



Joe and Arlyn Lamigo, CRWRC

Newsletter 0105

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Our Dear People of God:

Greetings from Manila! The Lord is good, praise His Holy name all the earth!

The first quarter of 2005 was very much meaningful to us here, I did the least traveling this quarter. We just crossed from a self imposed 6 months transition with regional responsibility to the first quarter of focus in the Philippines. Starting July 2004, my assignment moved from a broad range and high demand work of part-time Team Leader for Asia to a more in-depth and critical assignment of ushering the last 7 years of CRWRC in this field. CRWRC and our national partner organizations have this hope that we do not have to fund them after 2012, that they will have the capacity to sustain a flourishing ministry of serving the poor in this country. We will always remain as partners with them and together experience God's blessing in dynamic unity and mutuality. (Psalm 133)

Three events warmth our hearts this quarter. Camouflaged by the great Tsunami, was the disaster last December in the provinces of Quezon and Aurora when a series of three typhoons left 40,000 homeless, their source of income disrupted and many of their love ones lost in floods and landslide. ***More than 100 volunteers from the CRC Philippines brave dangerous terrain to bring in food packages to victims.*** The last food distribution was in February. We are working on a housing rehabilitation for at least 100 families. Fund generation is slow and low as people would rather give to the dramatic and huge tsunami disaster. We trust that the Lord sees the many homeless Filipinos as they sort out the pain, trauma, need for food, work and shelter. Please pray for them and the work of the National Diaconal Agency (NDA) of the CRC Philippines. We thank the Lord for the leadership of Eli Toribio of NDA-CRCP.

Business as a calling was celebrated by 3 Michigan based businessmen: Paul Holwerda with Lee Jagger and Michael Garette in Manila, as they share their success stories and explore opportunities for mentoring Filipino entrepreneurs gathered in the annual conference of the Evangelical Business People for Social Transformation (E-BEST). Together with CRWRC and PARTNERS Worldwide, these Filipino Christian business people are learning, working and serving together in the hope of transforming their communities through job creation and values formation. Pray for Jay Supetran our CRWRC staff who is acting General Secretary of E-BEST in July.

The peace building work in Muslim Mindanao comes into a milestone when MINPEACE took the stride of managing their own ministry among the triple communities of Lumads, Muslims and Christians in war-torn Mindanao. Its members have key transformation animators who took time and heart learning peace making. Each of ***the trained volunteers now lead strategic community development as entry project for conflict communities to begin peace building.*** The new convergence leader Pastor Troy Cordero shares his peace making journey in Central Mindanao (see his story). Please pray for him, as he leads the convergence ministry in Mindanao.

In the name of the Prince of Peace,

The Lamigos

A Peace Building Journey in Mindanao



I am Troy Eric Cordero, 40 years old, married and blessed with two precious kids. I was born in Cotabato City, Maguindanao, Philippines, the administrative seat of the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao.

My peace building journey began in November 1994. I was a pastor of a small church in Cotabato. In June 2003, I got married and was assigned by my organization as a national evangelist for Hope Ministries International based in General Santos City. After a year, we were led by the Lord to go back to Cotabato City. ***The Lord placed a burden in my heart to reach out to the Muslim communities in the city.***

I started preaching that we cannot win the Muslims by guns, war and violence, we cannot change them by our prejudices and indifferences. I told our people we can win and change them by our love and care. I said we can and we must forgive them. One of our church leaders, a retired soldier, told me that I don't know what I was talking about because I didn't know anything about what the Muslims did to him. I told him we can and we must forgive by the grace of God. I continued to preach the same conviction for the next three weeks. Then something happened. One late afternoon on my way home a Muslim teenager together with his companions, snatched my handheld two way radio and shot me at point blank range with a caliber .45 pistol. ***I thought I was fatally hit.*** The only words that came out of my mouth at that moment were: *Jesus and God bless you.* I was rushed to the hospital. Thanks be to God, the bullet passed through my left shoulder.

My family's reaction was to get even. My father, a policeman in the city since 1969, and my uncle, an army colonel then and other relatives in the local militia all wanted to retaliate. I told them I will not give my consent to their plans because I leave them to the Lord. When Sunday came, ***I told our people we can forgive, we must love our enemies as Jesus said.*** We can forgive because I forgave. I learnt that peace building is not an easy task.

In my desire to be more involved in peace building in our community, I continued initiating dialogues with the Muslim leaders and building good working relationships with them. I did this for four years. I took condensed

world missions course and Islamic awareness seminars to have a deeper understanding on the culture and the religion, as well as advocacy to the churches regarding my conviction of peace building

Page 02 "A Peace Building Journey . . .

In 1999, I was elected Chairman of the local ministers association. The new role gave me more opportunity to maximize all possible means to gain the trust and confidence of the Muslim brothers especially the rebel leaders. In the year 2000, I was invited to give a message on peace during the peace agreement anniversary of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the PHILLIPINE GOVERNMENT. I met the rebel chieftain, Prof. Nur Misuari who kissed me on both cheeks after listening to my speech. It was a gesture of acceptance. He said, "Pastor Troy Cordero, my brother, I accept your definitions of peace, that is the aspiration of my people. ***We will accept a Christian leader to lead us in Mindanao*** if he has the principles of peace you are talking about, PEACE WITH GOD, PEACE WITH FELLOW BEING AND PEACE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT."

The same year, the government declared an all out war policy in Mindanao. I rallied the churches to do relief operations as an act of love to the Muslims who were displaced at that time. We were able to collect P25,000.00 as seed money for the initial relief operations. After that, more funds came in from individuals, churches and other relief agencies, especially CRWRC. Because of that we were able to sustain the operation for 8 months distributing food, clothing and medical relief amounting to more or less P2.5M. we were able to cater to the needs of more or less 26,000 displaced families.

We desired to sustain the work that was started by an act of God. We forged tactical alliances among stake holders such as churches, Christian development agencies, NGO's, mission agencies and communities., ***thus the birth of the MINDANAO CONVERGENCE***. It was later agreed by the body to move to a stronger alliance, a structure of leadership was evolved, it was chaired then by Rev. Johnny Dalisay from Davao City.

We grew and slowly made our presence known in the six regions of Mindanao, through the creation of geo-groups in the respective areas. We were able to conduct peace forums, livelihood trainings, and grassroots peace building training in the areas.

In 2004, I was given the responsibility to lead the Convergence. We legalized our organization's existence. Our Certificate of Registration with the Securities And Exchange Commission was released in February 2005. ***We are now called MINPEACE INC***. We began to raise our own revenue and got a tax exemption certificate as well. We now have community based projects in three regions, namely GUSO FARMING IN REGION 10, WATER SYSTEM IN CARAGA AND PEACE BUILDING TRAINING IN DAVAO. We sent representatives to Mindanao Peace Institute and the Grassroots Peace Learning Center in preparation for module development in Community-based Peace Building

We are praying for more volunteers and resources so we can intensify our community based peace building and expand to other areas in Mindanao. We also covet your prayers for our many peace advocates who are reaching out to our people in communities where the Lumads, Muslims and Christians need to live together peacefully. In all of these, ***we thank all who have helped us partner with these communities so that they may have easy access to the manifold grace of God***. Let us continue the work we have started in building the Kingdom of God in Mindanao.

(Pastor Troy Cordero is the current Chairperson of MINPEACE INC., a Mindanao based Christian NGO established thru the Alliance of Christian Development Agencies, a partner of CRWRC in the Philippines.)

