



Maria Veronica A. Hernando graduated cum laude in 2002 at the Assumption College, Makati where she finished her B.S. Interior Design. In 2005, she was one of the participants of the first YP Workshop organized by TAO-Pilipinas, Inc. Known by family and friends as Enika, she completed her Master of Community Development from the University of the Philippines Diliman, College of Social Work and Community Development (UP-CSWCD) in April 2008. In the same year, she received the best thesis award and was accepted as PI GAMMA MU member, UP chapter. She has worked since then with community-based, church-based, non-government and government organizations. She joined the Department of Education-Indigenous Peoples Education Office from 2012-2014 and is now a Social Safeguards Specialist for the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP).

TAKING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

AS YP CELEBRATES ITS 10th year, it significantly coincides with the year (2005) I decided to take "the road less travelled". So I guess it was destiny to have seen that poster about the Young Professionals Orientation and Training Program on Social Housing (YP Workshop August 2005) at the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning (UP SURP) one afternoon as I took the detour connecting SURP to the CSWCD building where I was taking up my Masters in Community Development. It was my first semester at the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) as I said to myself I needed the theories and academic background on development if I am to pursue it as a life work. The poster said that the YP Workshop was organized by an NGO that was TAO-Pilipinas Inc. (Technical Assistance Organization). It surely caught my attention to know there are other technical professionals (architects, engineers) out there who are in development work – and it was an all-women organization.

My first close encounter with Manila's urban poor was actually through the YP Workshop. I was assigned in Parola Compound, Tondo. I have never been to Tondo, much less stay for two nights with a family in Tondo (along with my groupmates in the workshop). A memorable anecdote I would always share whenever I recall this experience is that the CR was directly above the river – no need for a septic tank – and we had no clean running

water. Such a basic necessity yet thousands of Filipino families live without it. What I would also always remember is that the families living in these harsh conditions should not be feared nor be blamed for their situation nor be accused of being lazy as the reason for their situation... just like you and me, they have dreams and they work hard but our society sadly can be ruthless and unjust. There I realized that the call for change is imperative. We need to create an enabling environment that offer equal opportunities, one where we are be able to access our rights and fully develop our potential as a nation's people are its best assets toward a (as best expressed in our own language) - "mapagalaya at mapagkalingang kaunlaran".

After the YP workshop, I continued my involvement with TAO Pilipinas as a volunteer for six (6) months working for its various projects. Among the most memorable were: the drawing workshops for the children of members of the People's Organization Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Maralita ng Navotas (SANAGMANA); talking with families in Navotas' houses on stilts with up to 3 floors!; sleeping by the river (since houses were built beside the river); shocked at the reality of the community having to alternately guard their houses as it might be set on fire in the middle of the night – which later on I have come to know was a common "strategy" to drive away the informal settlers. I also got to participate in the 1st Young Professionals National



Enika in Parola, Tondo during the community immersion for the first YP Workshop organized by TAO-Pilipinas, Inc. in 2005.

Camp 2005 organized by the JF Ledesma Foundation, Inc. held at San Carlos City, Negros Occidental in December 2005.

I am forever grateful for the experiences I had with TAO Pilipinas and I kept my ties with TAO even years after – there are not many technical women professionals truly dedicating themselves to development work such as the amazing ladies of TAO. I was fortunate to participate in its 2009 YP Workshop on WATSAN in Social Housing now as a facilitator. It was an exhilarating experience to have a direct hand in providing the young participants who were brimming with ideas and full of energy with new options to live a meaningful life.

I always carried with me those learnings and experiences and it has contributed into shaping me into the Development Practitioner that I am now – one who values people's meaningful participation, trusts in people's capacities, perseveres no matter how hopeless things may seem

knowing/believing that we are able to do great things not alone but by working together. As the famous old African Proverb goes "if you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together".

In the past 10 years I was blessed to have opportunities to work directly with communities and as well as with national organizations both government and non-government. I was given the chance to be part of the faculty of the Arts Department of the Ateneo de Manila High School – though only for a school year, it was fun and enriching to teach the naughty but nice high school boys about the elements of art, principles of design and even perspective drawing. A big chunk of my ten years, a total of six (6) years, which I spent with the Aeta Mag-antsi communities of Capas, Tarlac (thru the Aeta Mission of the Holy Spirit Sisters) are the closest to my heart – fighting side by side with them for their rights to their ancestral domain, education and self-determination. My involvement

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Taking the road... (From page 9)

with the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) gave me the church's perspective as I went around visiting program sites in various parts of the Philippines. My stint with the government in 2012-2014 where I did pioneering work with the Department of Education-Indigenous Peoples



Enika with the Aeta women and children in one of her first climb with Aeta Mission in 2005. (Photo source: Maria Veronica Hernando)



This photo was taken in 2008 at Sitio Kawayan, Capas, Tarlac showing the vast ancestral domain which Enika has traversed in her years of working with the Aeta community. (Photo source: Maria Veronica Hernando)



Enika in 2013 attending an opening ceremony for a learning center for kindergarten and grade 1 in Sitio Mangkay, Davao del Norte during her stint with Dep-Ed (Photo source: Maria Veronica Hernando)

Education Office (DepEd-IPsEO) was an eye opener for me on the in's and out's of government operations and how good governance can really bring about long-lasting changes in people's lives and that of the country and the world.

My technical background always came as an advantage – being able to do lay outs of site plans/floor plans for indigenous groups and urban poor communities as advocacy to the local government, my eye for art enabled me to design advocacy materials that were technically sound. Most recently, I assisted an Indigenous Peoples (IP) Organization develop their logo through a participatory workshop – they were happy to be part of the logo conceptualization process – from choosing the message and then the symbols to use, even the colors. At first they thought that because they did not know how to draw it was not possible for them to take part in the logo design workshop. They were delightfully surprised when they saw the final output and found it reflective of their aspirations as a community.

For about a year now, I have been doing consultancy work that has allowed me to work with various organizations and be tapped as a trainer on development modules. I conducted a training on Community Organizing and IP Sensitivity for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Pantawid Program - in particular for its MCCT (Modified Conditional Cash Transfer) Field Implementers. Earlier this year, I conducted a training on Participatory Action Research (PAR) and on Development Planning.

My background in Art and Design has become my edge/niche in development work though I still get remarks such

as "What's an Interior Designer doing in development work?!" but the people who know me, people who have come to know me and the people and communities who I have worked with never questioned my decision rather they have been inspired by my choice. To quote two high school friends – "I only dream of doing this, Enika! You have the courage." "I am proud of you and much prouder that you are my friend...thanks for being an inspiration." A friend I met when I was working for an architecture firm exclaimed upon seeing a picture of me in some faraway place, "Gaano man kalayo ang nilakbay I can see so much happiness in your face...!" And my interior designer friends would always say "Idol!" whenever I would share stories of my "adventures" such as a 4-hour bamboo raft ride downstream, a ride on a habal-habal (motorcycle) with wings traversing a uphill-downhill rugged terrain, a bangka ride across the sea, trekking for hours, crossing rivers, riding a horse and carabao sled...just to get to the hard-to-reach indigenous communities. My brother would sometimes even say that he hopes someday, together with his eldest son, we would climb mountains where we are as high as the clouds. I am thankful that my family has been supportive of my decision especially my parents.

Looking back at the 10 years that have been...I was fearless, I was ready for anything, I was idealistic...and I would like to believe I still am. Despite my last year to be in the "youth" category as I turn 35 this coming October I am grateful that the fire in me has kept burning.

To all the Young Professionals out there....Make that choice – to be significant, not for self-interest nor for success – but for the service of others.



Gloryrose Dy is a 28-year old Davao City-based architect who was part of the YP Interns batch 2009 and TAO HSE program staff in 2010. She has since set up her own organization called Switotwins Digital Storytelling Philippines, a social enterprise that she co-founded with her twin sister. Switotwins aims to provide a venue for people to express their talents in different fields of art including writing, animating stories, voice recording and video editing. Gloryrose shares with us her personal reflection and thoughts on the architect's social responsibility.

The Architect's Role in Rebuilding People's Lives

I WAS BORN DURING THE HEIGHT OF PEOPLE POWER I. Months before my birth, my mom, with me and my twin sister in her womb, led the people in the small city in the Visayas called Dumaguete City, to join the national efforts to stop martial law. My mom believed that the efforts of the small provincial city which was a fraction of the nation's voice can bring a huge impact in the society's call against social injustice. She believed that small passionate actions can be bigger with much determination and that someone should take the lead in this.

Years later, my family transferred to the wonderful island of Mindanao. The story of our relocation was quite an irony. My father, with his dream to improve our living space, loaned a huge amount of money from the bank to own a house. Unfortunately, it was impossible to pay so the bank had to retrieve our house. We lived there, in our own house, as "squatters" for a time until we finally decided to go to Mindanao and find new opportunities.

It was in Mindanao that I saw a more cruel social issue than being a squatter, and introduced to me the term "bakwit", or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). These are our fellowmen who lost their homes due to

armed conflicts and calamities and have not regained hope in the process. I was also introduced to other relevant social issues such as the need to preserve indigenous cultures in Mindanao.

Living in Mindanao opened my sensibilities to the extreme level and drove me to have the passion to fight more for social justice. However, what made me really found a social enterprise, together with my twin sister, was the hope to help not only Mindanao but the entire country as well. And the emergence of our organization was very timely when calamities were speedily becoming perennial.

In 2009, Ondoy killed over 100 people and affected almost 340,000. In 2011, Sendong hit Cagayan de Oro City and left 957 people dead and my family displaced from our original settlement. In 2012, Pablo swiped away areas in Davao Province and in 2014, the Philippines was devastated by not one but two major disasters. It can be said that the fuelled need to have more architects and design-build organizations who sincerely want to help people recover from disaster is an understatement. Suddenly, there was a demand for people who care.

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"TINGOG SA MGA BATA" (CHILDREN'S VOICE), A SWITOTWINS DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP IN NAPALICO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ARAKAN, NORTH COTABATO, DEC 12 - 13, 2013. ORGANIZED BY UP OMEGA ALPHA ALUMNI IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SWITOTWINS INC.

Switotwins, Inc. teaches the children about digital storytelling in the off grid community of Arakan, North Cotabato.



Switotwins, Inc. through its project, Istoryang Inamiga Switotwins Digital Storytelling Philippines, empowers the women in the community in the fight against violence of women and children.

Architect's Role... (From page 9)



IDPs in Zamboanga. Switotwins, Inc. produces a documentary about the impact of the armed conflicts in Zamboanga to children. (Photos by Jonathan Olarte)

But what was also very stressing was that as the demand for architects and designers to help in emergencies increased, most designers know of architecture as something that has to be imposed. This really bothered me a lot. Because one thing's for sure, in my short experience with TAO Pilipinas, a women-led technical organization that believes in the practice of participatory design, what I learned is that design for the community should not be imposed. Instead, design should and will always be participatory because designing is a form of nation building.

That is why, for me, community development is very important in the process of providing shelter for people who lost homes. It is very important for architects to not just design and impose their designs to people, but rather, immerse themselves with the community with only a pen and paper (literally) and ask the people what they need.

Considering this, it is also very important for architects to partner with community organizers to be able to fully be involved in the community at the onset



Gloryrose Dy joins Earth Village Project in creating an Earthship Biotechure in Barangay Batug, Dulag, Leyte, one of the areas which survived Typhoon Haiyan. Switotwins, Inc. is currently drafting an architectural tour on alternative construction to be set in Dulag, Leyte.

of their first interaction with the community. This way, as designers, we can have the right rapport with our stakeholders and have a good relationship during the participatory design stages.

The process of designing together can be very therapeutic especially for people who lost their homes and the exchange of ideas and concepts can lead to better community engagement and even lasting recovery. After all, architecture is not just a profession of merely designing and building but rather it is a profession that drives designers to help in the process of rebuilding people's lives.

While I was doing my first talk in front of experienced and renowned architects last December 7, 2013 at the "UAP Design Forum 2013: Solutions for Safer Communities", a forum organized by UAP Emergency Architects, someone from the group told me "So, you are not just an architect, you are a psychologist?". I said "No" because I am not a doctor. But if doctors such as psychologists are known to help a lot of people, then I would proudly say that yes, architects can be the psychologists of the built environment.

Because, yes, I am an architect, and I can help rebuild people's lives for lasting recovery.

Editor's note: Through Switotwins, Gloryrose has organized various digital storytelling workshops and tours in Zamboanga City, North Cotabato, and Tacloban City. More information about their projects can be viewed online at switotwins.com. They are also featured in the [Google Business Group](#) success stories.

YP Reflections



Mharren C. Castro, 20, is an incoming senior student of BS Architecture at the University of the Philippines – Diliman. As chairperson of the student organization UP Task Force Arki (TFA), he led the team of architecture students who volunteered to complete the drafting and design of 5 low-cost houses under the Pabahay program of SAPSPA in Tondo.

Without a doubt, experience is still the best teacher when it boils down to the most important lessons in life. And like any other educational companion, it can only be deemed effective by how the students would eventually respond to the learning process. Reception is everything, and at times, even relatively exclusive making this a critical defining point by which I, as well, have constantly been trying to frame all the interesting events of my young life into.

Being in and spearheading a service-oriented student organization is one of these moments of interest in my college life. We have been exposed to inspiring opportunities in architectural service as we learn in a holistic process – encompassing physical, social, cultural, and many other aspects – while interacting with people from almost all walks of life. Living (or almost-dying) as architecture students while dealing with extra-curricular responsibilities at the same time has been our chosen adventure; and for me, this setting is also that rewarding footpath towards a more purposeful and sensible education I had been hoping for.

Working for the Design and Drafting for SAPSPA Houses, in particular, seem like a roller coaster ride. Managing not only your own but also all the other teams' workflow, meeting the deadlines that define your capacity and not the other way around, and making sure all the forces in the project harmonize – while other pressures rise from academic obligations – can pretty much summarize the spirit of challenge in this project... a challenge that I admit we have not fulfilled excellently. I have found so much room for improvement in all our ways and these are the points by which I determined how to grow on learning from our mistakes and shortcomings. I lacked the agency for time management, and anticipation of the weight of duties, and consequently got lost in a time loop of confusions, miscommunications, and revisions here and there.

But on one hand, being able to apply our acquired academic faculties to this project makes me appreciate the difficult times. Even more so, the interaction with the community alone is a directional network of experience for me, the impacts of which I always try to share with and impart to our organization. Most especially, what pushed me to get back on track when facing the difficult phase of this project was the hope and trust from the community we needed to help in the first place. As cheesy as that may sound, when you realize that your actions are affecting people's lives, you have got to do the best of what you can. And that is precisely what I believe we've tried to do.

SAPSPA project has provided me a concrete venue for learning a deeper understanding of architecture, growing as a leader, and above all, reflecting on the sense of my life ultimately – in a nerve-wrecking, but fun ride that I truly never regret. Most importantly, I take privilege in working with and learning from TAO-Pilipinas, not only because they guided us all the way but moreover, they showed me the value of understanding, patience, and resilience during the stressful turns of this shuttle.

As I have known, nothing is perfect and keeping up with the pressure is the very least one can do in this world of imperfection. And that, I think, we did in the best way we could muster. After all, pressure makes diamonds. And for what it's worth, learning through a memorable ride of experience such as SAPSPA is indeed more than the diamond that I have started shaping myself into.



Leading the team of volunteer architecture students in their field visits to Magsaysay Village in Tondo



Explaining the minimum design standards for low-cost housing projects



Consulting the housing loan program beneficiary and discussing the schematic design proposal for their house.



Sarah Maria L. Chavez, 19, is a senior student of BS Environmental Planning and Management at Miriam College in Quezon City.

Pinlano ko ang aking sembreak kasama ang barkada ko. Sabi namin mag-si-swimming kami, mag-o-overnight, magmo-movie marathon, maglalaro, magpa-party, at kakain ng kakain. Pero napadpad ako sa TAO Pilipinas at doon napunta ang isang linggo ng sembreak ko. Hindi ako nagrereklamo, nangyari naman lahat ng pinlano naming gawin...sa ibang paraan nga lang.

Nakilala ko ang 15 na mga kabataang kagaya ko --- nais matuto, mapalawak ang kaalaman at magkaroon ng karanasan patungkol sa disaster risk reduction, climate change, housing, at marami pang iba. Madami kaming mga inaasahan at higit pa doon ang ibinigay ng TAO Pilipinas sa amin. Madami akong natutunang mga bagong bagay hindi lamang mula sa mga tagapag-salita kung hindi ay pati na rin sa aming mga ginawa noong linggong iyon.

Gusto ko mag-swimming, natupad ito noong napunta ang grupo namin sa Tanza, Navotas. Ang komunidad ng Masagana ay masagana sa tubig, ang komunidad nila ay lubog sa baha 24/7, minsan hanggang tuhod lang, pero tuwing umaga ay umaabot ito hanggang beywang. Para makarating sa mga bahay, nagsuot kami ng boots o kaya naman ay sumakay kami ng balsa (magaling ka dapat mag-balance). Nagtangka din kaming mag-jump shot sa baha, pero hindi kami nagtagumpay.

Movie marathon... ang buhay sa Masagana ay parang isang pelikula, ang daming drama dahil madami silang problemang kinakaharap, tulad ng ulan, bagyo, baha, pagsiguro ng titulo ng lupa, atbp. at ang TAO ang naging super hero nila. Isang relocation site ang pinagpaplanuhan nila sa ngayon at sa lugar na ito sa Angat, Bulacan ay nais nilang magsimula muli.

Nagtagal kami sa Masagana ng 3 araw at 2 gabi, isang beses lang kami naligo dahil hirap sila kumuha ng tubig, at hirap din kaming maligo dahil kakaiba ang banyo nila, walang toilet bowl, walang sink, ang mayroon lang ay "battab": batya at tabo. Masaya ang naging karanasan namin doon. Iyon ang maganda sa maliit na bahay, lagi kayong sama-sama sa lahat ng bagay. Isang kwarto lang para sa lahat ng tao at lahat ng gawain. Sabay-sabay kaming matulog, gumising, kumain, at mag-toothbrush.

Doon din kami nagplano ng aming isasagawang workshop para sa mga tao sa komunidad. Mahiyain ako at medyo nahirapan ako makipag-usap sa mga tao, pero pinilit kong gawin ang makakaya ko. Napagtagumpayan namin ang pagsasagawa ng workshop sa tulong ng mga tao ng Masagana. Marami silang mga saloobin at kumento, hindi man sapat ang isang araw na workshop para dito, masasabi kong nakagawa tayo ng isang malaking hakbang tungo sa pangarap na nais nilang makamit.

Hindi ko malilimutan ang isang linggong pag-ibig. Pag-ibig sa mga taong nakilala at nakasama ko, sa mga taga-TAO Pilipinas, sa mga tao ng Masagana, sa sarili ko, at sa kalikasan. Ang sembreak na iyon ang huli kong sembreak bilang isang estudyante, nagpapasalamat ako na iyon ang itinadhana ni Lord na mangyari sa atin.

P.S. Naiinis ako sa commercial na "Good morning sa inyo..." pero ngayon tuwing nakikita ko ito ay napapangiti ako.



From top, L-R: Sarah (second from right) with her YP Team mates as they arrive at Masagana community in Tanza, Navotas; enjoying dinner with group and host family; reaching out for a team mate to jump into a makeshift raft.



Lady Melody R. Sonsona, 21, is a 5th year student of BS Civil Engineering at the Technological Institute of the Philippines at Manila City.

This year's Young Professionals Workshop on Social Housing organized by the Technical Assistance Organization (TAO – Pilipinas) centered on various activities that brought about changes not only for us YPs but most especially for informal settler communities to change their situation for the better. It is important for the people from the informal settlements to take a lead in improving their circumstances and for us to provide support during the process.

As one of the participants in the 7-day workshop, I have now a better understanding on the problems surrounding the areas where informal settlers live. These people are highly vulnerable to different forms of hazards, both natural and man-made. The underserved and bad living conditions characterized by poor quality housing, poor sanitation, overcrowding, inadequate water supply, and insecurity of tenure make them more vulnerable to climate change.

This workshop has opened my eyes on what the real world is. It is true that we, as students (and later on we'll join the working class as young professionals) should not be confined within the four walls of the classroom. A workshop like this is a must for every student, whatever course they are taking. Like me, I learned a lot and actually in the short span of one week, the workshop has

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From top, L-R: Melody giving inputs on DRR topics; sharing meals with host family; Melody (fourth from left) and her YP Team mates in Tangos, Navotas



Cris Benedict M. Mabato, 20, is a senior student of BS Architecture at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila City.

Some pursue happiness, others create it. Ito ang motto ko.

Nung narinig ko sa professor ang tungkol sa workshop na ito, nagtaas ako kaagad ng kamay. Mam, Mam! Sali ako diyan! (Sabay bulong sa tabi, pandagdag sa resume yan..) Hindi ko na naisip kung anong mangyayari basta adventure at madadagdagan ang page ng resume ko. Sasama ako!

Workshop na. Hala, ganito pala yun. Electrifying ang mga gagawin. Na-excite ako nung sinabi na ang mga gagawin para sa immersion at lumala pa ito nung sinabi kung saan ang Team namin pupunta – sa Tanza, Navotas na kilala bilang bahaing lugar sa Metro Manila. Mahilig ako sa adventure, pumunta kung saan- saan na malayo sa sibilisasyon, umakyat ng bundok at matuto ng iba't ibang klaseng pamumuhay ng tao.

Nagsimula na ang immersion, nagsimula na rin ang pagkakaibigan namin nila Sarah, Mhar, Arvin, at Russel. Hindi ko ito inaasahan. Ang alam ko magbibigay lang kami ng kaalaman sa komunidad ng Tanza. Higit pa pala doon. Nagkaroon ako ng pangalawang pamilya na sabay sabay kumain habang nakaupo sa sahig. Kumain ng lahat ng klaseng pagkain, kumain ng lahat ng parte ng isda at kumain ng hindi nag-aaksaya ni-isang butil ng kanin. Hindi rin mawawala diyan ang pagyanig ng simple at pres-

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From top, L-R: Cris facilitating a focus group discussion; giving inputs on DRR topics; Cris (front, second from left) with his YP Team mates in Tanza, Navotas.



Jessabel S. Saria, 19, is a senior student of BS Architecture at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila City.

“It is time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people especially the poor to come to us” is the remarkable tag line of TAO Pilipinas, a non-government organization giving technical assistance to communities in improving their way of living.

The 7-day Young Professionals Workshop was held last October 19-25, 2011. Three days of lecture sessions held at a function hall was very informative and gave empowering knowledge, shared to us by professionals in relation with the main topic, “Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Community Planning and Development”. What they provided us can help guide future architects, engineers and planners of our society.

The very exciting part of the YP Workshop is the community immersion, wherein the YP participants were divided into groups to stay within an urban poor community and hold a DRR workshop for the community members. I was assigned with my other co-YPs to stay in Kasiglahan Phase 1-D in Montalban, Rizal. We met there a lot of extraordinary people --- Ate Sally, the homeowners’ association president and other co-officers, Ate Myrna and Ate Vangie. Each of them has an inspiring life story, especially how they have to do programs and projects to help and improve their community. They initiate to make their own steps in providing for their families and their community despite lacking financial assistance from the local government.

Sharing our knowledge as architecture students through the community workshop has been the most fulfilling part of the immersion experience. When I heard about the YP workshop, I just thought that it was good because at first all I really wanted was just an experience, without really knowing the things that might take place in the workshop. But after the workshop, there are a lot of things I have gained, not just knowledge but I was also filled with encouragement and concern to help people that architects, engineers and planners should serve.

Service without borders, this is our real job. It means to give service not only to those who can afford to hire and pay architects and professionals to have functional and aesthetically appealing homes, but we should openly give our services to those who are really

in need of it. The unselfish life is a satisfying life. It’s not always about the salary because there are a lot of more valuable things that we should give importance to. Being successful is not just about having a good career, being famous or having a lot of money. Success is not measured by the things we have but by the things we can give to others who are in need. When we give, we gain more.

The workshop became an eye opener for me as well as for the other YP participants. The organization made us realize and see the real situation of communities we should help when we are already professionals in our own fields. They took us from our comfort zone inside the classrooms, letting us observe and understand a lot of the things taking place in the real world. There are a lot more things we should consider and analyze to improve the society we’re living in. We are part of a bigger picture and if every one of us will play the role that we need to play, it will be a better place for all of us. I hope that more people will be inspired by the organization and conduct such seminars to improve communities.



From top (L-R): Jessa with her YP Team mates in Kasiglahan Village in Rodriguez, Rizal; Jessa facilitating the mapping exercise and focus group discussion.

YP Reflections

Reflections by Melody Sonsona

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influenced me to be socially conscious and look at the situation of the underprivileged.

It is not easy living in a developing country like the Philippines but we have a lot of talented individuals and groups that can help in addressing the nation's perennial problems like population control, natural and man-made calamities, waste management, housing, poor sanitation, crimes, etc. As I see it, everyone has a role in contributing to the betterment of this country. This workshop helped me in some ways to alter a little about my plans after I graduate. After our community immersion, I asked myself if it's worth getting a high-paying job and get rich in the process but ignore those who cannot afford to live well? I know I can contribute a lot as a young professional by studying and acquiring more knowledge on how to address the persistent problems our country has been experiencing for so many years now.

Filipinos should support each other and I am thankful to be one of the privileged persons to have the means to study and have a better life than those who cannot even afford to live in a decent community. I know I can do something for our country no matter how small it is, because I believe that if every Filipino will make their humble contribution, we can make this country and the world a much better place to live in.

Reflections by Cris Mabato

(From page 5)

kong bahay ni Aling Dianne dahil sa di-matigil na pagtawa ng bawat isa, ang paghampas sa dingding na gawa sa pinagsama-samang plywood, tarpaulin, at kahoy at pagpukpok sa sahig na gawa sa pinagdikit-dikit na kahoy na nakapatong sa apat na bamboo post para maitaas ang lebel ng sahig. Ito ay matibay sa lahat ng oras at nagsilbing inspirasyon sa bawat isa na ipagpatuloy ang nasimulan na pamamahaging kaalaman sa nangangailangan.

Sa pagsama sa programang ito, nadagdagan ng album ang facebook account ko at madami ang nakapansin. Ang iba like ng like, yung iba inggit! Ang iba masaya para sa akin, at yung iba naman hindi nagustuhan dahil siguro sa nakita nilang mga lugar. Kung alam lang nila, ang bawat litrato na iyon ay naglalarawan ng hindi mabilang na ngiti at karanasan na di lahat ng tao kayang isulat sa kanilang diary. Ang masaksihan at maranasan na makasama ang isang komunidad nang alam mo na nakakatulong ka at nakakapagpasaya ka ay isang malaking gantimpala.

Ako nga po pala si Cris Benedict Mengullo Mabato, nagpapasalamat sa TAO-Pilipinas sa napakasap na pagkain, maayos na tirahan at lalo na sa pagkakataong na mapabilang sa mga sa tumutulong sa mga taong di sapat ang kaalaman para mabuo ang simpleng bahay na pinapangarap nila na malayo sa disgrasya at may sapat na pahingahan.

DRR Workshop...

(From page 3)

their community.

The highlight of the workshop was on the second day when they prepared their community DRR action plans after giving various suggestions for disaster mitigating actions and community projects. From the community DRR projects that they identified, they chose three priority projects which led to the formulation of three community action plans. The projects they chose were 1) repair of wooden bridge access; 2) repair and improvement of earth dike; and 3) house repairs.

Overall, the participants enjoyed the workshop and learned a lot from the facilitators based on the evaluation they gave after the workshop proper. They were also very much willing to share the knowledge they gained from the workshop to neighbors who were not able to attend.

The workshop is part of a series of DRR workshops that TAO-Pilipinas will conduct in connection with the ADB-funded Pilot Demonstration Project in Navotas. The officers of the community association were tasked with coordinating the follow through activities outlined in the formulated action plans. Another consultation workshop has been scheduled in December to tackle the design requirements for the proposed bridge and earth dike repairs. *(Angel Sales)*



Top; Isla Pulo community members are taught how to create their hazards maps; bottom: focus groups complete their community emergency plans.

YP Reflections



Verna Lucia Sarraga, 21 years old, is a BS Architecture graduate from Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. She earned a slot as a participant in the YP Workshop by winning the logo design contest for the workshop. She was assigned in the MASAGANA community in Tanza, Navotas for the workshop's community immersion activities. She continues to do volunteer work for the community micro-project in MASAGANA.

"What if you did not win the YP Logo Contest, would you still pursue to be a part of the workshop?" This is the question that Ms. Geraldine asked me during my interview and briefing weeks before the YP Workshop for 2009. I would admit she caught me off-guard. I cannot clearly remember what my answer was (did I say no?) but it really made me think... "Oo nga' no, what if?"

The reason why I joined their contest was because I would like to attend the workshop for free. I have known TAO-Pilipinas for more than a year and I was impressed about their advocacy. Besides, I really admire girls taking the lead. Go ladies!

The lectures and discussions were very interesting for me. I've been trying to get a grip of all of the technical stuff because I know that we need to be equipped for the following days. At some point, I wondered what our site would look like. I've been to what they call "poor communities" every now and then. We have held feeding programs, outreaches, name it. It really feels great to help other people. One thing I learned from those experiences was that in order to make them hear our message, we should also meet their needs. So we give refreshment after giving them encouragement. But the workshop offered a different set of things. For two days, there was a constant question in my head: How?

I thought that I was ready for what was going to happen but I realized that I was not when we finally arrived at MASAGANA, our site. Although there were lots of problems to deal with in the area (like dry path walk for the people, lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation), it was not a depressing one. The people were wonderful and you can see that they have hope as a community. Rather than have pity on them, I was rather overwhelmed that they are always trying to see things positively. During our immersion, I remembered one of the speakers told us: "The poor know the problem and they know the solutions and can give the most difficult questions..." Surely, I cannot solve the problem alone! There are always people who know better than you do. *Hello?! Hindi lang ikaw ang bida!*

I will never forget those six days of my life. It made me ride on a roller coaster of emotions --- I was torn with my responsibility as a daughter and my responsibility as an individual; between your worth in the world and your real value as a human being. I got home with a broken heart but with a complete being. Really, what if I didn't have a chance to join the workshop? Then I would be missing waking up from that fancy dream of working your way just to be rich and famous. Then I would not dream that someday I will be able to serve these people completely.



Verna during the transect walk in MASAGANA...



...and visiting households to introduce the YP team to community members.



Verna presenting a satellite imagery of the community site...



... and facilitating a community workshop on water and sanitation.



Jayson Cruzat, 22 years old, is a senior student of BS Architecture at the Technological Institute of the Philippines in Quezon City. He spent his immersion work at UNNAI community in Bgy. Fairview, Quezon City and continues to do volunteer work for the community micro-project there.

Akala ko ang buhay namin ay mahirap na noong nasa probinsiya pa ako dahil sa naranasan kong buhay sa bundok na kung saan walang koryente, walang linya ng tubig, walang tv, at lalo nang walang signal ng cellphone. At ang tanging libangan ay makinig sa isang transistor radio.

Dahil sa narasan ko kung gaano kahirap ang kumita ng pera, kaya nagsikap akong makapag-aral para maiahon at magkaroon ng maayos na pamumuhay hindi lang ako kundi ang aking mga magulang. Ayoko na sa pagtanda nila ay hindi man lang nila naranasan ang kaginhawahan.

Ngunit nang mapasama ako sa isang *6-day workshop* na organize ng TAO-Pilipinas na kung saan ay dinala kami sa isang community at inalam namin ang kanilang kalagayan, marami akong nalaman hindi lang tungkol sa community kundi tungkol sa buhay. Nalaman ko na mapalad pa pala ako dahil nakakapag-aral pa ako kasi merong mga tao na hindi talaga makapag-aral. Kahit walang linya ng tubig sa amin, may bukal kaming pinagkukunan. Hindi katulad sa community na yung ibang pamilya ay walang makunan ng malinis na tubig at walang maayos na sanitasyon dahil sa kahirapan ng kanilang buhay. Nang matapos na ang workshop namulat ako na may mga taong mapalad na biniyayaan ng maayos na sanitasyon.

Tinatanong ko ang sarili ko kung ano ang pwede kong gawin para makatulong sa community. Nagpapasalamat ako sa TAO Pilipinas na binigyan ako ng pagkakataon para makatulong sa isang community hindi sa pinansyal na aspeto kundi sa nalalaman kong teknikal.

Ang TAO-Pilipinas at sa mga organisasyong katulad nito na tumutulong sa mga nangangailangan ay marami ang nagpapasalamat kahit hindi nila personal na naririnig. Isa ako sa mga taong nagpapasalamat sa pagmulat nila sa aking kaisipan tungkol sa maraming bagay na hindi matututunan sa loob ng iskwelahan. Sana ay dumami pa ang organisasyong katulad ng TAO-Pilipinas para mas marami pa ang taong matulungan. Maraming pong salamat sa inyo.

New batch of interns at TAO

TAO-Pilipinas welcomed a new batch of interns to work on its various programs and projects. Bringing their talents, energy and passion into the communities that TAO assists are Tracey Loontjens, Paul Brecht Van Acker, Ma. Christina Fiel, Hazel Joy Caisip, Rapunzel Narbonita, and Ermon Farrell Aguilar.

Tracey is an architect from Belgium who is completing a post-graduate degree in Urban Design and Country Planning. Her internship at TAO is part of a training exchange program for her postgraduate studies. Paul is also an architect from Belgium but is independently doing his volunteer work in Manila.

Christina is a senior architecture student from the Technological Institute of the



Jayson's YP team inspects water sources in UNNAI community.



Jayson consulting with TAO's Osang Marcelo before the community workshop...



...and facilitating a focus group discussion among women members of the community.



Community workshop on water and sanitation at UNNAI, Quezon City.

Philippines (TIP) who joined last year's YP Workshop on Social Housing. Hazel is an architecture student from the University of the Philippines (UP) while Rapunzel and Ermon are graduating architecture students from TIP who are completing their on-the-job requirements.

Tracey, Paul and Hazel are currently working on the design schemes for the SHEC Phase 3 Housing Project; Christina and Rapunzel are doing model house designs for the HSE program; Ermon is assigned on the SHEC Eco-Farm Design project. (*Ge Matabang*)

YP Reflections



Gloryrose Dy, 23 years old, is a BS Architecture graduate from University of the Philippines – Mindanao. Lotlot graduated in 2009 with the Best Thesis Award for Architecture in UP Mindanao and was also given the Red Point National Best Architectural Thesis Award in the Philippines by Cirdia Foundation. Lotlot is a member of the UP Mindanao Dance Ensemble. She recently joined TAO-Pilipinas as a staff in its Human Settlement and Environment Program.

TAO-Pilipinas was timely for me. The day after I was hired to be a staff of the Human Settlements and Environment Program under TAO-Pilipinas was the day Typhoon Ondoy struck our nation killing almost a hundred and leaving thousands of our countrymen homeless. It seems as if a supreme being was telling me that I am in the right place which to help the urban poor in Metro Manila.

I had a fairytale concept on what my job would be because it seemed to be a very heroic occupation. I imagined being like Angelina Jolie helping the poor in Kenya or Oprah Winfrey talking to a marginalized citizen in the US. I looked at helping the urban poor as sort of a fancy thing like saving a damsel-in-distress Indian princess drowning because of Captain Hook. The YP workshop made me more excited to do my job. I thought that finally I could save the urban poor for real since I have already been stuck in the office for quite long. So I had a well organized bag with a lot of shirts and pants ready for the whole event.

The first two days of the workshop was quite technical. Having a technical background helped a lot. Although, I had to pat my intelligent persona which I wanted to leave behind after I graduated college so that I could understand the seminar. While sitting on the chair listening to the soporific talk of the lecturer, I daydreamed about the next day where we will have to go to the site for real.

But when we went to the site for the first day, I suddenly lost all the excitement I saved when I was still preparing for the event. As I saw the real situation of the community, I felt so hopeless for the Philippines. I knew that if only we had an incorrupt government, we could have easily made their lives wonderful. I saw the real poorest of the poor in the Philippines. It was inevitable to compare it to the rural poor areas where they could still see a large amount of land beside their houses. But then, I also realized that the community was so skeptical at times with the help that they are getting. Maybe it was because of the thousands of broken promises they encountered in their life. I could not blame them but I could not also blame myself for feeling less stimulated.

There are times during the workshop when I felt so uninspired as if Bic Runga's song was playing *"My head is battling with my heart, my logic has been torn apart..."* This was the moment when I tried to ask myself, "Is this really this difficult or was I just so naive in thinking that helping the poor was as easy as helping save the Indian princess in Neverland?"

Indeed it is. It is difficult to help the poor. It is not a fancy thing. It is not the same as we see them in the movies. Helping the poor is just like marrying yourself to the poor people themselves and sometimes it is like marrying a person when you know that the end is still a divorce.

But as I looked at the eyes of the TAO-Pilipinas facilitators of the workshop; the eyes of the people that I am going to work with for years, I saw that they had hope in it. I saw their eagerness and enthusiasm to help whatever it takes.

TAO-Pilipinas was indeed timely for me. It made me realize the complexities of life during the point when I thought life was fancy. It also made me realize that life is full of synchronicities. If I choose to help the poor, the poor will choose to help themselves. It is that simple but then again that difficult. ~o~o~o~o~



Lotlot leads an icebreaker activity during the workshop sessions.



Transect walk activity in the Bicol and Chungkang areas of Tanza, Navotas, City.



Lotlot with children and community leaders in Tanza, Navotas.



Lotlot helps facilitate a community workshop with members of people's organizations in Tanza.

YP Reflections



John Michael Lumbang, 24 years old, is a 5th year BS Architecture student at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM). JM was a participant in the 2009 YP Workshop on Social Housing. He spent his community immersion work at Barangay Tanza, Navotas City.

Isn't it truly a blessing and privilege that most of us live in a community with proper drainage systems and far from severe flooding? ...with complete and sanitary toilets? ...and most importantly, with ample supply of safe water to drink? Have you ever thought that there are people who just dream of having this privilege we have? You may answer yes, but how aware are we about their situation? This is what I realized after I joined the Young Professionals' workshop organized by TAO-Pilipinas.

At first I thought that it was just the usual workshop wherein you sit and listen to the one sharing his/her expertise and then with a little audience participation, and that's it. But tables were turned and we, the YPs, will also have to facilitate a workshop with urban poor communities! Aside from that, we will also be handling an actual community project that could somehow improve their lives. I considered it a big change from the usual drafting table, solving a design problem given by our professors, submitting it to be checked and waiting for the score to be given.

Part of the workshop is the community immersion where we had to stay in the community for two days. The community of MASAGANA in Barangay Tanza, Navotas is not your usual community. We had to stay in a place where dry part of the land is a raft away. It has scarce water supply and no sanitary facilities.

From what I've seen in the community, the present generation is suffering the mistakes of previous ones in terms of environmental degradation. Air and water pollution, diseases, and global warming are some of the problems we are currently experiencing. It seems the more we progress with technological innovations, the more we are getting close to environmental destruction. The sophistication of our invention does not guarantee that we are living a better life. But in spite of the condition in the community, the people there always have a reason to smile. There, you can find comfort, hospitality and camaraderie.

I thank the organizers of TAO-Pilipinas for giving this kind of experience for YPs. There were new friendships reaped, much laughter recalled, and not to mention the yummy food they served! More importantly, I was enlightened that there are people who are willing to offer their talents for the benefit of less privileged communities. I think the experience gained from the workshop could change decisions one may take in the future.

Nothing is more rewarding than seeing a poor neighbourhood work together to create better homes. Their efforts and hope for a better life do not end at the neighborhood boundaries but also affect other residents around them. The community of MASAGANA in Navotas is still young but it is maturing rapidly because they are taking steps towards a more promising future.

I think the learning curve is steep but there is so much to learn. I end this reflection with the quote, "we do not own this world; we just borrowed it from our children." ~o~o~o~o~



JM and his teammates travel by banca to the MASAGANA community in Tanza, Navotas, City.



The YP team of JM during the community immersion in Tanza, Navotas.



The YP team wades through floodwaters to conduct the transect walk activity.



JM facilitates a focus group discussion activity during the community workshop on water and sanitation.

YP Reflections



Cherry May Mateo, 23 years old, is a BS Civil Engineering graduate of the University of the Philippines – Diliman. She graduated in 2008 with cum laude honors and garnered 6th-place in the Civil Engineering licensure exams. Cherry is currently taking up a graduate degree in MS Energy Engineering at UP-Diliman. She is also a member of the Department of Civil Engineering faculty and teaches Environmental Engineering and Engineering Economy.



The YP team of Cherry during the community immersion in Tanza.



Cherry facilitates a community workshop on water and sanitation.



Cherry with children in the community of Bicol and Chungkang areas in Tanza, Navotas City.

UP honor graduate + leadership capabilities + good values = high-paying job. Agree? I believe most people will agree with this. My parents and relatives would definitely agree. And so, it is quite hard for them to understand why I have chosen to teach in the university and reject my other higher-paying job offers.

It's quite a struggle. My mom often asks me why. Once, I have said my real reason: I feel that I need to serve my country; I feel the need to give back. She said: "*Anak, sa kahit ano'ng trabaho naman nakakatulong ka.*" Almost every other day, my mom would try to convince me to quit my job and work for the big companies. "*Bakit kelangan kong magsilbi sa malalaking kumpanya kung alam kong nag-aagawan ang nakararami para pagsilbihan sila, samantalang kokonti lang ang gustong magsilbi sa nakararami?*" Of course, I never got to ask this question out loud. =)

If teaching in the university is quite hard to accept for them, then working for a NGO is out of the picture. I've stayed quiet about my desire to work for small impoverished communities. So when I've learned about TAO's workshop for young professionals, I immediately grabbed the chance to experience working for the urban poor. Excellent opportunity – Destiny could have worked things out for me. This year's theme is water and sanitation, a field that I've worked on for my thesis and a topic that I teach in the university.

The discussions, lectures and workshops on water and sanitation were not entirely new to me. What was new to me, actually, was the genuine desire to re-learn all the topics. Maybe it was because I knew that this time, things are not going to be entirely theoretical – I am actually expected to apply what I've learned to the community.

Upon arriving at the community and settling in our host family's house, my team mates and I immediately tried to conceptualize the solutions that we could present to the community. We were overwhelmed by the situation – underneath the houses on stilts are layers of trash; water lines run along the black drainage waters; septic tanks are non-existent. None of the wastewater treatment systems presented to us is actually applicable to the community. We were not able to come up with a definite solution. We just hoped that after the workshop with the community, we could analyze the problems better.

Holding the workshop opened our eyes to more problems. Apparently, the community wants to solve more problems other than their water and sanitation concerns. They mentioned the need for street lighting and livelihood programs. After several discussions, we finally concluded that we will start solving their water connection problems first.

Although I have been to several urban poor communities, I haven't actually mingled and lived with them. It was my first time and I must say that I was overwhelmed with the veracity of living among these people. However, amazingly, while strolling around the community after the workshop, I felt a surge of calmness within me. No matter how troubling and hopeless the community seems from afar, I am not troubled. Probably, it is because simply by choosing to go there to understand their situation and not just wonder from afar how it is to live there, I felt that I have begun to become part of the solution. I have gained a better perspective and I have found a new purpose in life.

Please turn to page 10.

YP Reflections



Michelle G. Galarion is a senior student of BS Civil Engineering at University of Sto. Tomas. Prior to joining the summer internship program, Michelle was also one of the participants of the 2006 YP Workshop in Infanta, Quezon. As an intern, she worked on two TAO projects – the documentation of the SAPSPA housing project in Tondo and the subdivision development planning of SANAGMANA site in Tanza, Navotas. Michelle considers her internship experience as an eye-opener, realizing that “there are a lot more things to learn and see beyond the four walls of the classroom...”

As a civil engineering student, I found it difficult to have self-help housing. Before, I thought that civil engineers are only primarily needed for large infrastructure, high-rise buildings and highly modernized construction. I thought that for simple houses with small floor areas, civil engineers are not needed that much since there are already the construction foreman and laborers who can build the house. But when we visited the houses in Tondo, I recognized more the importance of having civil engineers involved in any structure to be built. In Tondo, it is important to consider the stability of buildings which is the main expertise of a civil engineer. Houses in Tondo face the problem of structural stability because of the soil conditions which cause the land to gradually subside. They cannot just put up concrete floors and heavy structures because of the problem of land subsidence, so it is important that house construction is also supervised by engineers.

I also appreciated that there are organizations like SAPSPA which continuously help the people in the community in their many needs, through SAPSPA’s housing loan program. Through the years, there are already a number of batches who have benefited from it. The P70,000 housing loan that were availed by the beneficiary-families helped a lot in reconstructing houses already submerged or in starting their dream houses. The beneficiaries also played a big role in the self-help house building process. They had to find additional money to pay for laborers and expenditures (other than the construction materials covered by the loan). They worked with a positive attitude, were so very eager to complete their house, and they really worked hard to earn enough money for its construction. I think they are a wonderful people that the community should be proud of.

Other technical professionals should reach out their hands to poor people. I know some people think that professionals are only for the service of the rich but they should realize that sometimes they really need to come to the ones who are oppressed and the ones who cannot afford to give them the professional fee. They should not wait for the poor to come to them; they should extend a helping hand. We must reach out because that’s the spirit of living in a decent society.



Jasmine M. Soriano is a senior student of BS Architecture at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Jasmine helped develop the 3D scaled model of TAO’s design prototype for Disaster Resilient Housing. She was also part of the project team that handled the documentation of the SAPSPA housing project in Tondo. Jasmine says that the internship taught her to be “more sensitive to the social issues and problems that the urban poor communities face” as an architect.

As I worked on the monitoring and evaluation of five beneficiaries of the SAPSPA housing loan, I saw how the program works for the people and how it actually is a three-way collaboration among the beneficiaries, the people’s organization and the technical assistance groups. These members compose the body, heart and head of the program.

There have been about one hundred twenty-three beneficiaries of the program and we interviewed five of the present batch with on-going house construction. Each of the families we interviewed had different number of family members, lifestyles and life plans but they had a common denominator...the need for decent shelter. So how do they work as the body of the program? The families who benefited from the housing-material loan have been given the full responsibility to execute the building of their houses...the “self-building” way. Either with immediate relatives or friends, the physical construction of the houses was done by them. Monetary supplement for the building permit and construction workers came also from self-funding. Through this duty, they are taught to work for their own betterment and in a way, “reap their harvest”.

The SAPSPA organization, also known as the “Pabahay”, is the heart of the program. The community in Magsaysay Village has been troubled for decades by land subsidence and limited resources to construct and repair houses, so SAPSPA serves as the intermediary between the people and groups that could help the community in its housing problems. SAPSPA works on the evaluation of housing loan applicants, repayment schemes, bookkeeping, as well as sustaining the Pabahay office and other administrative tasks.

Lastly, the technical groups taking part in the program serve as the head in bringing this project to life. With professional skills and knowledge, they help the community achieve their long-term endeavors by giving assistance in house designs and making sure that plans conform to building laws. They help in monitoring the construction process and building materials used and in checking that the actual construction is in compliance to the building plans approved by building officials.

Man lives holistically with his body, heart and head and it’s the same principle at work in this self-help, self-build housing project. If any of the three actors in the program do not work efficiently, sustainability would be hard to attain. Programs for urban poor communities need long-term planning and development but must also look into the people’s way of life and involve them in the planning. The housing project in Magsaysay Village entails hard work and may not bring profit, but it brings shelter to people’s lives so they may live decently.



YP Reflections



Marie Edraline Belga is a 23-year old BS Architecture graduate from the University of the Philippines who first applied as a volunteer during the preparatory activities of the YP Workshop in 2005. This involvement allowed her to gain some initial experience in working with community leaders and profiling the immersion areas. Edra has since been absorbed into the regular staff of TAO-Pilipinas and assigned as project team leader for the project SANAGMANA Subdivision Planning. After the required apprenticeship period, she plans to take the licensure examination for architects.

Changing Perspectives

For a young woman like me going into community development, it may seem that at first, one has all the enthusiasm to "save the world." That is what I thought back then. However, experience and reality has taught me that it is very hard work just to get around, or even try to make a little change. So I have eventually found out that the enthusiasm is still there, but at times, my energy might be dwindling. I am not to say that I have set aside my ideals, to do so would be to say that the world as it is now is just fine. It is fairly simple; I have hopes for a better, truly equitable society.

Right now, I can only do so much with words, I have sentiments, but I am a novice at uttering moving speeches. My energy was surging when I joined TAO-Pilipinas, I often dreamt of model housing projects being designed and constructed. For almost two years, my energy has its highs and very lows. Most of my encounters with the community, with the government, and with other organizations have left me with more and more questions. I ask, "Why?" Some words that I have heard have left me questioning my own judgment, my ideals, my methods and my principles. Some questions I have asked are still unanswered. All of these questions sometimes necessitate that I stop, breathe and give time for myself. Despite the confusions, working for community development has made me a more inquisitive, more analytical young woman. This is something I am very grateful for. I cannot imagine myself, gaining a greater world view if I have not been immersed in this work.

Taking action in the simplest way has replaced my blind hunger for a fiery battle for those who might seek fair access to social services. Whether it is as simple as making and explaining a subdivision plan, teaching technical drafting, or facilitating planning workshops, I do so because the community might need them. Small steps, but hopefully we will get there.

As for me, I am taking small steps too, in time I like to see myself as a person who would have a greater influence and power to initiate positive change with others. Maybe as an Environmental Engineer; I am crossing my fingers on that.

~o~o~o~o~



"It's time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people, especially the poor, to come to us."

YP Reflections



Anthony Vincent Michael Bicenio, 21, recently passed the licensure exam for civil engineers. BZ graduated from the University of Sto. Tomas where as a student leader, he was actively involved in volunteer works for academic extension projects. He was also a participant in the 2005 YP Workshop during his senior year and continues to volunteer for the project SANAGMANA Subdivision Planning.

Nagdaan ang mga araw ng 2006 at heto na ngayon ang taong 2007. Sinasabing kasama ng pagpapalit ng taon ang mga pagbabago. Nagdadala ito ng panibagong pag-asa, oportunidad, pagsubok at mga aral. Ang taong ito ay nagbigay kaagad sa akin ng isang napakahalagang aral, iyon ay kung gaano kahirap ang mabuhay.

Sa isang pagkakataon noong unang linggo ng Enero 2007, natanong ko sa magulang ko kung kami ay may natatagong isang milyong piso, wala, ang tugon nila. Muli akong nagtanong, limang daan libong piso? isang daan libo? Dito natapos ang aking pagtatanong dahil sermon na ang sumunod. Nito ko lang nalaman kung gaano kahirap ang magkaroon ng isang daan libong piso.

Ang pagmulat na ito ay nagdala ng madaming tanong sa aking isipan. Sa totoo lang ay naguguluhan ako, sapagkat ang mga minimithi ko para sa hinaharap ay nangangailangan ng higit pa sa halagang nabangit dito. Pinangarap ko na makatulong sa maraming tao, naisip ko na hindi ako magiging sakim, na ibabahagi ko ang anumang labis sa aking pangangailangan.

Nabago ang pananaw ko sa mga programang kinalahokan ko at ngayon lang nalinaw sa akin kung ano ang halaga nito. Inakala ko kasi na ang mga taong tumutulong sa mga nangangailangan ay pawang naglilibang lang. Ang pagbibigay ng mga bagay na napakahalaga para sa isang tao ay hindi pala madali para sa karamihan. Ang nakakalungkot, ang karamihan ang siyang nangangailangan.

Tanggap ko na sa ngayon ay napakadilim ng kasalukuyan. Maging ang kinabukasan ay hindi ko nakikitaan ng malaking pagbabago mula sa kadiliman na ito. Matagal na tayong nababalot sa kahirapan at kung ating susuriin, mas mahirap pa tayo kumpara sa nakaraan. Marami ang may kaalaman ngunit konti lang ang tumatanggap dito, at mas konti pa ang gumagawa ng hakbang tugon dito.

Masasabi ko na dakila ang mga organisasyon tulad ng TAO-Pilipinas. Nakakamangha ang mga kasapi nila na kaya nilang ibahagi ang kanilang oras, kaalaman at pagkatao. Marami ang nagpapasalamat sa mga tulong na mula sa mga organisasyon na tulad nito. Nakakalungkot na hindi pa sapat ito upang lutasin ang suliranin, na kulang ito para pagliwanagin ang hinaharap. Marami pang bagay ang dapat gawin, mga aspeto na dapat kilatisin at marami pang tao na dapat magising.

Sa pagwawakas, sana ay maisip natin. Tunay na pagpapala ang pagkabuo ng mga organisasyon na tumutugon sa problema ng lipunan. Ngunit sa isang banda, ito ay palatandaan lang ng ating pagkukulang. Isang pangarap, na isang araw, hindi na natin kailanganin ang mga organisasyong panlipunan, sapagkat natugunan na ang lahat ng pangangailangan.

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*"It's time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people, especially the poor, to come to us."*

## YP Reflections



*Ma. Veronica Hernando is a 25-year old licensed Interior Designer who has been employed in private design firms after graduating from Assumption College. However, Erika has opted to become a full-time student of Master of Community Development to pursue an alternative career path as a development worker. She was a participant in the 2005 YP Workshop and has since volunteered in various TAO-assisted projects. She also teaches art classes for children at Ateneo.*

Interior Design has been associated for a long time as a profession for the elite and never as one with a social concern. It has always been a misconception that Interior Designers only design homes for those who are rich, five-star hotels, high-end buildings. Many think that hiring interior designers only mean lavish furnishings, expensive materials and grand interiors. As a college student in Assumption College, we were made to realize our social responsibility towards our society especially to those who are less fortunate whatever our chosen profession may be.

My experience during the Young Professionals Workshop last August 2005 further enlightened me that as an Interior Designer or any other profession you have chosen, you can help our less fortunate fellow citizens uplift their lives and move towards a society that will recognize the needs of this sector.

The workshop provides an overview of the current scenario of human settlements issue in the Philippines and in the world. It provides a lot of insights regarding how Technical Professionals can help the sector that belongs to the "bottom of the pyramid". We can provide technical help for the communities to enable them to formulate a community development plan. To layout a subdivision plan can also help the communities lobby for their rights for security of land tenure. The highlight of the workshop was the immersion in various communities. I must say it was a fun-filled experience despite being surrounded by the harsh realities of life. In the community where I stayed, their favorite pass time was videoke. I do not know how to sing but it didn't matter, we all sang anyway which was part of the whole experience. The community will welcome you with such warmth and cheerfulness that you forget that Tondo is a place marked as dangerous. It only proves that it is unfair to stereotype all of the people living there as "bad" people. When you experience living with them, even if it was only for two nights, you realize they are just the same as we are – they work hard, they laugh, they cry, they have dreams. However their living conditions will make you also realize how harder life is for them. Witnessing how they live will make you appreciate how lucky you are to have basic necessities such as water. In the community where I stayed, they do not have any water supply so they have to buy water in containers. Every drop counted. But one of my realizations is we should not feel sorry for them but rather recognize that they have their own potentials just waiting to be tapped. They just need to be given equal opportunities for a better life. Their voices just need to be heard. We come to help them learn to help themselves. We do not go there as if to save them. We must also make them realize that they are the key factor towards their own development. We only serve as a catalyst.

To end my reflections, I would like to share a question posed by one of the participants. He asked, "Up to where do we extend our help?" There will always be a "battle of emotions" between wanting to make a name for yourself, earning lots of money and the desire in your heart to be of service especially to those who are poor. Is there any chance you'll be able to do both as a young professional? The answer might not come your way right after the workshop but it's a step forward towards realizing what you really want and what is important to you.

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"It's time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people, especially the poor, to come to us."

2006 YP... (from page 2)



*Ka Noli gives a tour of Buklod Tao communities in Barangay Banaba, San Mateo, Rizal for YPs*



*YPs hike to one of the immersion sites in the uplands of Barangay Agos-agos, Infanta*



*Participants of the 2006 YP Workshop in Antipolo*

Social Action Center (SAC) made possible the teams' participatory hazards assessment, mapping activities, focus group discussions and action planning with the communities. And for two nights, the workshop participants were accommodated within the homes of host families in the sites.

At the fourth day of the workshop, each of the teams presented their practicum outputs before a plenary. Several issues were brought up during the plenary discussions, among which included the engagement of LGUs in CBDRM programs, organizational strengthening of POs,

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## YP reflections



YP workshop participants are encouraged to reflect on their community immersion experiences. **Angel Sales**, one of TAO's R&P staff, shares with us her blog entries.

*The 16<sup>th</sup> until the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October was an important week for all of us in the office. I dreaded for that week to come because of the Young Professional General Orientation Workshop in Social Housing. The weeks that came before were tough ones too mainly because of the preparations we had to endure to make the workshop a success. I was very anxious as the weeks rolled on and I thought it was going to be a hell week. I was proven wrong.*

*As the weekend going into the workshop week ended, my anxiety grew even more. I remembered going to church hoping and praying that I will be able to do my responsibilities well and will not cause any disappointment for my officemates. I also prayed for good weather and good health for me to be able to endure the demands of the workshop.*

*Finally, the workshop week started, six long days of being away from home and from my own comfort zone. Though it was not my first time to be gone for so long, it had been awhile since I experienced being on my own again. I needed to remember what it was like to be independent again and to trust my own decisions. The workshop week definitely taught me that.*

*The YP 2006 Workshop was definitely an experience I will not forget. More than the long hours spent with my officemates forming bonds and strengthening them, it is the many realizations that I have chanced upon that made the workshop more meaningful for me. Once again I have proven to myself that I am most fulfilled when I am able to help others. Cliché as it may sound, it is the kind of satisfaction that no material possession can ever give me. The community immersion also made me realize that despite my family's own financial problems we are still very fortunate as compared to those families who were ravaged by the 2004 typhoon.*

*Hearing their stories and seeing their conditions first hand, the community of Pope John Paul II Village earned my respect for the resiliency and strength of character that they have shown. They are a joyful bunch of people*



*Angel and Osang conduct ocular inspection of the resettlement site in Agos-agos*



*Angel with YPs and host family in Agos-agos*



*Angel in charge of video documentation of the YP workshop*



*Angel facilitates hazard assessment workshop with Agos-agos community*

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"It's time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people, especially the poor, to come to us."

### 2006 YP... (from page 3)

mangroves area protection, the perennial problem of lack of basic services in resettlement sites (that residents consider as everyday hazards in their lives), and previously urban area concerns that now also affect rural communities (e.g. garbage disposal, groundwater depletion and contamination). It was also noted that in the four groups where participatory hazards assessments were held, the hazards which were prioritized by people were the lack of potable water supply, flooding, typhoons, and solid waste. These practicum outputs were a validation that the scope of disaster risk management should encompass both natural and human-induced hazards.

On a more personal level, the workshop participants also shared their reflection over their involvement in the community immersion activities. For most of the students, it was their first experience in directly interacting with poor communities as technical service clients. They acknowledged that the workshop activities were an eye-opener that gave them a wider perspective on their roles as professionals and a deeper appreciation of basic shelter needs. *"It was clear from the presentations that YPs faced a tough task where you were not only architects and engineers but also became researchers, organizers and teachers,"* commented one of the panelists (TAO Board member and filmmaker Avic Ilagan).



The Dinahican-YP team visiting the coastal areas...

...facilitating focus group discussions with fisherfolks

...presenting their community immersion outputs.



The Agosagos-YP team gives a creative presentation of their immersion experience through puppetry.



Kate Teves of FEU-IARFA explains her reflection drawing.



YPs paint with hands for their group mural painting.

The community immersions were primarily aimed at letting the YPs experience first-hand participatory planning approaches by conducting community consultations. They were also opportunities for them to apply and validate their understanding of the CBDRM lectures from the first part of the workshop. However, the activities facilitated by the workshop participants in the immersion sites would be considered as just the initiation phases in the whole CBDRM process. Indeed, much of the information drawn out from the people need to be analyzed and further coordination (among various stakeholders) and community work are expected to be done so that effective disaster risk management at the grassroots level can be fully realized. With YPs willing to focus their talents and energies on such endeavors, TAO-Pilipinas hopes to contribute more in helping create disaster-resilient and sustainable communities.

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### YP Reflections... (from page 3)

*whose faith in God is unwavering despite the hardships that they have faced. Most importantly, it is the hospitality of the community that would leave a lasting impression on me. I will not forget how one community member remembered my name upon arriving at their village and greeted me warmly despite the fact that I have only visited their village just once. I felt ashamed of myself for not even bothering to get her name.*

*Lastly, the event was even more memorable because I had the opportunity of meeting different interesting people. From the students to the community participants, all of them contributed in making the workshop a success. It certainly was a week that I will not forget not because of the hard work that we went through but because of the lessons that all of us learned from one of another.*

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"It's time for us to go to the people rather than ask the people, especially the poor, to come to us."