, Raul</b>	5.09	7.14	5.09	5.46	4.55	4.06	4.53
<b>Villanueva, Eduardo</b>	5.05	12.56	5.17	4.63	6.16	5.21	2.71
<b>No Answer</b>	7.76	7.87	7.87	8.16	7.06	9.80	7.69



*It appears that contrary to popular belief, a majority of Filipino voters of today have learned their lessons from history that populist candidate cannot change their lives for the better. But what will transform Philippine society is a good government that goes beyond rhetoric and empty promises. Filipinos want a responsive government that cares and delivers tangible result to meet the needs of the nation.*

Based on "The Poor Vote Is A Thinking Vote" written by Ms. Shiela Coronel, the author disclosed that the solution to abject poverty was the most important platform of program the voters asked from the presidential wannabes. Similarly, the "Vote of the Poor" study conducted by the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) of Ateneo de Manila University revealed that the 5 most important factors in choosing their candidates were: (1) education, (2) leadership experience, (3) platforms of government, (4) integrity, and (5) service to the nation. It appears that contrary to popular belief, a majority of Filipino voters of today have learned their lessons from history that populist candidate cannot change their lives for the better. But what will transform Philippine society is a good government that goes beyond rhetoric and empty promises. Filipinos want a responsive government that cares and delivers tangible result to meet the needs of the nation.

But whether PGMA truly won the recent national election remains a mystery to many Filipinos and progressive groups including FPJ camp, which have already filed to the Supreme Court a case of electoral fraud and public plunder. Field reports that *dagdag-bawas* were rampant particularly in the regions of Visayas and Mindanao where Arroyo was supposedly strong. Election irregularities such as ballot box snatching, the lack of election paraphernalia and power outages during precinct level counting and canvassing of votes were reported. According to Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, at least 141 people were killed in election-related incidents for this May 2004 election, which was the highest number compared to previous national elections since 1995. Such incidents had put the whole Philippine electoral system and infrastructure under question, undermining Philippine democratic system (Tujan, July 2004).

In the case of electoral fraud, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Arroyo. While Efforts to open ballot boxes to satisfy opposition doubts concerning fraudulent Certificate of Canvass (COCs) were denied during the joint session of Congress. On the other hand, the charges of plunder against Arroyo were either dismissed in the case filed by the opposition or not acted upon in the cases filed by Mr. Frank Chavez and the Kilusan ng Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

Even the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) was not spared from public controversy. Mr. Roberto Versola's article, "**The True Results of the 2004 Presidential Elections Based on the NAMFREL Tally: A Final Report**" unveiled the following facts:

- GMA did not win by around 1.1 million votes.
- GMA did not win by around 681,000 as the NAMFREL Terminal Report indicates.
- The NAMFREL tally shows clear signs of manipulation through selective tabulation in favor of GMA, making her lead appear to be larger, but much of the skew in the NAMFREL data can be corrected through statistical operations.
- It was a very close contest, with the most probable results ranging from a GMA win of around 156,000 votes or less, to an FPJ win of around 84,000 or less.
- NAMFREL officials appear to be keeping the truth from the public, by (1) not including in their system design a provincial or regional breakdown of precincts counted; (2) not releasing this breakdown despite strong demands by the opposition, the media and election watchers; (3) continuing to refuse this information today despite repeated requests; and (4) keeping silent on the major discrepancies between their tally and the Congress canvass.
- If NAMFREL releases this breakdown, we might be able to narrow down the probable range even further and get closer to the truth.

Mr. Versola stressed that there are good men and women among the NAMFREL officials and volunteers who have risked their lives hoping to contribute towards a quick, complete and honest citizens' count. For this reason, the author enjoined everyone especially the NAMFREL chair, secretary-general and the head of the Systems group to release in public the breakdown of NAMFREL election results by province reflecting the number of precincts it has covered. *"This small piece of information will lead us closer to the true results of the 2004 presidential elections"* the author reiterated.

Truly, the depth and extent of the doubts cast on the whole democratic process and on the integrity of the ruling leadership has created a danger vacuum in the national governance. The protest of the aggrieved political parties and their followers, the brewing discontent among young officers and ranks of the military and the longer-standing overt armed rebellions are building up to a dangerous tempest. Feelings of outrage are rising and there are serious signs that mass action will not get the same "maximum tolerance" accorded past demonstrations. The prospects of bloody confrontations are real (PCAD Unity Statement, July 21, 2004)

Branded as spoilsports who cannot accept defeat and unmindful of the socio-political instability of the nation because of their narrow partisan interests, the opposition forces supported by progressive groups were watered-cannon and broken up violently with such preemptive force during their series of mass actions. According to Tujan, the post elections *"instead of healing the factional split created by EDSA II has now become another occasion to deepen it."*

The Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) immediately issued a statement in support of the Arroyo administration stating that the recent national elections are credible and satisfactory. This was supported by the private business sector, media opinion makers and of course, the US Embassy.

During the thanksgiving mass of PGMA at the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral, Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal said, *"The winners and losers of the May 10 elections should talk less and unite more towards nation building. The gift of another chance is ours for the taking."* The nation must learn the lessons of history and *"rise to the challenge of another chance."*

PGMA, in her State-of-the-Nation address last July 26, 2004 said that, *"the season of bitter partisanship is over."* She enjoined everyone to work together for the realization of her 10-point agenda, to wit:

1. Creation of 6-10 million jobs
2. Support for 3 million entrepreneurs
3. 100% enrolment of school-age children
4. Provision of a computer in every school
5. Provision of electricity and clean water in every barangay
6. A balanced budget
7. Decongestion of Metro Manila and surrounding areas
8. Development of 1-2 million hectares of agricultural business lands
9. Peace settlement with Muslim and communist rebels
10. Computerized election



*President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo clad in yellow native gown delivers her State of the Nation Address (SONA) at the opening ceremonies of the joint session of the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress held this afternoon (July 26) at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City. The President is flanked by Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. (Malacañang Photo)*

AT PRESENT, the state of the nation is alarming *"marked by an empty treasury, a P 200-billion budgetary deficit, a runaway Php 5.3 trillion national debt, a five-million unemployment record, a sinking peso and rising prices matched only by an increasing loss of purchasing power,"* (Former Senator Francisco Tatad, Tribune August 23, 2004). The ballooning fiscal crisis poses a grave threat to the country because it stunts the economy, swells the nation's debt burden, raises interest rates, induces inflation and since it is a clear sign of financial mismanagement and poor governance, turns-off potential foreign investors to boost our ailing economy.

Unless the ballooning fiscal crisis are brought under control, many believed the country will most likely face an Argentinean-style economic crisis in two to three years time. A group of Filipino economists at the University of the Philippines called for the government to: (a) cut half the pork barrel of legislators, (b) raise at least P150.6 billion more a year through fresh taxes and an 8% increase in motor vehicle registration fees, (c) pushed for the indexation of specific taxes on tobacco on alcohol, (d) closing tax leaks and additional efforts by the Bureau of Internal Revenue, (e) increase the value-added tax rate from 10-12%, and (f) impose a P2 per liter tax increase on petroleum products. Furthermore, the group suggested that, *"the simple application of taxes on fringe benefits and ceilings on deductions would be fairer and more prudent way to deal with tax evasion among corporations than the proposed shift"* to gross income taxation.

President Arroyo ordered her economic managers to *"identify measures"* to alleviate the government's fiscal problems, particularly since it has to absorb some of the National Power Corporation's Php 560 billion debt. In a press statement, President Arroyo admitted that indeed, *"We are already in the midst of a fiscal crisis and we have to face it squarely – wielding our courage resourcefulness and solidarity as a nation and as a people."* She expressed her deep appreciation to the suggestions made by well meaning quarters to resolve the crisis saying, *"Average Filipinos are already taking the brunt of sacrifices but we have to gather round again as one national community to take stock of the future. The pain is imminent but it will be shared fairly without putting one over the other."*

But according to central bank deputy governor Amando Tetangco, *"technically Manila was not yet in a fiscal crisis because it had not defaulted on payments, not lost access to the international debt market, and not accumulated a budget deficit of 'unmanageable' proportions."*

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said *"It is important to put the issue in its proper context. We all recognize that there is a fiscal problem. But the solutions to the problems have been clearly laid out by the Arroyo administration in terms of legislating new revenue measures and continuing to institute fiscal discipline measures."* (Inquirer News Service, August 23, 2004).

How the government is handling the fiscal crisis has generated mixed reactions from the Senators, the business community and civil society groups. Senator Richard Gordon attributed the fiscal woes to *"waste and abuse"* of government power and assets, and the failure to expand the tax base. He proposed for a national audit of all assets, government expenditures and total debt payments, fast-track infrastructure development, and drastically trim-down government expenses.

Senator Manuel Roxas II said the solutions should be good governance and better tax collection, not new taxes, whereas Senator Ralph Recto proposed to make the economy grow at a faster rate to create more jobs and therefore, more tax payers.

Mr. Guillermo Luz, executive director of the Makati Business Club said, *"We should first recognize that we are in a crisis and then move toward the solution. But we must deal with this right away without hitting the panic button."*

IBON research director Mr. Antonio Tujan, Jr. proposed that the government should ensure that current taxes are effectively implemented and impose an across-the-board tariff hike. He said, *"Higher tariffs are good for the economy because it raises local production. It will dampen imports. [And] with a tariff increase and effective implementation of the current taxes, the foreign exchange rate will surely be stabilized."*

Bayan Muna representative Teddy Casino explained that although he generally agreed with the UP economists' study the implications of increasing the VAT rate and the tax on petroleum products means *"the bulk of these taxes would be shouldered not by oil companies or business establishments, but by ordinary consumers."*

Mr. Eduardo Castillo of the Professional Against New Taxes said, tax amnesties of the government only provide *"big taxpayers the opportunity to evade taxes legally by just paying a certain increment above their previous year's taxes or an average of just 10%, even though they may have earned a lot more than that."*

So far there are vital signs that the Arroyo administration is doing its best to get the budget in place. To achieve the target of 100 billion pesos and wipe out deficit, the Arroyo administration is already working with Congress to donate part of its pork barrel funds as well as raising development funds from the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). Moreover, PGMA endorsed to Congress a package of tax measures aimed at raising some Php 80 billion by imposing taxes on "sin" products such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, cosmetic surgery, among others.

Parallel efforts are underway to transform national government into a lean and mean bureaucracy by downsizing 30 more offices under the Office of the President and simplifying procedures to eliminate fixers that breeds graft and corruption. Aside from skipping snacks during meetings and energy conservation schemes, the government is also studying the feasibility of reducing the number of working days by some government staff from 5 days to 4 days in a week while re-shuffling of Cabinet members is ongoing. The Executive enjoined the Judiciary and the Legislative branches of government to start practicing austerity measures. Leadership by example and role modeling should start from the government so that the people will know they are sincere in their efforts.

Equally important, the government has urged the United Nations, through its visiting Assistant Secretary General Hafiz Pasha to sponsor a summit between its member lenders and borrowers the soonest possible time in order to discuss a "reasonable" debt restructuring and to come-up with an expanded debt relief program for borrowing countries. According to House Speaker De Venecia, *"Under the debt restructuring program, short-term loans will be turned into medium-term loans, medium-term loans to long-term ones, and long-term borrowings into semi-concessional debt."* (Philippine Star dated August 24, 2004).

Peace talks and negotiations are on-going between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the New People's Army (NPA) along with other dissident groups aimed at ending (if not reducing) the armed conflicts involving concerned groups. Hopefully, the improvements in peace and order situation that includes rising criminality are in check would lead to political stability and therefore, increase the prospect of getting more investors and tourists to spur economic growth and development.

In response to the country's growing population expected to break the 84-million mark this year, a bill is now passed for the enactment of a *"Two-Child Policy."* If left unchecked, the population growth rate of 2.36% will put so much pressure on the social services and infrastructure already considered by government as lacking in overcrowded cities and this in effect, increases government expenditures and therefore, negates economic growth.



Photo taken from Inquirer Libre dated 3 August 2004

While the Arroyo government is addressing the fiscal crisis in different fronts, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales urged members of the Congress amid the growing public clamor to give up their pork barrel funds to help government. The Church and other religious groups have started raising Bayanihan funds to help government cope with the crisis.

According to Bishop Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, D.D, *"the profound renewal of politics is the urgent need of the day. The way we practice politics is a concrete demonstration of how we separate moral and religious principles from daily."*

Indeed, the First 100 days of PGMA is crucial in building our nation. The 10-point agenda of PGMA somehow provides window of opportunities for the active participation of civil society groups, Academe, political parties and Donor community aimed at achieving good governance towards strong Philippine Republic.

No good government will thrive in a hostile environment and without the support of its constituency. Hence our government, far from being perfect, needs the support and cooperation of all sectors. It is about time for the government to stand firm and continue doing what is right. Yet it must uphold the promotion and protection of human rights at all times.

## CALL TO ACTION

**The Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA)** believes that in the midst of political and economic crisis, the situation calls for national healing and reconciliation. It is about time to set aside personal interest and partisan politics for the meantime and concentrate solving the nations urgent concern.

**WE DENOUNCE** in the strongest possible terms the uncontrolled increase of the prices of goods and services ranging from oil and petroleum products, water, electricity, transportation and other basic commodities that put so much pressure to many Filipino poor families.

**WE DEMAND** the government to respond immediately to the alarming rate of mass hunger affecting 36 million people through food security measures while addressing the looming fiscal crisis. People are hungry, angry and beginning to feel hopeless. The plight of Angelo de la Cruz in Iraq and the sad state of some of our OFWs suffering from racial discrimination and human rights violations are concrete manifestations that people are already desperate and in the brink of survival. *"Better to face death in Iraq than starvation at home"* was the pitiful cry raised by many OFWs.

**WE DEMAND** the government to stop graft and corruption and eliminate fixers and willing collaborators both in government and private sector.

**WE DEMAND** the government to scrutinize the root causes and symptoms of the fiscal crisis. We believe that among the possible solutions to fiscal crisis are good governance and better tax collection but not necessarily exacting more taxes from the impoverished Filipinos. Debt moratorium and loan restructuring should be explored rather than, prioritizing debt servicing over basic social services.

**WE APPEAL** to the private business sector to commit full transparency to the public on the petitions for tariff rate increases.

**We APPEAL** to all Filipinos to sacrifice and practice austerity measures by living a simple lifestyle, promoting energy conservation schemes and join in the advocacy for **Food Security to All**.

**WE SUPPORT** Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales in urging members of the Congress amidst the growing public clamor to give up their pork barrel funds to help government head-off economic collapse.

**We SUPPORT** the initiatives of the Church to raise Bayanihan funds to be used for the delivery of basic social services and the construction of infrastructure projects to help poor Filipinos.

**WE JOIN** the People's Congress for Authentic Democracy (PCAD) in its analysis that the Arroyo administration must respond to the prevailing crisis according to its importance starting from social crisis to redress massive hunger and poverty; national crisis to address crisis in governance and not just fiscal crisis; and system crisis, which requires changing the culture of elite democracy via transforming the unjust structures and oppressive systems of the Philippine society.

**WE STAND FIRM** in defense of genuine democracy and strengthening the intermediary institutions that are instrumental for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. And being an intermediary institution, we believe that the De La Salle University can do its share as a resource for the Church and the nation.

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# Cooperative as a Tool for National Development

Harry Francisco



In this “hard times,” it may be worth taking a serious look at cooperative as a tool for national development. Cooperative is defined by the International Cooperative Alliance *as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.*

At present, there are 64,998 registered cooperatives, of which only 31,191 registered cooperatives are fully operational since the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) has been canceling the registration of non-functioning cooperatives if they can no longer be helped. It is true that cooperatives were failure in the days of the “*Samahang Nayan*” and FACOMAS when politicians organized cooperatives. But we cannot ignore the fact that, many cooperatives too have succeeded. If we are to measure the development impact of cooperatives on the lives of Filipinos, government policy makers will realize that cooperative enterprises contribute to national development.

*The cooperative has made lives better for many of our countrymen and their family members making them assets to this country and enabling them contribute to its national development.*

According to CDA, cooperatives contributed 12.5% or Php 517 Billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in order to boost our ailing economy. Cooperatives contribution to national income grew by 1.22% in 2002 while direct and indirect employment has reached more than Php 1.5 M. It is estimated that almost 26 Million household members were beneficiaries of cooperatives (CDA Report 2003)

Many small entrepreneurs based in public markets love to tell stories how they were emancipated from the clutches of usurers because of their cooperative which gave them capital at reasonable interest rates, enabling them to maximize their income and savings. The cooperative has made lives better for many of our countrymen and their family members making them assets to this country and enabling them contribute to its national development.

Cooperatives are of different types, which include, credit, consumers, producers, marketing, service and multi-purpose. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of Century Cooperatives last November 2003 in Cavite, 15 cooperatives including the De La Salle Credit Cooperative shared their best practices, which are summarized below:

1. *continuous membership growth*
2. *diversified services to answer needs of members- "name it, we have it"*
3. *creative capital build-up programs*
4. *regular meetings of General Assembly (GA), Board and Committees*
5. *timely, accurate and relevant reports to the governance board and to GA*
6. *transparency, periodic audit and strict observance of check and balance*
7. *Ethical and value-based leadership*
8. *continuous education and training for members, directors, officer, management and staff*
9. *keeping the tripod of success – enlightened leadership; good management; active members*
10. *use of technology to enhance delivery of services*
11. *support of institution where coop is operating*
12. *bringing the coop to remote areas were soldiers serve thus expanding membership and savings mobilization*
13. *diversified livelihood assistance program*
14. *cooperation among coops through membership in unions and federation*
15. *responsive and practice business strategies*

Cooperatives are economic and social enterprises. Seven principles serve as guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice, namely: (1) Voluntary and Open membership; (2) Democratic Member Control; (3) Member Economic Participation; (4) Autonomy and Independence; (5) Education, Training and Information; (6) Cooperation among Coops; and (7) Concern for the Community.

**Voluntary and Open Membership** means it is open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

The Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) in Resolution No. 366, s-2003 has maintained the policy of requiring newly recruited members of cooperatives to undertake pre-membership education seminars (PMES) to ensure the recruitment of quality members.

**Democratic Member Control** means the cooperatives are run and controlled by their members, who actively participate in formulating policies and making decisions. Elected officers are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner. Hence this principle enhances formation of democratic values. After observing an election in one coop, an Undersecretary of Finance once remarked that, *"if only our COMELEC can manage the elections like your cooperative, we have better national elections in our country"*.

**Member economic participation** requires members to contribute to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. In return, they participate in the distribution of net surplus, less the required reserves and other allocations. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership.

In practice, De La Salle Credit Cooperative (DLSCC) focuses on increasing the value of the money of their members. For every 1% that members pay for services (loans), the members get more than 1% in return. DLSCC charges 9% p.a. interest for loans, 0% service charge if paid in 6 months or less, otherwise it is 1% (based on 12 months, pro-rated) service charge. In fiscal year 2003, of the 9% interest, half was returned as patronage refund, which means that the net interest was only 4.5%. Yet, members received 5% interest on capital (many times bigger than the banks), and 5.34% on savings (FS 2003). On top of that, other benefits totaling Php 2.5 M in Christmas gifts, Damayan Php 192, 860.00, Php 150,000.00 Book subsidy, and 2 college scholarships were granted.

DLSCC has 2,661 members in its 41 years operation with a net worth of Php 142 M. Total loans granted was Php 177 M, which generated a 9.29% increase in gross surplus for a total of Php 20.86 M (RP's economic growth was 4.5%). By end of 2004, total loans granted are estimated to exceed Php 200 M making the total loans Php 1 Billion for the last ten years.

**Autonomy and Independence** is an assertion by the cooperatives that they are responsible and accountable to both members and clients. Cooperatives maintain its identity in dealing with other entities. Government's policy enunciated in the Cooperative Code declares that coops are autonomous and it observes the principle of subsidiarity. Government provides Coops, as in Corporations and other entities, the legal framework in which the coops may function so that the declared policy of the State to promote and encourage the growth of cooperative as a vehicle for social and economic development is implemented.

Cooperatives provide proper **Education, Training and Information** to all officers and members so that they can all contribute effectively and efficiently to the development of their cooperatives. Through information dissemination, the general public clearly understands about the nature and benefits of the cooperatives.

The principle of **Cooperation among Coops** has tremendously improved the development of cooperatives not only in the Philippines but other countries as well. Cooperatives strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

The experiences in this country enabled cooperatives to take advantage of economy of scale as their undertakings are done in larger scale, often nationwide, which include housing, banking, marketing, production, transportation, warehousing and social services such as medical care and schools.

For instance, Metro South Cooperative Bank (MSCB) is emerging as a strong federation in cooperative banking. Its membership is estimated to reach 600 cooperatives nationwide by year-end 2004. Its primary and secondary cooperative members include cooperative banks actively operating in different provinces found in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. In its seven years of existence, MSCB has proven its financial stability and it shows a promise that it could easily serve as the national bank of cooperatives.



**Concern for the Community** is the newest principle added in the Centennial Congress in Manchester in 1995. While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members. It is a positive declaration that cooperatives have social responsibility for the promotion of community development.

Consequently, the cooperative offers a ray of H-O-P-E in developing this country since it practices good governance and assures the equitable distribution of wealth among its members and not only to a few. Equitable distribution of wealth is part of the solution that will help solve the interrelated problems of abject poverty, unemployment and poor governance that breeds graft and corruption. Good governance is a prerequisite for cooperative development consistent with the ethical values of honesty, integrity, transparency, self-help, equality, social responsibility, and caring for others. In this sense, cooperative can bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Let us give fishing nets to fishermen to fish, not fish to eat. What help we can do for cooperatives is like giving people fishing nets to fish.

# COSCA and Partners Celebrate Children's Month

Gregorio L. Quitangon



COSCA in partnership with the Student Council (SC), Metro West Network in Need of Special Protection (MWN) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) will be celebrating Children's Month from October 25-29, 2004 to be held at the Central Plaza, De La Salle University-Manila. This year's theme **"Bright Child: Bunga ng Mapagkalingang Pamilya"** aims to give recognition to the important role of a nurturing family in producing a Bright Child.

The organizers will start the event with a Eucharistic Celebration to be held at the Pearl of the Great Prize Chapel of the De La Salle University-Manila. There will be a weeklong photo-exhibit and hopefully, a trade fair at the Central Plaza to promote the products produced by street children for their own educational scholarship program. A Forum on Children's Rights will be organized by COSCA together with the Student Council on October 26, 2004 promoting Children's Rights with emphasis on the role of a nurturing family in producing bright children especially those in need of special attention.

Furthermore, the organizers will be sponsoring child-friendly activities such as the *On-the-Spot Poster Making Contest* and *Quiz Bee Contest on the Rights of the Child* to be participated in by street children belonging to different ages from 9-17 years old and a special category intended for Lasallian students.

"*Donate a Book*" project will support the mini-library intended for the children of urban poor families where a community partner of COSCA is actively operating. As a culminating activity, a Children's Night will be organized on October 29 featuring local performers and children's choir.

## COSCA Commemorates Martial Law

In commemoration of Martial law, COSCA and the Student Council will be organizing a photo-exhibit from September 20-24, 2004 to be held at the Central Palza featuring graft and corruption and the Magna Carta for students.

To promote good governance, COSCA will advocate against graft and corruption highlighting the profile of the Ten Most Corrupt Men in the World and some illustrations to better understand the culture of corruption.

The Student Council, on the other hand, will work on promoting the Magne Carta of Students starting from the student's struggle during the First Quarter Storm up to the present state of student's rights in De La Salle University-Manila.

Crony Capitalism as well as human/student rights violations are all part of the Marcos Legacies. In this light, a forum entitled, **"Karapatan Mo, Alamin at Ipaglaban"** will be organized by COSCA and SC on September 21 (Tuesday) from 2:40-410 p.m. to be held at the Ariston Estrada Seminar Room in order to increase the social awareness of more than 40 Lasallian students on Philippine history to be given by Mr. Butch Hernandez, Executive Director of Foundation for World Wide People Power, Inc. Never again shall we allow a dictator to rule our land. As the old saying goes, **"Ang Kalayaan matapos makamtan ay patuloy na ipinaglalaban"**

## October is Cooperative Month

COSCA in cooperation with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and the Manila Union of Cooperatives-De la Salle Credit Cooperative will be sponsoring a seminar entitled, **"Cooperative Governance for National Development"** on October 22, 2004 to be held at the Waldo Perfecto Seminar Room.

More than 150 participants are expected to attend the whole day seminar composed of officers from the different cooperatives in Manila as well as Lasallian faculty and students. The topics to be discussed are regulations, taxation and cooperative governance for national development.

To promote social awareness within De La Salle University, COSCA and its partners will also organize a 4-day photo-exhibit to be held at the Yuchengco Lobby starting October 19-22, 2004. The photo exhibit will showcase the best practices of two cooperatives in Manila, namely: (1) De La Salle Credit Cooperative; and (2) Paco Soriano Pandacan Development Cooperative. The organizers will also promote the basic concepts of cooperatives as a tool for national development. As such, the definition and basic principles of cooperatives will be included in the photo-exhibit to promote cooperative awareness especially to the Lasallian faculty and students.

# Biodiversity: *The Wealth of Life, The Source of Life*

Janalezza Morvenna A. Esteban

COSCA partnered with Haribon Foundation and the Student Council last June 21-25, 2004 in celebration of Environment Week. This year, the organizers adopted the theme ***Biodiversity: The Wealth of Life, The Source of Life***. The theme reminds the Lasallian community of the significance of the Earth's biodiversity, and how this is the wealth and source of life for all organisms. Hence the organizers featured a one-week photo-exhibit at the Central Plaza, organized a forum on the State of Philippine Environment and a film showing about Rain Forestation. They also sponsored a tree planting activity in Montalban, Rizal.

More than 250 Lasallian faculty and students attended the *Forum on the State of Philippine Biodiversity* last June 21, 2004 held at the Yuchengco seminar rooms 407-409. Ms. Pilar Saldajeno of the Haribon Foundation gave a 30-minute power point presentation on the State of Philippine Biodiversity. *What exactly is biodiversity?* Haribon Foundation, in its instructional CD *Teaching Philippine Terrestrial Biodiversity*, defines biodiversity as the wealth of all life on earth. The word itself is composed of two root words: Bio (*life*) and diversity (*variety*). It is also the variety of living organisms on earth and the habitat they are part of.

After presenting an overview of the urgency of biodiversity and ecosystem protection, the audience asked about the importance of conservation to the Philippine economy. Ms. Saldajeno pointed out the principles of interconnectivity and interdependence, and how touching one part of the ecosystem has an effect on the entire web of life. Ultimately, conserving and protecting living organisms in the Philippines now will be beneficial for the economy today and in the future. Professor Virginia Evasco of the Biology Department affirmed this statement and told the audience that as members of the Academe, students also have a special role in popularizing the importance of biodiversity conservation. They can do this through information and education campaigns, through their wide network of friends and organizations.

A film showing about the "*miracle of one person caring for the world*" was held last June 22 at the Waldo Perfecto Seminar Room attended by more than 150 students and June 25 at the Ariston Estrada Seminar Room involving 40 biology students. "*The Man Who Planted Trees*" is an animated modern-day fable about the dedication of Elzard Bouffier, a French widower farmer who dreamed of seeing a barren land brought to life by trees. He plants 100 acorns each day and restores the barren landscape of his hometown into a forest paradise teeming with life. The film is an inspiring testament of the blessings that humans receive if they treat Nature with respect and honor. During environment week, the film is a reminder that each person's efforts make a big difference, especially in the task of caring for the environment. The discussion about "Rainforestation" efforts in Leyte localizes the active role Filipinos have in biodiversity conservation.



A celebration of modern day environmental heroes and advocates was held at the Central Plaza on June 23. The Environmental Biology classes of Prof. Virgie Evasco and Dr. Carandang of the College of Science were present among the audience. The DLSU Jazz dance troupe opened the celebration, with a creative dance interpretation of Enya's *Book of Days*. Organizations and individuals who advocate environment-friendly alternative lifestyles were featured, and foremost were *Earth Haven* and the *Fire Fly Brigade*. *EarthHaven* encouraged the young people to help the environment by taking care of themselves: a life free from junk food ("*No to fastfood, chips and softdrinks*"), minimalist living ("*Cut back on harmful aerosols and chemicals for your body!*") and a oneness with nature ("*Enjoy the trees! Meditate!*") was discussed. The Fire Fly Brigade shared their fulfilling moments biking along Metro Manila's streets. They invited the audience to join their crusade against air pollution by biking instead of driving combustion vehicles like cars.



The Student Council actively took part in the celebration as well. They sponsored a photo exhibit and a debate on environmental militancy.

A tree-planting activity on June 24 concretizes the commitment of the DLSU Manila community in taking environmental conservation to the next level (*see related article*.)

In sum, COSCA, SC and Haribon Foundation's Environment Week celebration heralded Biodiversity as the wealth and source of life here on earth. Through its various activities, the meaning of biodiversity was more creatively made relevant to the Lasallian community.



# Lasallians Participate in Tree Planting

Determined to show their concern for the environment, 120 Lasallian students, members of the Outdoor Club, COSCA staff and volunteers planted 500 mahogany seedlings last June 24, 2004 held at Sitio Kayrupa, Barangay San Rafael in Montalban, Rizal. The tree planting activity was actually part of a weeklong celebration concerning the Environment sponsored by COSCA and Student Council of the De La Salle University-Manila in partnership with HARIBON Foundation from June 21-25, 2004 with a theme: **"Biodiversity: The Wealth of Life, A Source of Life"**

As early as 7:30 in the morning, Dean Carmelita Pabiton of the Student Personnel Services (SPS) led the group from the South Gate of the De La University up to Sitio Kayrupa, Barangay San Rafael in Montalban where they traveled 2 and half hours to reach the area. After a short break, Councilor Serafin Garibay started the opening prayer to be followed by Barangay Captain Salvador Cruz who welcomed the participants. Mr. Bhang de la Cruz, a community leader gave his message of solidarity and thanked the Lasallian delegates for choosing their area for the tree planting activity.

In behalf of the De La Salle University, Dean Carmelita Pabiton expressed her deep solidarity with the community. She was glad that the Lasallian students were actively involved in environmental protection projects. She is hoping that environmental efforts like tree planting will be sustained in the long run in order to create a development impact in the community.

Mr. Dodgie Quitangon and Ms. Gaily Villanueva of COSCA gave a brief orientation to the participants on how to plant a tree properly using a one-page handout as a guide. The participants were asked to remove the bottom of the black plastic bag before planting the mahogany seedlings. They were also asked to bring their hand shovels. Thereafter, the students were guided to the planting site by the COSCA staff in coordination with the community members. Except for the Outdoor Club members who crossed the river by foot, most participants have crossed the river via small *bangka* where they paid Php 10 each for the services rendered (back and forth).

The participants found more than 500 holes in the planting site about 8-10 inches deep and bearing a distance of 2 x 3 per hole. Most participants were able to plant at least 2 seedlings. After tree planting, the participants went back to the community to take their lunch.



*Dean Carmelita Pabiton during the Tree Planting activity in Montalban, Rizal*

At around 1:30 p.m., Mr. Mario Antonio V.M. Reyes (a.k.a. Da Da Ac. Shiveshananda Avt), a Taichi and Yoga Instructor from *Earth Haven* gave practical input on Eco-Spirituality. He taught a simple meditation exercise starting from personal to ecological awareness. He also shared to the audience the different types of hand gestures and asked some student volunteers to join him as he demonstrates a prayer dance to the group.

Ms. Gaily Villanueva and Mr. Reyes awarded the Certificate of Participation to the participants. Picture-taking followed suit.

Through COSCA team leaders, Mr. Dodgie Quitangon asked the participants to donate money for the purchase of indigenous seedlings along with their farm tools to be used by the next batch of Lasallians. They were able to collect Php 1,160.00 for nursery development, which involves the active participation of the community members as caretakers and as development partners of COSCA.

COSCA intends to sustain its tree planting activity in partnership with the Local Government Unit of Montalban for the next 2-3 years. COSCA will be supporting the Montalban Watershed Protection Program aimed at reviving Wawa Dam as a supplementary water source to La Mesa and Angat Dams, which will benefit more than 10 million water consumers in Metro Manila, San Mateo and Montalban, Rizal.



According to Engr. Jun Santos, the Montalban Watershed Protection Program and the revival of the Wawa Dam will help solve the impending water crisis in the light of the El Nino phenomenon and the growing population. The LGU of Montalban submitted a program proposal to the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) for approval. They welcome the support of the civil society groups and the Academe particularly the De La Salle University for the development of their Watershed Protection Program, of which tree planting is a vital component while awaiting the approval of their program proposal. *DLQ*



# COSCA and Partners Observe IP Week

Gregorio L. Quitangon

COSCA in partnership with the Student Council (SC) of the De La Salle University-Manila and the Kabataan Para sa Tribung Pilipino (KATRIBU) celebrated Indigenous Peoples Week from August 9-13, 2004 held at the Central Plaza, De La Salle University. The objective of the five-day activity is to increase the level of social awareness of the Lasallian Family particularly its faculty and students on the problems and issues of indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

Bearing the theme, "*SALUGPUNGAN Para sa Kultura at Kaakuhan*," the organizers staged a weeklong photo-exhibit, 2 fora and film showing on the problems and issues of the indigenous peoples in the country. "*SALUGPUNGAN*" is a mangyan word calling for unity. In the light of the IP week celebration, it means to be in solidarity with the IPs in asserting their self-determination and cultural identity.

More than 100 Lasallian students attended the Forum on the State of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines last August 9, 2004 held at the Pablo Nicolas Auditorium. According to Mr. Rino Bersalona, Mindanao Area Coordinator of the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), the term **Indigenous Peoples/Communities** refer to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription of others who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory. They have occupied, possessed and utilized such territories under claims and ownership since time immemorial. They share common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinct cultural traits. Historically, the IPs are differentiated from a majority of Filipinos given their resistance to political, social, cultural, inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures.

In the Philippines, there are 110 Ethnolinguistic groups residing in communities classified as "public domain" with an estimated population of 10-12 million. Basically, the IPs are classified into different groups such as the *Negrito*, *Cordillera*, *Mangyan*, *Lumad*, *Islamic peoples* and *other island groups*. They can be found in the different provinces of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (see pictures).

*"When one speaks of indigenous people, it is not so much about their beautiful story as peace-loving communities bound to Mother Nature and Father Spirit of the Universe; nor their talents and skills and accomplishments. For the term indigenous people has been synonymous to oppression, exploitation, discrimination and poverty. They, whose ancestors were once the proud rulers of this land, are now the scum of the earth, the so-called poorest of the poor in the Philippines."*

Atty. Evelyn S. Dunuan  
Asian Dev't. Bank  
October 1, 2001

The state of IPs in the Philippines is critical mainly due to development aggression, oppressive government policies, abject poverty and sub-standard living conditions, human rights violation and ecological degradation.

## Cordillera People



*Ifugao Kankana-ey;  
Ibaloi; Kalanguya;  
Kalinga; Tingguian, et al.*

## Islamic People



*Sama Dilaut, Sama Jengeng,  
Badjao, Molbog, Jama Mapun,  
Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug,  
Yakun, Sangil, Samal, Kaagan*

## Negrito People



*Aeta, Agta, Agay, Ata, Ati,  
Dumagat, Remontado,  
Ebukid, Sambal, Mamanwa,  
Umayamnon*

## Lumad Tribe



## Mangyan Tribe



*Hanunuo; Buhid; Tadyawan;  
Iraya; Gubatnun; Alangan;  
Tau-Buhid*

## Other Island Groups



*Tagbanwa Peoples; Batak; Ati &  
Pala'wan*

*Higaonon, Manobo,  
Bagobo, B'laan, Mandaya,  
T'boli, Mansaka, Teduray,  
Subanen,  
Manguanguanon,  
Mamanwan. others.*

With the advent of Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Right Act, it provided the legal framework that recognizes, protects and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples over their ancestral lands/domains.

In 1997, the government created the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) with the mandate to protect and promote the interest and well being of the IPs with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions and institutions. It shall serve as the primary government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of pertinent and appropriate policies, plans and programs to carry out the policies set forth in the IPRA.

According to the speaker, the NCIP has not yet been able to live up to the expectations and inspirations of IPs regarding the full implementation of IPRA owing to insufficient funds, bureaucratic hitches, delayed program implementation which include NCIP's own inexperience in program development and management. It has yet to consolidate its specific role and leadership in the promotion of IP rights within the framework of the Administration and hence, should be able to establish itself firmly as the lead agency in protecting and promoting indigenous rights.

Concerning the status of IPRA, the intent and spirit have yet to be incorporated into current jurisprudence and administrative policy development. The protection of indigenous rights may be hampered, however, by the conflict of laws between the 1995 Mining Act and IPRA. Nevertheless, there are on-going efforts among government agencies such as the DENR, DAR and NCIP to harmonize IPRA with other government laws and policies.

Towards the end of the forum, Mr. Bersalona reiterated that the struggle of the IP continues as they strive to assert their ancestral domain rights, while ensuring the implementation of an integrated area management plans guided by the principle of self-determination which include political, socio-cultural, economic & ecological enhancement.

The Relsfor and Katribu Forum held at the Pablo Nicolas Auditorium last August 12, 2004 provided a venue for the Lasallian students to share their research work and field experiences in Barangay Daraitan, Tanay, Rizal. The presentation of the students revolved around the issues of marginalization and worsening conditions of the indigenous people due to the construction of Laiban dams, the unabated illegal logging and mining operations as a result of capitalists incursion in ancestral lands. Based on their research, many IP families were displaced from their lands without food, shelter and means of livelihood. Human rights violations were rampant such as the death of some tribal leaders involving military. Some IPs were forced to join the Civilians Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) to protect their environment and ancestral lands against illegal encroachers.

To cap the IP week celebration, the partners gathered together for the *Solidarity Night* last August 13 held at the HRD Staff Lounge. Hosted by Mr. Francis Angeles of the Student Council, the La Salle Dance Company-Street led the opening number. Thereafter, solidarity messages from SPS Dean Carmelita Pabiton and COSCA Director "Lou" Melegrito were read aloud by Ms. Gaily Villanueva and Mr. Dodge Quitangon after each partner has rendered a special number. Mr. John Turalba of the Filipino Department, Mr. Jimmy Borromeo of KATRIBU, Mr. Roman Cruz of the Cultural Arts Office and SC President Ms. Jillian Sze personally delivered their messages of solidarity to the group.

The SC, COSCA and Relsfor students donated rice, canned goods, mineral water and used clothings to the KATRIBU representatives to support the latter's SANDUGO Festival attended by some 200 IP leaders last August 14-15, 2004 held at the Quezon City Memorial Circle.



Forum on the State of IPs in the Philippines  
By Mr. Rino Bersalona of PAFID



Photo-Exhibit  
highlighting the  
problems and  
issues of IPs  
vis-à-vis  
development  
interventions by  
COSCA partners

Solidarity Night



La Salle Dance  
Company - Street



# *May Bukas Ka Bata!*

## The Millenium Development Goals, Educators and Business

Janalezza Morvenna A. Esteban

It was a meeting of minds, a convergence of ideals, and an assemblage of commitments. The 2004 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Week brought together prominent leaders of the business community, government, civil society and the academe in a conference that would discuss the global compact for a most important actor in the world today: the YOUTH.

With the theme "*May Bukas Ka Bata*," the 2004 CSR Week, celebrated annually by the Philippine business community heralding its efforts in the field of social responsibility, focused its attention on gearing programs benefiting the Filipino youth. CSR Week also celebrates a brighter future for the Philippines' youth by designing business and society programs in accordance with the Millenium Development Goals.

This year, the Millenium Development Goals is placed as the centerpiece of corporate forum during CSR Week. The goals are part of the 2000 *Millenium Declaration*, signed by 189 heads of state in September 2000. It is a global commitment and one of the most significant United Nations documents of recent time. It offers a common and integrated vision on how to tackle some of the major challenges facing the world.

The declaration has resulted in eight Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on reducing poverty, improving the quality of peoples' lives, ensuring environmental sustainability, and building partnerships to ensure that globalization becomes a more positive force for all the world's people. Specific targets and indicators are set for each of the goals, to be achieved by 2015 (*see boxes beside this article*). Some of them have very direct implications for business, others relate more broadly to the enabling framework and policy environment in which most companies operate. All of them are relevant for the private sector in today's inter-dependent global economy.

During the July 9, 2004 plenary talk, representatives from the business community, the national government, the UNDP, the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), and civil society gave their insights on how each of the Millennium Development Goals will contribute to a brighter future for the Filipino youth. Members of the country's premier universities were also present in the gathering.

Deborah Landey, the United Nations Representative in the Philippines, provided a perspective and the global context of the MDGs. She congratulated the Philippines for just coming out of an election. With the new leadership at the helm, Ms. Landey wished the nation all the best especially in delivering the targets of the MDGs in the Philippine context.

### The Millenium Development Goals Philippine Targets

#### Goal 1

#### Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

1. Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990-2015
2. Halve the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption and halve the proportion of underweight children
3. Halve the proportion of people with no access to safe drinking water or those who cannot afford it by 2015

#### Goal 2

#### Achieve Universal Primary Education

4. Achieve universal access to primary education by 2015

#### Goal 3

#### Promote Gender Equality

5. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and all levels of education not later than 2015

#### Goal 4

#### Reduce Child Mortality

6. Reduce under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015

#### Goal 5

#### Improved Women's Reproductive Health

7. Reduce maternal mortality rate by three-quarters by 2015 (half by 2000, half by 2015)
8. Increase access to basic reproductive health services to 100% by 2015

#### Goal 6

#### Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

9. Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015
10. Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

... *May Bukas Ka Bata!*

Sec. Robert Neri of the National Economic Development Authority presented the current action plans of the national government for the delivery of the MDGs. He showed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Ten Point Agenda, and emphasized the importance of cooperation among business and civil society.

Peter Brew of the Prince of Wales (IBLF) reaffirmed this claim by Sec. Neri. He enjoined the audience to actively take part of making the MDGs happen, as it is no small task if each would go about his own way. He mentioned that civil society groups should work together more, and join the lead of Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a social development foundation that is continually linking business, local government, civil society and the academe.



*Eradicating poverty*

### **The Millenium Development Goals Philippine Targets**

#### **Goal 7 Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

11. Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005, to reverse loss of environmental resources by 2015
12. By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

#### **Goal 8 Develop A Global Partnership for Development**

13. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system; Include a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally
14. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debts sustainable in the long-term

The business community has started a consensus group that would contextualize the MDGs in their respective programs. The *Square Tables* group as they call it, was designed to identify gaps that hinder the achievement of the goals on time as well as craft specific action points for business involvement and investment. To facilitate the discourse, the *Square Tables* proposed and decided to cluster tie MDGs into four major areas of focus: Poverty, Education, Health and Environment. The forum was quick to note that these are also the four major themes where Philippine business was heavily investing. It was also noted that the Filipino youth is affected by all four themes identified.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Chairman of the Philippines Chamber of Commerce and Industry, gave the business response on poverty. He mentioned that roughly 1 of every 8 Filipinos cannot earn enough to meet the daily food requirements, which is just about P21.00 or barely \$ 0.37. This can only buy a kilo of rice and a few pieces of *tuyo*. Part of business goals is providing enough opportunities for the less fortunate, and cutting by half the number of Filipino families subsisting on less than a hundred pesos a day by 2015. The campaign against poverty includes the fight against malnutrition. Private enterprises commit to help the government in drafting a Comprehensive Nutrition Plan that includes nutrition education in community health centers and feeding programs in communities.

Guillermo Luz of the Makati Business Club linked Mr. Ortiz-Luis's report to business's direct involvement in improving schools around the country. Physical facility improvement such as Coca-Cola Foundation's *Little Red Schoolhouse* Project has built more than 50 multigrade schoolhouses in some of the country's remotes barangays. Programs that engage active reading involvement of the youth is Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation's (supported by the Petron Foundation) main thrust, and the Knowledge Channel Foundation is linking more public school to the rest of the world through cable television. Part of these foundations' capability building program is training public school teachers in more competent methods of teaching.

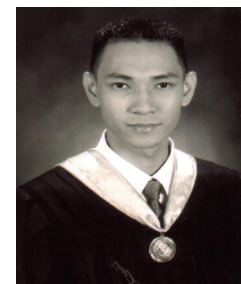
Donald Dee (Member, Board of Governors of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines) highlighted the importance of responsible parenthood in taking care of the nation's health and population. Howard Belton of Unilever Philippines stressed the importance of community participation in caring for the environment. He pointed out the success of Unilever environment projects because of the cooperation of top level management, employees and neighboring communities. He also stressed the important role of the youth in disseminating information about active environmental advocacy, citing the active young employees of Unilever as a benchmark of involvement.

All five speakers stressed that the Millenium Development Goals have a very important role in shaping the future of the youth. With the immense influence business and civil society has over matters of national concern, the youth definitely has a brighter future ahead if all eight goals can be reached on target.

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# Pakikibaka sa Eleksiyon: The NAMFREL Experience



Saint Anthony Tiu, Co-Chairperson, NAMFREL Manila

*"All it takes for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing."*

As early as April of 2003, I browsed through a certain advertisement calling all youth to volunteer. This was the exact statement:

## Youth Urgently Needed



To serve and lead our country, our people.  
To dedicate heart, mind and spirit to the cause of honest elections, honest government.  
We worked hard for a new beginning at the risk of our lives.  
We must work even harder, together, to build our future.  
It is our right and our responsibility.  
Together, the youth are strong and productive.  
Together, we can make democracy work in our country.  
Join NAMFREL – a cause greater than that of any candidate or party.

During that time, I was drafting my program of action as the incoming Student Council President. It came to my mind of volunteering not just for myself but also, the entire Lasallian student body to prove that Lasallians can effect meaningful change specifically, on the way politics and elections are being run in the country.

A month later, I read through another advertisement calling the people to help out in dissolving the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). I was so alarmed because NAMFREL is being dissolved without me being able to implement my program of action. But I was wrong because it was in helping NAMFREL that you contribute in its dissolution. This was the exact advertisement:

## Help Dissolve NAMFREL

NAMFREL was formed to help establish fair and honest elections in our country. With roots that can be traced back to as early as 1957, NAMFREL's continued presence here today clearly indicates that we have not yet met our objectives. As long as there exists a possible threat to our democratic system, NAMFREL cannot and will not rest.

Which is why we are now urging you to put NAMFREL out of business. If you do your part in protecting the sanctity of the ballot today, there might no longer be a need to defend your right to be heard tomorrow. No one will try to buy, steal or destroy your vote. Instead, you'll have the freedom to make your own choices. And NAMFREL's job will finally be done.

I was so encouraged by this advertisement to go all out in helping NAMFREL in its cause. I was appointed Co-Chairperson of Manila city and to spearhead the Operation Quick Count 2004 Manila. The experience was very challenging because I have to coordinate to a lot of people – students, faculty, administration, parents, alumni, community associations, etc. – just to promote the cause of NAMFREL. But the hardship was nothing as compared to the effect that I, together with the other volunteers, can do for the country.

A lot of preparations were required on my part to ensure that every aspect of our operation runs effectively and efficiently. I organized human resources training, courier and transportation strategies, safety and security measures, system's quick count operation, etc. This was my way of lighting my candle to help those people in the darkness. It was also my way of sharing the light of my candle to light other people's candles.

I conducted 5 different sets of Volunteer's Training. I considered these training courses very effective because the audience participation was sustained throughout the module since they were supplied with real life stories. I made the module so informative that excited volunteers would comprehensively know what they have to do and what are required of them during their volunteering period.

May 10 came and I woke up very early, nervous and excited – nervous about our operation and excited because it was my first time to vote. I went to ABS-CBN studio 17 as early as 6:30 to catch up with my interview with the show Breakfast. I was interviewed about NAMFREL's operation and preparedness. After the show, I hurried up to my precinct in Cecilio Apostol Elementary School to exercise my right of suffrage. I was very proud going out of the precinct because I can tell the whole wide world that I am a responsible citizen of the land for being able to participate in its democratic electoral process. I went straight to La Salle to do the last minute things. I briefed the Voting Center Managers before they meet with their volunteers.

At exactly 12 noon, I oriented the volunteers and gave them the last minute reminders. I could see in their faces the excitement as if they were to march on in their respective battlefields. At exactly 1:30 PM, the volunteers went to their assigned voting centers. I can't help but to feel proud to be a true Lasallian – seeing fellow Lasallians, wearing the official shirt, hurrying to their destinations to make a difference in other people's lives by helping in the conduct of clean, honest and orderly elections. Truly, Lasallians are resources for the Church and nation.

At 4:00 PM, I traveled around the 15 voting centers where we deployed Lasallian volunteers. I asked each Voting Center Managers (VCM) to report to me all incidents that had happened for the past few hours. There, I heard stories of harassment of our volunteers and other stories of fraud and disenfranchisement of the voters. I can't help but feel sad about the situation. But every time I toured each precinct to look upon the condition of the volunteers, I can't help but feel proud that despite the hardship that they were encountering, they were doing their very best to accomplish their missions.

The entire process of the precinct level tabulation was too long and tedious. It took more than 15 hours before we received the first election return (ER) in the tabulation center. Most volunteers were awake for almost 15 hours. The last VCM who came in school arrived at 7:00 AM. The experience was tiring. I went around asking volunteers and many of them have said that the entire process was tiring yet it was fulfilling. They felt they were heroes of the land. I agreed with them because truly, they served the country at its most crucial time. It proved that Lasallians knew their responsibilities to the nation and they were not apathetic. This showed Lasallians were not merely students whose concerns are their studies and grades alone.



***"To dream the impossible dream, to reach the unreachable sky..."***

### **A Call to Change the Character of Politics and Create Fertile Ground for True Reforms**

In 1997, Congress approved Republic Act 8436 (Election Automation Law of 1997) to reform the manual system used in this country over the past 50 years. The manual system has been characterized by cheating, *dagdag-bawas*, long and tedious process of counting and extreme pressure on the teachers in the appreciation of votes. Furthermore, that system has been beset with violence that has caused the deaths of many people.

Presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada were both determined and committed to full automation nationwide and its implementation in ARMM in 1996 and 1998 demonstrated the potential of automation by having reduced the timeframe and violence inherent in the manual process, and thereby raising the integrity and credibility of the electoral results.

RA 8436 requires that automation be implemented nationwide starting in the 1998 elections. However, the Commission on Elections did not implement automation in the 1998 presidential elections and in the 2001 general elections. It is therefore imperative that full automation be executed nationwide in the May 2004 elections for we cannot see any positive effect in leaving 80% of the country with the manual process that has been plagued by cheating and because the implementation of the law is now six years overdue.

The 2004 elections were the most crucial elections in the history of the Philippines and the results must reflect the true will of the people for no economic growth can take place unless there is first political stability.

### **A Call to the President**

To the President, through full automation, you will leave behind a historic legacy to the nation, and this is Your Excellency's appointment with history. Our people will be eternally grateful that when called upon by the nation, you had the courage, strength and determination to *"change the character of our politics, in order to create fertile ground for true reforms."*

With such an election, our people and the candidates (both winners and losers) will be able to accept the results – *vox populi, vox Dei* – such that our people will rally behind the newly-elected President, Vice President and Congress to promote economic growth, address the issues of poverty and job creation, and lay the foundation for good governance and the creation of new politics.

In the midst of widespread cynicism among our people, the De La Salle University – Manila students and the Filipino people will come together to answer the challenge of Ninoy Aquino's question, *"Is the Filipino worth dying for?"* With a resounding *"YES!"* Together, we will restore faith in the Filipino and hope in the future of the Philippines. Together, we will act so that we can make a difference for Philippine democracy.

***Patuloy kaming makikibaka para sa demokrasya ng bayan!***

# CWTS Students in Action: *Teaching Kids, Touching Lives*

Armen Ria Toquero

For Vincent Ngo, a Physics major in his sophomore year, Saturday is not a time for nursing a bad hangover after gimmick night.

Vincent wakes up at 6:00 in the morning so that he can be at Camarin, Caloocan by 9:00 am. There, he teaches five grade six pupils until 12:30 in the afternoon.

*"I first read and study their assignments, then I help them with the lesson and guide them in completing their homework. I also give them quizzes to check if they understand the lesson. If someone cannot catch up, I turn him over to my co-tutor, Dennis, who handles one-on-one sessions."*

Vincent is only one of the 163 DLSU students involved in a tutorial program in the area. Since January 2003, students enrolled in the Community Service Phase (C2) of the Civic Welfare Training Service (CWTS) have been teaching elementary and high school kids in the *barangay* every Saturday, from 9 am to 12 noon. The Tutorial Program is implemented by COSCA in partnership with the *Nagkakaisang Tinig ng Kamarin* (KATINIGKA), a people's organization (PO) that seeks to enhance the quality of life of the residents of Camarin. The program in Camarin is just one of the several education-related CWTS endeavors that COSCA supervises, in partnership with different POs and non-government organizations (NGOs).



Vincent on his way to a tutorial session in Camarin



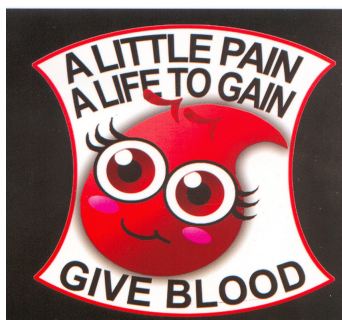
KATINIGKA's Literacy Training Service Coordinator Aileen Villotes relates that running a tutorial program can be difficult, especially when tutors are late or absent. *"The parents of the tutees get upset when the tutors are late or absent because they prepare their children early for the tutorial session."*

Despite the cases of absentees and latecomers, Aileen stresses that the children of Camarin have truly benefited from the program. *"Their parents are very grateful as their children now have better study habits. Their grades in school have also improved,"* Ms. Villotes added.

While the children of Camarin seem to be benefiting from the Tutorial Program, DLSU students have learned a few lessons of their own. For Vincent, his experience in Camarin has opened his eyes to the poor state of education in the public school system today. According to Vincent, *"Students do not have their own books and there are not enough teachers. Some subjects are not even taught every week. My pupils who are grade six students still have difficulty in multiplication and division when they should be tackling basic algebra by now."* Nonetheless, it gives him pleasure that his pupils seem to be performing better at school. Vincent is willing to volunteer again as a tutor in the near future given free time and opportunity.

Saturdays have indeed become more meaningful for CWTS students deployed in Camarin and their wards. Through the Tutorial Program, the CWTS students are continuing the efforts of the University's founder, St. John Baptist De La Salle, of providing quality education to underprivileged children. For the young children whose lives they have touched, they are the tireless *"Ates"* and *"Kuyas"* who are helping them discover their potentials.





# SALAMAT SA HANDOG MONG Dugo at Buhay

Ervin Pucio

COSCA, together with the National Voluntary Blood Services Program (NVBSP) of the Department of Health, sponsored once again a successful Blood Donation activity last August 4-5, 2004 held at the Yuchengco Lobby in De La Salle University – Manila.

Dubbed as **"Salamat sa Handog Mong Dugo at Buhay"**, 198 donors composed of Lasallian students, faculty, staff, and alumni signed up to donate their blood and save lives. Before the actual blood letting activity, donors were asked to fill up a Donor's Form. A physician examined their weight, blood pressure, blood type and hemoglobin level to determine whether they were qualified or not. After the screening procedures, a total of 148 individuals were able to qualify.



*Blood Donation Recruitment Week  
Julv 26-30. 2004*

Qualified donors were then asked to lie down on a bed while the skilled medical technicians administered the bloodletting procedures. The amount of blood to be collected would depend on the weight of the donor but never to exceed 450 ml. A total of 148 bags of blood were collected from the donors who were told to rest for a while in order to help their bodies regained strength. They were given simple snacks and some freebies.

*Bro. Armin Luistro  
donated blood  
last August 5, 2004*



## Blood Trivia

### WILLIAM HARVEY (1578-1657)

THE ENGLISH physician William Harvey was the first scientist to publish a full description of the way **blood** moves around the body. He found that it is a two-part process. First, blood flows from the heart to the **lungs** and back to the **heart** (the lesser circulation). Second, blood is supplied to the whole body, except the lungs, before returning to the heart (the full circulation). The Arab doctor Ibn Al-Nafis (1205-88) already knew how blood circulates through the lungs, but his work was not known in Europe.

Harvey became court physician to both King James I and King Charles I. King Charles allowed Harvey to carry out research on deer in royal parks.



*Ms. Gaily  
Villanueva posing  
with the  
COSCAvolunteers*



In 1628, William Harvey became the first physician to discover that blood circulates around the body. Richard Lower, using animals as subjects, carried out the first successful blood transfusion in 1665. When human blood transfusions started, physicians couldn't understand why their human recipients kept dying. It wasn't until 1900 when Karl Landsteiner of Vienna discovered that blood comes in four different groups. He got the Nobel Prize for his discovery.

# Are you *IN* or *OUT*?

Are you **In** or **Out**? This is basically the question COSCA Coordinators will ask those people who wish to be involved in social action work with COSCA.

As the social development arm of the De La Salle University–Manila, COSCA is mandated to mainstream social development concerns into the life and work of the university by facilitating social development initiatives to the members of the DLSU-Manila community. This is animated through COSCA's various programs such as Curriculum Integration, Institutional Advocacy, Volunteer Formation and Community Development.

In order to efficiently facilitate the various activities, COSCA provides the following general guidelines to the DLSU community in the conduct of social development related activities within and outside the University. These guidelines were culled from COSCA and its attached unit's manual of operations. Through these policies, COSCA will be able to effectively coordinate and direct all the community service related activities of the DLSU community to its partner communities and organizations

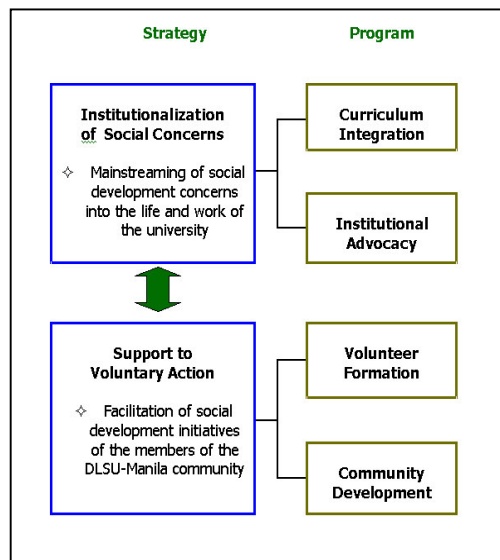
## On Exposure and Community Service of Students (under the Curriculum Integration Program)

### Requirements

- ❖ Letter of Permission signed by the parents or guardians of students
- ❖ Letter to be submitted before the exposure/community service activity

### Process

- ⇒ Orientation of students on the program, partner organization, community/center
- ⇒ Submission of completed letter of permission by students
- ⇒ Actual exposure/community service
- ⇒ Processing of experiences
- ⇒ Submission of required documents by students and other parties involved



## On Internally Initiated Off-Campus Activities or Projects (e.g. Summer Immersion Program, Mobilizations, Conferences, Fora, etc.)

### Requirements

- ❖ Approval of COSCA Director or the DLSU President, EVP, or VPAR (if the image and integrity of the University would be affected by the activity / project)
- ❖ Approval of units involved (if applicable)
- ❖ Letter of Permission signed by the parents or guardians of students participating in the activity

### Process

- ⇒ Staff/unit involved informs the Director of the off-campus activity and/or project
- ⇒ Director approves the activity/project
- ⇒ Consultation with and approval of DLSU administrators and/or units involved (if applicable)
- ⇒ Signing of MOU among the parties involved (if applicable)
- ⇒ Implementation of activity/project
- ⇒ Submission of necessary documents (e.g. financial report, terminal evaluation report, etc.)

## On Community-Based Activities and/or Projects Initiated by Administrators, Colleges, DLSU Units, Faculty Members, and Student Organizations

### Requirements

- ❖ Formal letter to COSCA Director requesting for coordination with COSCA partner organizations and/or communities
- ❖ Letter should indicate objective and nature of activity, target date, tentative work plan and target outputs, and brief description of participants
- ❖ Letter should be signed by the faculty-in-charge or faculty adviser and noted by their supervisors (e.g. Chairperson of the Department, Dean)
- ❖ Letters of permission signed by parents or guardians of students

### Process

- ⇒ Submit formal letter to COSCA 15 working days before the activity.
- ⇒ COSCA relays request to appropriate partner organization/community
- ⇒ Requesting party waits for response from the community
- ⇒ If response is positive, participating units/faculty/students undergo orientation
- ⇒ COSCA and the requesting unit/individual send letters to parents of students joining the activity. Signatories include COSCA Director, Faculty in-charge, and Faculty Supervisor

... Are you In or Out?

### On Establishing Strategic Partnerships with Development Organizations

#### Requirements

- ❖ Partners may belong to any of the following types of organization: Non-government organizations, Educational Institutions, Church or Church-Related Institutions, People's Organizations, Local Government Units
- ❖ Partners must uphold COSCA's development framework and principles; has extensive development work experience; have mechanisms and procedures to manage the program and activities.

#### Process

- ⇒ COSCA unit identifies and contacts potential partner organization
- ⇒ COSCA initiates exploratory meeting and/or rapport-building with potential partner
- ⇒ COSCA visits Office and area(s) of potential partner to assess their needs and capabilities
- ⇒ If potential partner passes criteria, COSCA calls for a meeting to discuss working arrangements
- ⇒ Signing of MOUs
- ⇒ Implementation of activities/MOU
- ⇒ Documentation of learning

### On Establishing Tactical Alliances for Issue Advocacy

#### Requirements

- ❖ Formal letter of potential partner to COSCA Director requesting support for issue advocacy
- ❖ Approval of COSCA Director. Approval will depend on the consistency of the stand of the potential partner on a particular issue with COSCA's development framework and principles; willingness of potential partner to engage in a mutually beneficial and transparent partnership and if deemed necessary, approval of the Multi-Sectoral Committee on Advocacy (MSCA) once the committee has been fully operationalize.

#### Process

- ⇒ Submission of formal letter to the Director by the potential partner
- ⇒ Director assigns Institutional Advocacy Coordinator to respond to the Communication
- ⇒ Institutional Advocacy Coordinator recommends possible response/move
- ⇒ Director approves recommendation
- ⇒ MSCA approves the recommendation (if the image and integrity of the University would be affected by the response/action)
- ⇒ Information dissemination to the Lasallian community
- ⇒ Actual response
- ⇒ MSCA and/or COSCA evaluate the activity

#### References:

1. *Manual of Operation of COSCA*
2. *Operations Manual of the Different COSCA Programs*
3. *Informal interviews with COSCA Program Coordinators*

## Relief Operations for Flood Victims in San Fernando, Pampanga

*"This is one of the worst floods in living memory.... The flood of 1972 was purely an act of God...This time it appears that this was an act of negligence on the part of man."* – Sen. Gordon (PDI Sept. 1, 2004)

From the explanation of the local officials, there was a failure of the local authorities to dredge silted rivers that runs through Dagupan. This failure affected 1.6 million Filipinos, took 43 lives and wrought damaged to crops and property estimated at P1.3 billion. Until now, some of the areas in Central Luzon are still submerged in water and crying for assistance while awaiting for more aid from the government and the private sector.

It is in this backdrop that Mr. Joey Rosal, Community Development Coordinator and Ms. Gaily Villanueva, Volunteer Formation Coordinator of COSCA in coordination with the District Justice and Peace Commission (DJPC) spearheaded a relief operation in the flooded areas of San Fernando, Pampanga last September 19, 2004. The relief operation was successful because many benevolent donors have donated in kind such as rice, used clothing, noodles, candies, among others. There were COSCA staff and 17 Lasallian volunteers who supported the relief operation.

To meet the needs and ensure the daily subsistence of the flood survivors, the organizers would like to invite Lasallians to partake in this mission to be in solidarity with the poor by assisting survivors from this man-made catastrophe. Donations in kind could be dropped off at La Salle Provincialate, 343 Ortigas Ave., Mandaluyong City on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2004. Check donation should be made payable to De La Salle Brothers Inc. Receipts will be issued for cash donations.

For more information, please contact Yuri D. Cipriano at (02) 844.7832 loc. 3182 & 3172 or email: [djpc@mail.dasma.dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:djpc@mail.dasma.dlsu.edu.ph) or Mr. Joey Rosal of COSCA at tel. No. 523-41-43/email [rosalj@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:rosalj@dlsu.edu.ph)

# A Life Enriching Journey

Sharlette Go Yu, Relstri C36

The first part of our community service was held in the town chapel of 745 Singalong, Manila. I found myself face to face with fifteen pairs of young, eager eyes. They were all timid and tame but the shyness soon wore out and the opening prayer marked the beginning of what would be a pleasant but tiring session. Although everything conducted in the first visit was unforgettable, the memory really stuck to my head was when the children had their hands on the coloring materials and started creating their own masterpieces. I can't help but reminisce on my childhood days when I was only 6 years old. Funny how all children are one and the same regardless of color, belief and upbringing. We all carried the same dreams and emotions when we were children. We all loved to paint the image of our perfect family complete with the house underneath the brimming ray of the sun in the bluish sky. I felt an instant welling of sadness deep inside because I realized how imperfect this world can be and some people were unlucky enough to get stuck in the rut. My first visit changed my view on extending my hand to other people because truly not everyone gets to be as fortunate as I am. Never in my life I have to line up for food or for any other purpose. Everything in my life has been served in a silver platter and I didn't even have to ask. These kids taught me how valuable life is and how thankful I should be to the Big Guy who has made it all possible. These kids offered me something not even my family or my school could ever give me, the chance to get to know myself through their life.

The second part of the community service was much more memorable for it was held just right outside Ms. Baby, the barangay facilitator's house. The town chapel was unavailable due to a wake so we had to conduct our activities right in the squatter's area. This visit made more impact on me because I was welcomed to their home and I am glad that I joined them. I have to admit I was wrong because despite the smallness of the house and the unpleasant odor coming from the garbage-filled creek, the participants had something not all wealthy people have. The children had the admiration and love of their family members. Their parents and some of their siblings remained at our activity site to watch them participate in the games and tutoring sessions. One grandma even stayed to assist her grandson and made sure he was able to experience the fun.



I cannot help but feel at a loss because more than those kids benefiting from me, I benefited from them. The community service generated a lot of firsts for me. It was my first time to be in a shanty area. My first time to ride a jeepney and be strangled by children wanting me to give them a horseback ride. My first time to be slapped in the face by a kid because she wanted me to remain by her side at all times. My first time to feel tired and stressed but happy at the same time. This was the first time I was called beautiful and it felt like pure innocence and sincerity. It was genuine admiration and after having been able to take extra steps toward Singalong, I felt beautiful.

The Relstri community service has instilled in me the objective of Christian Morality. If the first visit taught me to love myself, the second one taught me to extend that love to other people. Now I have wholly accepted who I am. I am able to accept other people into my life. I was surfing the internet one day when I read, "Let me help. Good friends see a need and then try to fill it. When they see a hurt they do what they can to heal it. Without being asked, they jump in and help out." Let me help is the three little words I implicitly uttered to these children when I went to Singalong and completed my service. And now that the hours of servitude were over, I have learned to continue uttering it for those who will still need me in the future.

With this life-enriching journey, there is a misconception between temporary satisfaction and lifetime fulfillment. What I really want in life is just what any child wishes for. I dream of a big house not a mansion but, big enough to shelter Jesus, my family and to fill it with lots of love, strength and joy. I want to have the food that nourishes the heart, mind and the soul. Something you can eat only once a day and you'll never go hungry again. I wish to have good education and the gift of wisdom that makes us continually grow through the years. I want a big heart, filled with love that does not choose nor point. A heart that gives without asking in return. A child who has selfless desires and thinks innocently. A child who forever believes there is God and never gets eaten by her fear. To be the kind of person who loves the poor and loves being poor. To be contented with what is in store for me and simply follows the will of my Father. This is the realization I have made and these are the things I ask from Jesus. Money is something, I cannot deny that fact. Yet money is not everything. It does not make the world go round. Love does.

*I wish to have good education and the gift of wisdom that makes us continually grow through the years. I want a big heart, filled with love that does not choose nor point. A heart that gives without asking in return. A child who has selfless desires and thinks innocently. A child who forever believes there is God and never gets eaten by her fear. To be the kind of person who loves the poor and loves being poor.*

... Editorial

Based on the LEDAC Reports, the Arroyo administration has identified the following reform programs as a concrete response to help the country survive from this murky situation:

Under the **Social Justice and Basic Needs Program**, the government identified five targets, to wit:

1. Livelihood (commitments to support an increase of 3 million entrepreneurs through microfinance (2004-2010) and the development of 2 million hectares of land for agribusiness)
2. Asset reform ("New Agrarian Land Reform" – need for farmland as collateral; Urban land reform – Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto and his team to study Phil urban situation; Ancestral domain reform) 70% of the P38 billion of Marcos wealth to be used for distribution to land reform beneficiaries; P8 billion for the human rights victims put in escrow until Congress passes human rights victim compensation bill.
3. Essential services (access to clean potable water of 200 MM barangays and 200 municipalities (2004-2010); power to 4,500 barangays; low-cost medicines ) – do not need legislation but may require funding support through PDAF
4. Protection of the vulnerable young (children, youth, women, people with disabilities, older persons)
5. Empowerment (KALAHI community organizations, town hall consultations or "Pulong Bayan", creation of the Malacanang Office of Constituency Affairs)

It has also identified Pro-Poor Legislative Proposals, namely: **(a)** Social justice through land tenure legislation (Agricultural Lands as Collateral Act, National Land Use Policy Act, Land Administration Reform Act (creating Land Administration and Management Authority to integrate, streamline and subsume functions and powers relegated to key agencies of the DENR and DOJ, and **(b)** Health sector legislative reform agenda (DOH) – Health Sector Reform Implementation Act, Template Bill on Hospital Corporatization, Bill Amending DOH-BFAD Regulatory Mandates.

Under the **Anti-Corruption through Good Governance**, it has identified three components of Anti-Corruption Campaign, which are: **(a)** Enforcement (Customs and BIR as showcases, Lifestyle checks, Law needed – Ombudsman like ICAC), **(b)** Systems (Frontline services, automation of elections, implementation of procurement law) GMA expects the Cabinet to work closely with Bishop-Businessmen's Conference to craft enforceable anti-corruption programs along **(1)** need for specially trained prosecutors and investigators, **(2)** involving all sectors at all levels to scrutinize projects, and **(3)** bidding of government-funded projects be made clear and available for public scrutiny, **(c)** Values (values education in schools, values seminars in institutions, Commission on Values)

Government re-engineering (GMA's top legislative priority) aims **(a)** to abolish function and agencies whose activities are no longer relevant and necessary, **(b)** to consolidate various functions that are duplicated, **(c)** to strengthen agencies that need additional resources (e.g., DepEd)

Under the **Economic Growth and Job Creation Program**, the 10-point agenda are: **(a)** Create 10 million jobs in six years, **(b)** Increase growth to a sustainable 7% or more up to 2010, **(c)** Bring poverty incidence from 34% to 17%, **(d)** Increase investment rate from 19% to 28% of GDP in 2 years, **(e)** Increase exports from \$38 B to \$50B in 2 years, **(f)** Develop 2 million hectares of agribusiness land, and **(g)** Develop and support 2 million entrepreneurs

Equally important are the economic policy imperatives of the Philippine government such as: **(a)** sustaining macroeconomic stability, **(b)** restructuring the financial sector, and **(c)** increasing investments, employment and exports.

According to the Leduc Report, to balance the budget, the government must address: **(1)** NAPOCOR issues through passage of Transco franchise bill and **(2)** issue of access to MERALCO'S distribution lines. Eight legislative measures were identified to reduce fiscal deficit, which are as follows:

- a. Gross Income Tax for corporations and self-employed persons (HB1470)
- b. Indexation of the excise taxes on sin products (HB 1558, HB 1591)
- c. Increase the excise taxes on petroleum products (HB 1323)
- d. Rationalize fiscal incentives (HB122, HB 271)
- e. General Tax Amnesty with submission of SAL (HB 552)
- f. Lateral Attrition System (HB 554)
- g. Franchise Tax on Telecommunications to replace VAT (HB 1560)
- h. Two-step increase in the VAT rate (HB 1468)

Related legislative agenda were also identified, such as the following:

- a. Amendments to Magna Carta for Public School Teachers (RA 4670)
- b. Amendments to Fair and Equitable Allocation of the DECs budget for Capital Outlay (RZ 7880 Roxas law)
- c. Removal of election duties from teachers
- d. Amendments of education provisions in Local Government Code of 1991

... Editorial

Through the government's reform program, the Philippine government is hoping to improve the country's bad condition. The leadership of President Arroyo bowed to exercise good governance. In one of her speeches she expressed that, *"to ensure that our gains are not dissipated through corruption, we must improve our moral standards. As we fertile ground for good governance based on social moral foundation and a philosophy of transparency and an ethic of effective implementation."* But she also admitted of the imperfections and inadequacies of her government. According to President Arroyo, the realization of her government's vision and targets largely depends on the support and cooperation of the different sectors of the society. She continues to appeal to the civil society, private sector and the different political groups to contribute in nation building, to partake in the rebuilding of our economy and to be vigilant in protecting our democracy.

Amidst the fiscal crisis, public sector and accountability have become critical elements in determining the over-all effectivity, efficiency and the ability of the government to ensure good governance. The challenge is to develop institutions and process that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens – especially the poor. The government has to strengthen its efforts to protect, especially the most vulnerable sector – the poor.

More than ever, concerned sectors of the society must participate in rebuilding our financial state. Managing the country's affairs is not just the responsibility of the government. It is both a responsibility of the citizens and the state. The contributions of other institutions and groups such as the academe, church, cooperatives, business groups and volunteer groups are very crucial.



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