

**LONGING FOR HOMES WHERE MANGROVES USED TO GROW: NARRATIVES OF  
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES**

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## Abstract

This master's thesis project, involving three months of ethnographic fieldwork using decolonial Filipino methodology and methods, is an exploration of armed conflict induced displacement in Zamboanga City (Mindanao, Philippines). The stories shared by eleven research participants from four barangays, interrogate the dominant representations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as voiceless victims in need of rescue and reliant on humanitarian assistance. Using *bahala na* or agency specific to the Filipino cultural context, IDP women and gender diverse individuals challenged the conventional understandings of agency to recognize decision-making beyond individual choices. The findings highlight that the enactment of agency by Filipino IDPs in southern Philippines is shaped by class and ethno-religious-linguistic identities, revealing the inherently unequal and unruly patterns of mobility. These factors also shape their access to humanitarian emergency responses. In contrast to Catholic IDPs who had no concerns over their daily needs for survival, poor Muslim IDPs experienced food insecurity, malnutrition, and communicable diseases. Poor Muslim IDPs exercised *bahala na*, a form of situated agency, by avoiding asking for better humanitarian assistance, which risks them being portrayed as complaining and ungrateful. This demonstrates their awareness of how humanitarian systems function and managing their vulnerabilities in different ways. Moreover, they nuanced the architecture of IDP camp sites as more than just a space of confinement by practicing hope and imagining future possibilities.

**Keywords:** Critical Filipino Studies, Philippine Studies, Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, Internal Displacement, Decolonial Feminist Agency, Transnational Feminist Ethnography, Humanitarian Approaches

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## List of Acronyms

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BMLO	Banga Moro Liberation Organization
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
CSWDO	City Social Welfare and Development Office
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LASEDECO	Land and Settlement Development Corporation
LGU	Local Government Unit
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MIM	Muslim Independence Movement
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NHA	National Housing Authority
NLSA	National Land Settlement Administration
PDRRMA	Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act
PSR	Protracted Refugee Situations
PNP	Philippine National Police
TS	Transitory Sites
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WVV	Women Victims of Violences

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Why am I compelled to write? Because the writing saves me from this complacency I fear. Because I have no choice. Because I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive. Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it. I write because life does not appease my appetites and hunger. I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you.

— Gloria Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*

### The Nation in Our Hearts

Throughout my undergraduate degree in international development and globalization, I learned about the ‘white man’s burden’ narrative.<sup>1</sup> As one of the few racialized students in class, I heard stories about my community represented in ways that invoked shame, making me simultaneously invisible and hypervisible. When my professors showed graphs generated by the World Bank about the economic performance of countries based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), more often than not, a seemingly curious White student would ask me about where my country is ranked. On the one hand, this question always put me in a defensive position, coaxing me to explain why the Philippines could not be on the list of high-growth economies along with countries in the Global North or Asian Tigers. On the other hand, I found myself engaging in the Oppression Olympics with my few fellow racialized students by comparing our native homelands in terms of economic growth. At

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The White Man’s Burden’ is a poem written by Rudyard Kipling (1899) about the Philippine-American War to justify the civilizing mission of the US in the Philippines. In this poem, Kipling dehumanized and infantilized the Filipino people by describing us as “half devil and half child.” US politicians used this argument to establish American-style education and democracy in the Philippines. They claimed that we were childlike, who did not know what was best for us. Since the US considered themselves as the superior civilization, they felt “bound to exercise over [the Philippines] a profound social influence” (Pimentel 2003, par. 15).

the end of such discussions, I was often left with mixed feelings of joy and pain as I realized that although our home countries were not ranked amongst the poorest, we may not be able to 'catch up' (convinced at the time that this is the goal) with the countries in the Global North. We may never be able to undo the erasure of "indigenous ideologies regarding identity, status, kinship, marriage, residential patterns and gender relations," or reclaim "indigenous social and political systems" (Koczberski 1998, 397-398).

While a sense of pessimism usually consumed us, White students on the contrary, viewed themselves as innocent or simply curious. In rare occasions, others participated in what Mary Fellows and Sherene Razack (1998) describe the "race to innocence." During class discussions, White students would draw examples from their experience of voluntourism<sup>2</sup> when they taught English in elementary schools or nurtured street children in so called developing countries. They shared these stories in ways that romanticized their deeds and implied saviourism; they inevitably constructed countries in the Global South as geographically distant and temporally in the past. Yet, when I shared my personal story of being forcibly displaced by natural disasters, hoping that my classmates could make the connection between the forces of capitalism and ecological destruction, I was victimized and my resiliency was overly glorified.

The remainder of my undergraduate experience included such involuntary treatment from peers and instructors. When I wrote essays about the solidarity economy

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<sup>2</sup> Voluntourism or volunteer tourism is a multi-million industry that primarily attracts secondary and post-secondary students from the Global North to travel in the Global South and 'work' in development projects or charities. However, volunteers end up doing more harm than good to the community they intend to help. Voluntourism is a neocolonial practice whereby volunteers exploit the local communities by building poorly planned development projects, in order to satisfy their White saviour complex (Bandyopadhyay 2019, 327).

in the Philippines, my research was considered less rigorous because I was studying my own community. Only fragments of my stories, my lived experiences and knowledge by flesh and blood of the concrete manifestations of colonial, heteropatriarchal, and imperial injustices in my community, which aligned with the 'white man's burden' were recognized. My stories were "put into the paradoxical position of being invisible and hypervisible: invisible because numerous kinds of people, problems, and achievements [were] ignored, and hypervisible because only the stereotypes [were] deemed relevant and significant" within and beyond the classroom (McElhinny et al. 2012, 5). Despite these challenges, I feel compelled to write more than ever because beyond the fear of complacency, I have myths to dispel about my community and country. More importantly, I write to demonstrate a multiplicity of "what it means to live as, and call oneself, Filipino" (Hau 2014, 56).

Conely de Leon (2018) highlights that one of the reasons that explains the paradoxical positioning of Filipino experiences within the Canadian academy is the absence of Critical Filipino Studies and mentors for students interested in this area (3). Academic scholarship on Filipinos in the Canadian context is "more recent and more limited in scope" because of its shorter immigration history that began in the 1960s (McElhinny et al. 2012, 12). In the United States, Critical Filipino Studies emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in response to overlapping strands of political activism involving the civil rights, anti-Vietnam war, gay liberation, feminist, and Third World feminist movements (Manalansan IV and Espiritu 2016, 5; Aquino 2014, par. 12). As with many other ethnic groups in the United States, Critical Filipino Studies eventually found its way into higher education where it gradually asserted itself as a legitimate field

of intellectual inquiry (Manalansan IV and Espiritu 2016, 5; Aquino 2014, par. 12). Simultaneously, this shift was an attempt to decolonize Philippine Studies that began as a colonial enterprise in the early 1900s, when the country became a colony of the United States. It was formed with the intention to study fascinating tribal groups in remote areas and to justify American military presence in the Far East (Aquino 2014, par. 7-10). Yet, despite this progress, Critical Filipino Studies and Philippines Studies were separated as ethnic and area studies in the American academy, where they occupied marginal status within Southeast Asian Studies (Manalansan IV and Espiritu 2016, 8).

In addition to the institutional developments happening during the 1970s and 1980s, American-trained Filipino psychologists returned to the Philippines to develop theories, methods, and practices free from “the massive American political, economic, and cultural influence in the Philippine life, society, and psychology...and responsive to internal Philippine social problems” (Enriquez 1992, xxi). They argued that “former Philippine Studies was not situated from the standpoint of Filipinos” (Covar 2018, 66), which inaccurately depicted Filipino psyche, culture, society, language, art, films, and religion. They also spoke to larger issues of what Caroline Hau (2014) has termed as “epistemic privilege,” pointing to the unequal generation of knowledge between the Global North and South (as cited in Manalansan IV and Espiritu 2016, 9).

Although my thesis project goes beyond the neat distinctions between Critical Filipino Studies and Philippine Studies, by rejecting the binary model of native/stranger, nation/diaspora, and here/there (Manalansan IV and Espiritu 2016, 10), I also acknowledge that my work does not speak for all Filipinos within and outside the

archipelago. To borrow the words of Ethel Tungohan (2021), “I don’t cite others to show how my work ‘fills in research gaps’; now I cite to show how my work is part of an ongoing conversation.” I also turn to Robert Diaz’s (2017) message about the importance of citation in honouring other lives. He explains that “our survival in places that often do not want us depend on it” (par. 5). In Canada, Roland Coloma, Glenda Bonifacio, Eleanor Ty, Patrick Alcedo, Denise Crus, Lisa Davidson, and Nora Angeles bravely carved out spaces within the ivory tower so that younger generations of Filipinos could sustain the pride of telling our stories, not only of collective struggles, but including hope and dreams with sensitivity (Diaz 2017, par. 5). These individuals also include Ethel Tungohan, John Paul Catungal, Ilyan Ferrer, Marissa Largo, Casey Mecija, Conely de Leon, Chaya Go, PJ Javier, Alyssa Schenk, and many others.

### **Mindanao, A Troubled Land of Promise**

The conflict in Zamboanga City is an extension of the Mindanao Problem or the Moro Problem, which is rooted in colonial and ‘postcolonial’<sup>3</sup> land policies of homesteading<sup>4</sup> and resettlement.<sup>5</sup> These land policies that led to land disputes among

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<sup>3</sup> I put single quotation marks in postcolonial to signal the period after colonialism when the country gained independence from Spain, the United States, and Japan. Simultaneously, I recognize that while the Philippines is an independent country, it is not completely free from the influence of its former colonial masters, especially the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Homesteading is the practice of expanding public lands to ‘qualified citizens’ who could own them by making productive use of the lands for agricultural purposes (Cushner 1964, 288; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2). Under the American colonial administration, peasant farmers resided in the area they registered in for a duration of five years before they could apply for a land title. At the earlier stage of the program, peasant farmers could own a maximum of 24 hectares of lands, but this was later reduced to 12 hectares during the ‘postcolonial’ period (Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2; Vellema, Borrás and Lara 2011, 305).

<sup>5</sup> Resettlement is the movement of people from one place of home to another with the intention of staying permanently (Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2).

the Christian settlers,<sup>6</sup> Lumads,<sup>7</sup> and Moros<sup>8</sup> were derived from the Tamontaka experiment introduced by the Jesuit missionaries in 1872 during the Spanish colonial time (Cushner 1964, 288; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2). The Tamontaka experiment was conceived as an alternative way to convert the local inhabitants of Mindanao, by using their “community as an instrument for preaching Christianity,” rather than the traditional way of individual conversion (Madigan and Cushner 1958, 322). The Spanish Jesuit missionaries believed gradual conversion to be more effective in the island of Mindanao, since indigenous Muslim Filipinos “heartily disliked the Spanish rule, which they had defied for some 290 years” (Madigan and Cushner 1958, 323).

The idea behind the Tamontaka experiment originated from Paraguay in the 17th and 18th century, when Spanish Jesuits missionaries gathered together members of various indigenous communities in an isolated settlement “equipped with schools, churches, stores, and houses” (Madigan and Cushner 1958, 322-323). In the Philippines, the Jesuit missionaries built a Christian settlement where they raised Muslim captive children they bought from Chinese merchants. When these children reached adulthood, they were put in prearranged marriages by priests and nuns, and were given “a plot of land, a carabao, and in their first year of marriage, food and

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<sup>6</sup> Long-Christianized Filipinos from the islands of Luzon and Visayas who internally migrated to Mindanao under the Spanish and American colonial programs of homesteading and resettlement.

<sup>7</sup> The word Lumad is used to collectively describe the non-Muslim indigenous people in Mindanao (Milligan 2005, 25). While some of them still retain their traditional beliefs and customary practices, others have come to embrace Islam (Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 15). In Mindanao, there are at least 13 indigenous groups who have adopted the Islamic faith (Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 15).

<sup>8</sup> The term Moro refers to indigenous Muslims residing in Mindanao. It was originally used as a derogatory word by the Spaniards against the indigenous people of North Africa, known as Moors (Tignon 2006, 25). This term was later adopted by the Americans and Christian Filipinos as a discriminatory label for Muslim Filipinos. However, the term Moro has been reclaimed by Muslim Filipinos to highlight their struggles against the oppression of Spaniards, Americans, and the Philippine government (Tignon 2006, 25; Soriano and Sreekumar 2012, 1038).

clothing up to the first harvest” (Cushner 1964, 289). By displaying a higher standard of living, this would attract the local inhabitants of Mindanao into Christianity.

While in the minds of Jesuit missionaries the Tamontaka experiment was “the best and only workable method of bringing the Moros within the Christian pale,” there were some children who found the life in Christian settlements “too restrictive and so escaped” (Cushner 1964, 290). In addition to this, the experiment was time consuming and did not receive adequate funding to sustain the program. Thus, it was suggested to resettle willing and “ready-made” Christians from over-populated and poorer regions in the islands of Luzon and Visayas to Mindanao (Cushner 1964, 289).

However, the Spanish colonial master, whose purpose was to first convert the local inhabitants of Mindanao in order to utilize their natural and material resources, did not long benefit from this experiment. The United States had invaded Manila, pushing them out of the archipelago (Cushner 1964, 291; Vellema, Borrás and Lara 2011, 302). The outcome of this led to the Treaty of Paris of 1898 that signalled a new colonial order. This is the very same treaty that gave the United States complete dominion over the Philippines, including the southern most regions in Mindanao that were once difficult to penetrate (Tignon 2006, 27; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 3).

Like the Spanish colonial administration, the United States deployed a similar strategy of homesteading and resettlement to divert the peasant uprising in the islands of Luzon and Visayas, by providing landless farmers with lands in Mindanao (Cushner 1964, 288; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2). However, the landless farmers from Luzon and Visayas who converted to Christianity during the Spanish colonial era brought with them hybrid ways of life that were antithetical to the customs of Lumads and Muslims

(Milligan 2005, 25). In addition, the colonial programs of homesteading and resettlement aimed at “making *Filipino* out of the *Moro*” (emphasis not mine) (Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 2). These programs resulted in the original and primarily Muslim inhabitants of Mindanao losing access and control over their lands, leading to economic and spatial marginalization, as well as the exploitation of their natural resources.

The law was also instrumental to the acquisition and dispossession of communal lands of the original inhabitants (Ringuet 2002, 36). Colonial land ownership relied on the idea of private property, which made it impossible for Moros to claim ownership of their ancestral grounds (Ringuet 2002, 36). Some communities in Mindanao, such as the Maranaos, based their territorial claims on kinship or genealogies, instead of residency or citizenship (Milligan 2005, 22-23; Vellema, Borrás, and Lara 2011, 306). While the Americans provided Moros the chance to validate their claim to lands, the actual size of their properties had been reduced (Ringuet 2002, 37). More importantly, not all Moros were fluent in the English language, especially the legality and “bureaucratic intricacies of land registration” (Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 12). In contrast, the Christian-settlers used the legal system to grab more lands from Lumads and Moros (Ringuet 2002, 37).

In ‘postcolonial’ Philippines, later administrations deployed similar resettlement strategies to address economic underdevelopment, increase agricultural productivity, and resolve the ongoing uprising of the peasant and working classes in Luzon and Visayas. The forced acquisition of lands was facilitated in less populated areas of Mindanao, and it was also around this time that the province had been imagined as the land of promise (Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 4). This narrative encouraged Christian Filipinos

to participate in government-funded programs of homesteading and resettlement, including the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA), the Land and Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO), and the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR).

Some of these programs, such as the EDCOR, was formed to resettle former Communist supporters in Mindanao through the provision of “land for landless” (Vellema, Borras and Lara 2011, 205; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 4). They resettled in the communities of Lanao and Cotabato where military presence was high. Although these programs were successful in increasing the agricultural production in the region, it was only for a brief time as the presence of militaries was perceived by Moros as a form of government surveillance (Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 6). In addition, this program was implemented poorly as the provision of land settlement was not guaranteed to Christian settlers who travelled from Luzon and Visayas. This created disputes in terms of territorial claims between the Christian settlers and Moros, which was intensified by the military presence who favoured the former group. Moreover, government-funded programs such as this, created a palpable sense of anxiety among the original inhabitant of the land. As poignantly explained by a Moro inhabitant in Maguindanao:

The government brought in ex-rebels from the other end of the country, people who are alien to us, settled down on our land, gave them everything they need to farm, and [laid] out towns for them. We ask[ed] for the same consideration. We [were] told we do not qualify...We do not know how to compete with these people...Soon we shall be landless people on our own home country (as quoted in Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 8).

The programs of homesteading and resettlement systematically reduced the access to resources of Lumads and Moros necessary to sustain the needs of their communities. To date, Christian Filipinos in Mindanao make up 70 percent of the total

population (Rodil 2003 as cited in Tignon 2006, 29), and they occupy the majority of arable lands in the province alongside transnational corporations who use these lands to grow commodities for consumption in the Philippines and for exports (Milligan 2005, 20; Tignon 2006, 29). Despite the wealth of natural resources in Mindanao, it remains impoverished. The level of pessimism in the region is higher than the national average, largely because of war, displacement, and political corruption that are prevalent in Muslim regions (Tignon 2006, 30; Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 10).

While the Muslim separatist movement has always existed even in the colonial period, it was difficult for them to mobilize as they could not obtain sufficient support from other Muslim ethnic groups (Ringuet 2002, 38). The turning point, however, occurred in 1968 in response to the Jabidah Massacre, during which Muslim Filipino youths who were recruited by the Philippine government to infiltrate Sabah, Malaysia had been slaughtered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). This “has caused an outcry from within the Muslim community...followed by numerous demonstrations and manifestos demanding clarification from the government” (Ringuet 2002, 38). But information about this event was suppressed by the administration of former president Ferdinand Marcos (Rasul 2009, 27). Marcos believed that the military was integral to the economic and political development of the country. As a result, the AFP became a major force in the Philippine society during this rule, and it was instrumental to the preservation of corruption and power throughout the period of Martial Law between 1972 to 1984 (Ringuet 2002, 39). However, this contradicted the values of Lumads and Moros, who viewed themselves as inherently autonomous from the Philippines.

The Jabidah Massacre, combined with a long history of instability in Mindanao and the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos were some of the catalysts that caused the Moro insurgency from 1968 to present times (Ringuet 2002, 38-39; Abaya-Ulindang 2015, 10). The Muslim or Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was formed to advocate for Moro separatism from the predominantly Christian country of the Philippines. Although it disbanded not long after negotiating with Marcos, some of its members established another organization with the same mandate, called the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO). This newer organization could not sustain itself due to internal disputes related to generational differences (CISAC 2019, 2). The younger members of the BMLO viewed their seniors as corrupt and formed a breakaway group, named The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The MNLF is a political organization that primarily operates in some regions of the southern Philippines, with the mandate of establishing an autonomous region in the country (CISAC 2019, 9). Yet, much like the preceding organizations, the internal structures of the MNLF have changed overtime. Its political activities and leadership have multiplied, causing some members to leave the MNLF and establish other factions (CISAC 2019, 7). This led to more internal disputes as they have different goals, targets, and tactics.

Since the formation of the MNLF, several peace negotiations have occurred between them and the Philippine government. One notable deal was the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 that would allow MNFL to establish an autonomous region, largely inhabited by Lumads and Moros (Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 17; CISAC 2019, 3). However, Marcos did not implement the agreement by executive order. Instead, he

submitted a referendum within provinces where an overwhelming number of voters rejected the agreement (CISAC 2019, 3). Thus, the initial plan of creating a single region did not materialize and two separate regional governments were formed (CISAC 2019, 3).

The failure to create a “large and unified region led by the MNLF,” resulted in MNLF ending talks with the Marcos administration (CISAC 2019, 3). In 1989, the new administration led by former president Cory Aquino, signed the Republic Act No. 6734 to establish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). In line with the preceding administration, a referendum was cast and only four out of thirteen provinces voted to join the ARMM (CISAC 2019, 4). In 1992, the Philippine government and the MNLF signed the Jakarta Peace Agreement to officially end the MNLF’s guerrilla wars with the government. This agreement included the integration of some MNFL members into the Philippine National Police (PNP) and AFP, while others joined the local government as civil servants (CISAC 2019, 3-4). Some members of the MNLF did not agree with the governance structure of ARMM, as well as their assimilation into the PNP and AFP, as these are the very same institutions that inflicted violence on the lands, community, and spirituality of Moros.

Led by Nur Misuari, the remaining members of the MNLF renewed its political activities of separatism in 2001 in response to the new Organic Act that would eventually replace ARMM with Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Many MNLF members viewed that this contradicted the Jakarta Peace Agreement in terms of who has the rightful authority over mineral resources in the ARMM region (CISAC 2019, 5). Nur Misuari’s dissatisfaction with the implementation of

the agreement led him to launch an attack in Sulu and Zamboanga City in November 2001. Although the MNLF attempted to restore its relationship with the Philippine government, the two entities could not agree on the implementation of the peace deal (CISAC 2019, 6).

It was in the late 2000s when the splinter group-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and former president Benigno Aquino III discussed the possibility of expanding the regions in Mindanao under the autonomy of Bangsamoro. Under this proposal, BARMM would be an independent region and comprise of more provinces, alongside the Bangsamoro Organic Law allowing self-determination to pursue its economic, social and cultural development. The MNFL group did not support this agreement as it would replace the ARMM and Tripoli Agreement of 1976. In response to this, Nur Misuari's faction organized a militant attack in Zamboanga City in September 2013.

### **Selected Timeline of the Moro Insurgency in the Philippines**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Historical Event</b>
1565	Spanish colonial period in the Philippines.
1872	Spanish Jesuit missionaries established the Tamontaka experiment in Mindanao.
1898	Spanish-American War in the Philippines and the Battle of Manila, followed by the declaration of the Treaty of Paris, which marked the American colonial period in the Philippines.
1899	The Tamontaka project was abolished and replaced by American agricultural colonies project.
1937	The National Development Corporation (NDC) was established under the commonwealth regime of Manuel Quezon to finance the homesteading and resettlement of Filipinos in the island of Mindanao.
1942	Japanese occupation of the Philippines during the Second World War.

- 1942 The Hukbalahap was formed to resist the Japanese invasion.
- 1946 The Philippines gained independence from the United States.
- 1948 The EDCOR was established to resettle dissidents, landless farmers, and Hukbalahap rebels in Mindanao by providing them with farmlands.
- 1965 The beginning of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. presidential reign.
- 1968 The Jabidah Massacre.
- 1968 The founding of the MIM.
- 1970 The MIM was disbanded and replaced by the BMLO.
- 1972 The BMLO was disbanded and the MNLF splinter group was formed.
- 1972 Ferdinand Marcos Sr. declared Martial Law.
- 1973 The AFP began massive military operation to pacify Moro separatism.
- 1974 The MNLF formed their Central Committee in Libya and the Bangsa Moro Army.
- 1974 The MNLF released a manifesto.
- 1976 The Tripoli Agreement
- 1989 The formation of the ARMM
- 1992 The Jakarta Peace Agreement
- 2001 An MNLF faction led by Nur Musuari renewed political activities of separatism to reject the drafting of Bangsamoro Organiz Law that would facilitate the founding of BARMM.
- 2013 The Zamboanga City siege.
- 2019 The ARMM was abolished and replaced by the BARMM.

## Mindanao is in the Heart

The matriarchs<sup>9</sup> in my family (both biological and chosen) have many qualities in common. They are good storytellers and bad historians<sup>10</sup> because they do not rely on time, place, and space when they tell their stories of displacement, home, and belonging. Since they have been in Mindanao for most of their lives, they know that injustices in the Philippines are a continuation of colonialism that is also the cause of ethnoreligious tensions and (in)voluntary movement of people in the region. They understand that the history of Mindanao is pluralistic. As Lumads, Moros, and Christians, we may view ourselves as distinct from one another, embodying unique histories and identities, but as inhabitants of Mindanao, we may share similar futures.

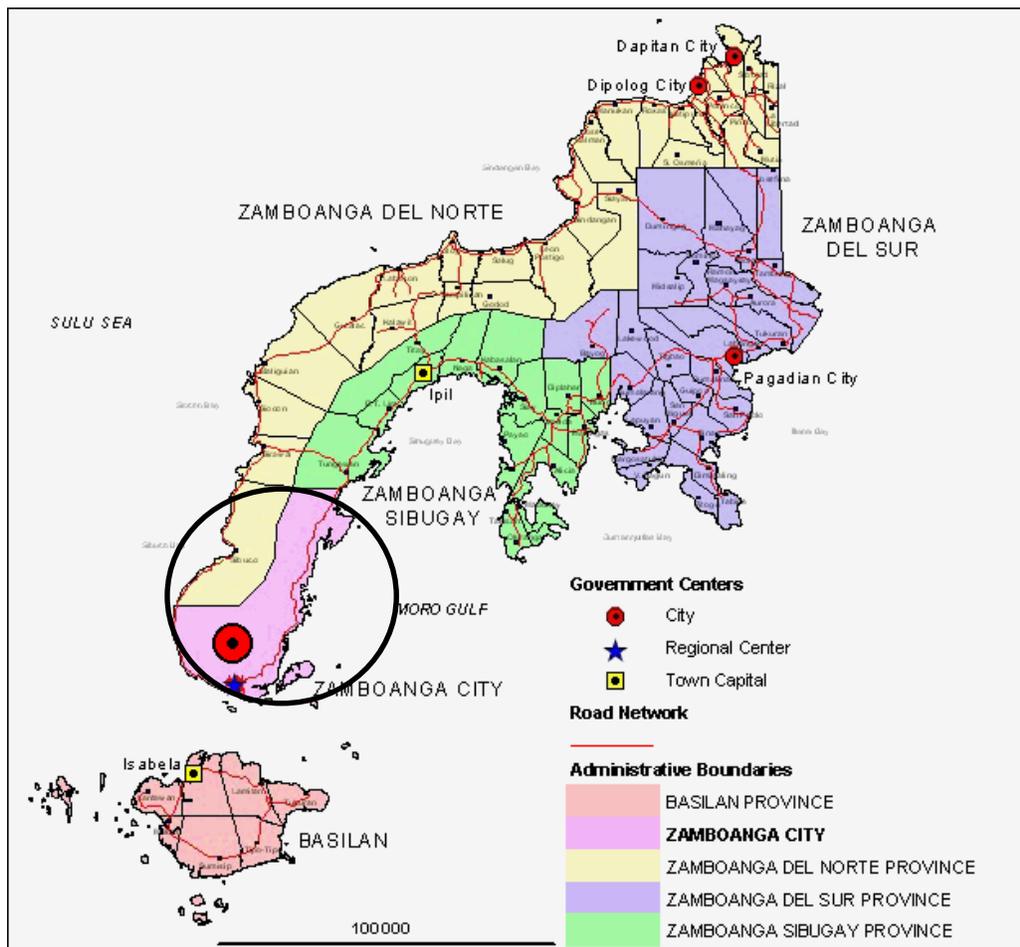
The matriarchs in my family are also travellers. They travel to foreign lands to work as helpers, nannies, entertainers, and nurses. While some had voluntarily returned home, others were forcibly repatriated. Although their reasons for leaving and returning may vary, their migration stories always contain the message that Mindanao is not fixed, its boundaries are constantly changing as people travel to various parts of the globe, carrying with them parts of their homeland. Like the root word of diaspora, we are seeds scattered across. We are birds, unstoppable by borders. But we have also become pieces of lands to claim, open for demarcation.

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<sup>9</sup> The pre-colonial/Hispanic Philippines had a long-standing leadership tradition of women and transvestites or native effeminate men (Garcia, 2004, p. 35; Hega et al., 2017, p. 1), with manifold roles as warrior, healer, priestess, and sage (Villariba 2006, 55). Otherwise known as *babaylan* in the Visayan regions, *catalonan* in Central Luzon, and *baglan* in northern Luzon (Enriquez 1992, 3,) they are specialists in “all kinds of theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon of nature” (Villariba, 2006, p. 55).

<sup>10</sup> My understanding of the bad historian is derived from the medical lexicon ‘the poor historian,’ an expression used by health practitioners to describe a patient who cannot provide a medical history that they can ‘verify’ (Tiemstra 2009, 723). This is also used to express the contradictions in a patient’s description of their medical symptoms (Fisher 2016, 11). I extend beyond this medical definition to draw connection with historians educated under Western canons who tend to demand precise dates and Western-centric sources that may prevent my matriarchs from citing their own understanding of the past.

Adrienne Rich (1984) expresses that to locate ourselves in our bodies, means “recognizing where it has taken [us], including the places it has not let [us] go” (215-216). Terrified that I might lose my sense of self and direction, I brought Zamboanga City with me so I would always ‘feel at home.’ It was this imagination of home that made me feel the concrete effects of the Zamboanga City siege that erupted in September 2013. Even though I was in Canada, I could feel that the city was in distress. I felt the suffocation as some of the residents were covered in body bags and felt deaf as the city was attacked by tanks, bombs, and bullets. I saw Zamboanga City as a burning city engulfed in gradient colours of red, orange, and purple. I also felt the silence when it turned mute to conceal the hiding dwellers.



Map 1: The Site of Study is Zamboanga City in the Island of Mindanao, Philippines  
Source: [https://www.zamboanga.com/html/Zamboanga\\_Peninsula\\_map.htm](https://www.zamboanga.com/html/Zamboanga_Peninsula_map.htm)

The violent conflict between a faction of the MNLF, AFP, and PNP, led to the forced internal displacement of 120,000 individuals, primarily from five affected barangays<sup>11</sup> in Zamboanga City. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals who are forced to flee their homes due to war-like conditions, but do not cross an international border (an important distinction from convention refugees), often rendering them under the protection of the very same government(s) that may be responsible for their displacement (Orchard 2010, 210; Giles 2013, 82). Although the fighting between the MNLF, AFP, and PNP lasted for only 23 days, its aftereffects were widely disastrous with long-lasting implications. The war created homelessness and joblessness, left the city in rubble, and led to hunger, deep poverty, gender and sexual violence, public health outbreaks, and prolonged situations of displacement (Medina 2016, 21; Salazar, Law and Winkler 2018, 5).

However, the narratives of IDPs induced by armed violence in southern Philippines are underrepresented in policy, media, activist, and academic discourses, since they are eclipsed by climate induced displacement or people who flee their homes because of a typhoon (Ginnetti et al. 2013, 7). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2022), between 2008 to 2021, 53.7 million Filipinos had been forcibly displaced by storms and floods, while the number of IDPs triggered by armed violence was three million. Due to the frequency and geographical range of

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<sup>11</sup> All municipalities in the Philippines are subdivided into barangays, the smallest unit of government in the country. It refers to a village, district, ward, or inner-city neighbourhood.

typhoons in the country, more resources are directed toward disaster preparedness, management, and recovery. In line with this discursive and policy gap, the dominant framework used by the state to manage armed conflict displacement is derived from the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (PDRRMA) (Bermudez, Temprosa and Benson 2018, 44). The PDRRMA provides legal guidelines on the “planning processes and implementation of response,” but it is a top-down approach that lacks “participative processes and human rights commitments” including approaches from the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Bermudez, Temprosa and Benson 2018, 45). Moreover, although men and women may have similar experience of displacement, little attention is placed on the lived conditions of women and gender diverse individuals because of androcentric and heteropatriarchal norms that privilege the realities of men (Raven-Roberts 2013, 38; Cohn 2013, 22).

This research is exploratory in nature and sought to uncover the narratives of IDPs displaced by armed violence as opposed to climate-induced forced movements. Additionally, it seeks to correct the androcentric bias in studies of IDPs to understand the intersectional experiences of internally displaced women and gender diverse individuals in southern Philippines, by interrogating dominant ideas about forced migrants from/in the Global South and offering nuances to their everyday lives.

## **Outline of the Work**

The remainder of this thesis is organized into five parts. In chapter two, *Bahala Na (Come What May): Rethinking Displaced Persons’ Agency in the Filipino Cultural Context*, I explore the dominant theories of forced migration and agency. I begin with the theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben

in forced migration studies and argue that while they have greatly contributed to the expansion of the field, they offer limited insights on the question of agency. In the second section of the chapter, I review conceptualizations of agency from two school of thoughts: liberalism and poststructuralism. Both paradigms situate agency in the Western understanding of autonomy, or active and independent resistance against structural conditions. Thus, I offer *bahala na* as a form of decolonial agency that is conceptually grounded in the Filipino cultural context.

Chapter three, *Indigenous Filipino Methodology and Methods*, outlines the methodological framework that shape my research. This chapter describes decolonial Filipino ethnography and how it informed my data collection and analysis. In addition, I discuss my complex and evolving role as a researcher and activist. This chapter outlines the profiles of my research participants and concludes with a discussion of fieldwork challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter four, *Forced to Flee? Agency in Trajectories of Displacement*, draws on my interviews with women and gender diverse IDPs displaced by the Zamboanga siege to explore how they exercised their agency, however limited, to decide where and how to move. The class and ethnoreligious identities of research participants shaped their trajectories of displacement. All Muslim IDP women from low-income households remain in prolonged conditions of displacement, while Catholic IDP women and gender diverse individuals were able to return to a semblance of their lives prior to the siege and consequent displacement.

Chapter five, *Looking for a Safe Haven in a City Torn Apart by War*, examines the contrasting experiences of poor Muslim IDP women and working-class Catholic IDP

women and gender diverse individuals during the humanitarian emergency under study. These experiences were highly structured by their ethnic identities and available social networks. Muslim IDP women who were evacuated to the largest camp site in the city, experienced food insecurity, malnutrition, and communicable diseases. In contrast, Catholic IDP women and gender diverse individuals who were evacuated to Saint Ignatius Institute had no concerns over their daily needs for survival. Similarly, home-based IDPs drew on their network of support to sustain their emotional, financial, and urgent needs. This chapter also discusses the traditional durable solutions of return, local integration, and resettlement to forced migration.

In the concluding chapter, *Another Future is Possible*, I discuss the key findings and contributions of this exploratory research, followed by a discussion of the limitations of my study and avenues for future inquiry.

## Chapter Two: *Bahala Na* (Come What May): Rethinking Displaced Persons' Agency in the Filipino Cultural Context

### Introduction

The conceptual foundation of my research is grounded in the narratives of internally displaced Filipino women and gender diverse individuals in southern Philippines. Particularly influential was a vivid encounter I had with Hyacinth, whom I interviewed and whose response to my question—what does women's rights mean—revealed her capacity to reflect on the entrenched social structures that create the conditions in which she lives and her conceptualization and exercise of agency despite these difficult conditions.

Hyacinth's initial response to this question was laughter, followed by brief silence. When I rephrased the question to ask what women's rights entail for Muslim Filipino like herself, she said that it is "the right to a beautiful life." Although she explained that these rights already exist in Zamboanga City in the form of good employment opportunities, she emphasized that these opportunities are only accessible to some. When I asked Hyacinth if she had ever participated in development projects for women's empowerment while in an evacuation facility following the Zamboanga siege, she was vague in her response and said that there were activities for children and single mothers.

I carried this thought home with me after the interview and reflected on what "the right to a beautiful life" could mean to other research participants and the general residents of Zamboanga City, who also occupy a plurality of social locations. Why would IDP women in Zamboanga City like Hyacinth, who is a widow with four children, be reluctant to engage in activities that were designed to facilitate her empowerment by

challenging her subordination? For someone who had been forcibly displaced twice—the first time in her native hometown in Jolo, and more recently from her settlement in Santa Barbara—Hyacinth has lost control over her life situation as an IDP, yet she refused opportunities to be empowered.

Hyacinth's refusal to participate in women's empowerment projects for IDPs in evacuation facilities, defies dominant Western theories of forced migration and agency that portray forcibly displaced women as voiceless victims. By drawing on decolonial worldviews, I argue that we cannot reduce our understanding of the world to Western paradigms that render the wide and varied lived conditions of displaced individuals into a singular story (Jocson 2009, 34; Orteza 1997, 2; Fernandez 2006, 5; Anzaldúa 1992, 227; Tuck and Yang 2014, 223; Ahmed 2017, 10; Lagmay 2018, 329; Enriquez 1992, 89; Alexander and Mohanty 2010, 27; Mohanty 2003, 503; Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 45, Escobar 2015, 15). To insist on Western theorizations of forced displacement and agency denies the non-normative realities of how people move, and the forces of colonialism and capitalism that cause people to flee (Long 2021, 5). The first section of this chapter briefly explores the theoretical contributions and limitations of Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben in forced migration studies. While they have greatly contributed to the expansion of the field, they lack variations on the question of agency. They reinforce the refugee figure as victims with limited rights and reliant on the sovereign for protection.

The next section reviews mainstream theorizations of agency in forced migration studies within two school of thoughts: liberalism and poststructuralism. These paradigms reduce the understanding of agency to perceptions of limited or lack of

control forced migrants have when making decisions about mobility. In doing so, they undermine the fluidity of agency that is enacted by displaced persons in multiple temporalities. It is in the final section where I offer alternative ways to recognize the agency of Filipino IDPs through the vernacular *bahala na* (come what may). *Bahala na* stimulates courage and facilitates creativity, allowing IDPs in Zamboanga City to act in their “own capacity to change the[ir] present problematic condition[s]” (Enriquez 1992, 89).

### **Dominant Approaches to the Study of Forced Displacement**

The refugee figure emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the creation of modern nation-states often went hand in hand with large-scale population displacement (Oskay 2016, 23; Bloch and Doná 2019, 3). In academic scholarship, the figure of the refugee was introduced as a mode of inquiry in law and legal studies (Banerjee and Samaddar 2019, 44), constituting refugee studies. These legal conceptualizations were criticized for “dehumanis[ing] the field” (Banerjee and Samaddar 2019, 44), by portraying forced migrants as criminals and potential terrorists, or as victims in need of rescue (Mainwaring 2016, 289-290). Outside of these rigid legal conceptualizations, sociologists and anthropologists were concerned with studying the mechanism of how states deal with the migration of formerly colonized people (Banerjee and Samaddar 2019, 44). This includes the research of Elizabeth Colson (1971) in “Japanese-American internment camps in the 1940s and her analysis of colonized populations’ experiences of displacement and forced resettlement in the 1950s and 1960s” (as cited in Fiddian-Qamiyeh et al. 2014, 2).

Historically, while occurrences of involuntary movement had always happened, it was never considered a crisis to be contained until the 'end' of colonialism when the racially/ethnically and religiously different people began moving from the Global South to the Global North (Banerjee and Samaddar 2019, 44; Betts and Loescher 2011, 15). Xenophobic tendencies of nation building led to framing large-scale involuntary movements of racialized/ethnic/national Others as a crisis or problem. One of the overarching frameworks for refugee protection is the 1951 Geneva Convention, which defines a refugee as a person who:

owing to a well-founded fear or being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to, or owing to such a fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (as quoted in Bloch and Doná 2019, 4).

With "the establishment of international refugee regime and the institutionalization of the legal category of 'the refugee'" (Oskey 2016, 23), migration-receiving countries in the West could justify their formulation of discriminatory policies to regulate and correct the movement of (un)wanted people using rationales of austerity, national security, and nationhood.

The 'turn' away from refugee studies into forced migration studies began in the 1980s to recognize the changing profile of forcibly displaced individuals, including their patterns and experiences of crossing borders (Bloch and Doná 2019, 3; Fiddian-Qamiyeh et al. 2014, 2). The shift in terminology includes refugees, asylum seekers, and those who are internally displaced by "conflict, famine, development projects, chemical or nuclear wars or natural and environmental disaster" (Bloch and Doná 2019, 3). This shift also signifies the ethical responsibility of scholars "not to adopt categorical

distinctions which, while perhaps administratively convenient, fail to reflect the true substantive differences” (Hathaway 2007, 351).

Another important development in the field of forced migration studies in the 1980s was the scholarly contribution of Barbara Harrell-Bond. In *Imposing Aid* (1986), she reminds scholars that “research *about* refugees should be used *for* refugees’ rights and agency throughout the processes of displacement” (emphasis not mine) (as cited Fiddian-Qamiyeh et al. 2014, 2-3). Accordingly, scholars who were based in the Global South marked this shift by not setting clear boundaries among different categories of voluntary migration or otherwise. They did not separate refugee studies from “bonded labour, indentured labour, village to city labour migration and forms of servitude” (Banerjee and Samaddar 2019, 45). Despite these developments, the intellectual antecedents pertaining to the regulation of borders and bodies are often associated with the scholarship of Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben.

Although Foucault was not a forced migration scholar, as he never examined the refugee figure in his historical inquiry, his understanding of biopolitics has inspired many contemporary scholars to draw connections between the regulation of life in prisons to that in asylums (Saunders 2016, 10; Abbas 2019, 2452). He argues in *The History of Sexuality* (1998) that power no longer resides in the sovereign as observed in the 17th century, when the sovereign had the monopoly of power over life and death (Foucault 1998, 137-142). Foucault describes that in modern states, the exercise of power has shifted from “the right to take life or let live,” into the management of bodies and populations (Hess 2017, 21). Applying Foucauldian analysis in forced migration studies reveals how forcibly displaced individuals—refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs—

occupy a specific category that is outside the norm of the territorially-bounded citizens (Saunders 2016, 79). As anomalies, they distort the order of things and must be regulated and reproduced as “voiceless, apolitical, [and] victim” without legitimate choice and agency (Saunders 2016, 80).

In a similar vein, in *We Refugees* (1994), Arendt presents the figure of refugees as merely victims of conflicts outside of a political community, without rights as set by a sovereign (as cited in Hess 2017, 26). She outlines in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966) that in the aftermath of the First World War when countries attempted to “lump together many peoples in single states,” some were designated as minorities to be governed by special regulations (as cited in Saunders 2016, 115). As minorities, they are partially stateless and partially exiled because they are outside the legal protection of a sovereign. It is in *The Human Conditions* (1958) where Arendt explains that in becoming refugees, they lose “the entire social texture into which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world” (293).

Agamben has been by far the most influential figure in forced migration studies (Owens 2009, 567; Ramadan 2013, 67; Saunders 2016, 7). In *Homo Sacer* (1998), he explains that forcibly displaced individuals appear “as a human life without citizenship,” who meddle with the assumed continuities between “birth and nationality,” whereby those who are born in their country of origin are by default a citizen with inalienable rights (Ramadan 2013, 68). Since forcibly displaced individuals are non-citizens, they are excluded from the protection of the host country where they apply for asylum. They are only included in the legal framework of protection for the purpose of regulating their movement and prolonging their life in exile (Ramadan 2013, 68).

While Foucault, Arendt, and Agamben have greatly contributed to the understanding of forced migration, they offer limited insights on the question of agency. Their theorization of the lived conditions of forcibly displaced individuals are restrictive and essentialist, reinforcing the refugee figure as victims with limited rights and reliant on the sovereign for protection. Forcibly displaced individuals are constrained by the labels ascribed by national refugee regimes and international systems of refugee determination and protection (Saunders 2016, 109). For Foucault, Arendt, and Agamben, forcibly displaced individuals possess limited capacity to consciously act against structural conditions to fulfill their needs and desires.

Although forced migrants do not necessarily agree with this portrayal, challenging their victimhood in policy, media, activist, and academic discourses could heavily influence the way their claims for protection are treated (Oskay 2016, 25; Mainwaring 2016, 290). After all, Western countries set the terms of engagement for 'correcting' illiberal, weak, or failed countries in the Global South that produce forced migrants (Lippert 1999, 304; Betts and Loescher 2011, 15). In addition, the limited representation of forced migrants can be attributed to Western paradigms with vestiges of colonialism and domination. Foucault and Agamben rely on the explanation of the 'modern man' by Aristotle, who once described the enslavement of non-Western people as just and beneficial. Arendt draws influence from Heidegger, a confirmed Nazi Party member who "never expressed a word of regret for the horrors perpetuated by the Third Reich" (Rubenstein 1989, 179). Their theorization of forced migration mostly excludes the role and representation of the subordinated group under study in knowledge production. It

also preserves the monopoly that institutions in the Global North have in forced migration studies (Hampton et al. 2020, par. 5).

### **Mainstream Theorization of Agency in Forced Migration**

Early theories of agency are steeped in the liberal conception of autonomy, or the active and independent resistance against structural conditions (Showden 2011, 2; Kanal and Rottman 2021, 1-3; Cadena-Camargo et al. 2019, 4). Conversely, poststructuralist approaches reveal that agency does not stem from individual choices, but “a product of social and discursive structure” (Oskay 2016, 32). These early theories of agency that are predominant in social sciences, overlook other expressions of agency that are grounded in the local cultural context. Liberal conceptualization of agency is overly individualistic and ethnocentric (Isaacs 2013, 129), while poststructuralist approaches deny individuals any capacity to “apply a certain level of consciousness to their actions” (Oskay 2016, 36). In reality, the capacity for human agency is exercised in a continuum between individual choice and structural conditions.

Within migration studies, immigrants are perceived as strategic actors who carefully weigh their options when choosing to migrate, although oftentimes for selfless reasons, such as to improve the living condition of their families (Hari 2018, 547-548; Paret and Gleeson 2016, 282; Kanal and Rottman 2021, 1). In contrast, forced migrants are portrayed with little to no agency because the forced/coerced rationale for migration is uncritically extrapolated to be a lack of decision-making power in all situations that follow their displacement (Moore and Shellman 2006, 599). In addition, the dominant manner of studying the agency of forcibly displaced persons is heavily influenced by examining their efforts to change their situations of protracted victimhood (Kanal and

Rottman 2021, 3), without recognizing that “the capacity to endure, suffer and persist” in itself as a form of agency (Mahmood 2001, 217). Accordingly, racialized men are usually understood as the primary decision makers who tend to limit their displacements (Vignal 2021, 171), but are often portrayed as criminals, fraudsters, or potential terrorists (Mainwaring 2016, 290). This is attributed to how black and brown bodies had been historically framed in Western culture as essentially strong and masculine, who lack modesty, sexual purity, and innocence (Gray and Franck 2019, 279). Similar colonial representations were deployed in the aftermath of 9/11 and ‘war on terror,’ particularly in relation to forced migrants from Arab nations, which persists in the rampant Islamophobia in many traditionally immigrant-receiving countries (Gray and Franck 2019, 279).

In contrast, women are represented as voiceless, apolitical, pitiful, and in need of rescue (Kanal and Rottman 2021, 3; Mainwaring 2016, 290). While framing themselves as victims of war may make them look innocent and vulnerable, which could potentially lead to additional legal protection of refugee women and sexual minorities, this could also further reinforce the narrative of victimhood (Cadena-Camargo et al. 2019, 3). Alternatively, actively speaking out about their experience of violence could bring them a sense of empowerment and allow them to regain their autonomy (Cadena-Camargo et al. 2019, 3). This is also dangerous, however, because it illustrates that agency can only be recognized when women and sexual minorities actively resist heteropatriarchal oppression from their own culture (Kanal and Rottman 2021, 3).

These gendered and structural narratives of victimhood do not acknowledge that vulnerability and resistance are not mutually exclusive. As Saba Mahmood (2005)

reminds us, we must refuse the understanding of agency from the lens of subordination and resistance, because “just as our own lives don’t fit neatly into such a paradigm, neither should we apply such as reduction to the lives of [forcibly displaced] women” and sexual minorities (174). In line with this argument, Carisa Showden (2011) explains that manifestations of agency are shaped by which aspect of one’s positionality is made most salient in specific times and places (19). It can “open and close, ebb and flow, not simply grow or increase throughout time” (Showden 2011, 19).

### **Practices of Decolonial Agency: *Bahala Na* (Welcoming What Comes)**

While there have been attempts to decolonize approaches to forced migration studies, they tend to be centred on the Western construction of dichotomy between the Global North and South. In conversation Nof Nasser-Eddin and Nour Abu-Assab (2020) claim that policymakers, academics, and the media frame Northern states “as if they’re the safe haven, as if they’re the best place to be for all these disadvantaged” forced migrants (2). Countries in the Global South where forced migrants go to seek protection are called “transits,” even though many forced migrants “don’t want to carry on with the journey to reach Western countries” (Nasser-Eddin and Abu-Assab 2020, 2).

In addition to this criticism of the Global North-South binary, some scholars attempt to decolonize forced migration studies by correcting the reliance on the scholarship of the ‘holy trinity’ of postcolonialism. While Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979), Hommi Bhabha’s *Location of Culture* (1994), and Gayatri Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) have brought to life how non-Western countries and people are represented as inferior and always in opposition to Western culture, they have also been criticized for their “epistemological indebtedness to Western discourses such as

postmodernism and poststructuralism” (Ahluwalia 2001, 1 as cited in Adeniyi-Ogunyankin 2019, 5). Therefore, to counter this singular story or what Nasser-Eddin and Abu-Assab describe as “the imposition of certain terminologies, [and] the imposition of certain practices on the [G]lobal South,” we must shift our attention to trajectories of migration among Southern countries, from the Global North to South, and the ways Northern countries and governments “are themselves involved in creating forced migration and displacement” (2020, 191-192).

Building on this momentum, I argue that *bahala na* is a form of decolonial agency that is rooted in indigenous Filipino spirituality (Gripaldo 2005, 194).<sup>12</sup> While Western scholars interpret *bahala na* as an escapist cultural value or passive acceptance of difficult situations (Bostrom 1986 as cited in Enriquez 1992, 88), *bahala na* is uttered in conditions of extreme uncertainty that call for immediate attention (Rafael 2010, 157). What makes *bahala na* suited to the theorization of Filipino agency is that it is deeply rooted in the Filipino culture of “willingness to expose oneself to chance, to face the unknown...to be free for a future that is yet to come” (Rafael 2010, 157), allowing individuals to reflect on and improvise strategies to cope with unpredictable and stressful predicaments (Enriquez 1992, 89; Lagmay 2018, 329).

In this study, I apply *bahala na* to understand the constrained agency exercised by IDP women and gender diverse individuals to determine where and how they move. Their enactment of *bahala na* in southern Philippines can be distinguished by class and ethnoreligious identities. They expressed *bahala na*, or the Filipino cultural context of

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<sup>12</sup> *Bahala na* is derived from the word *Bathala* (cosmic being), but it later came to be associated with the Christian God after the arrival of Spanish missionaries in the country. My use of *bahala na* is rooted in indigenous Filipino culture of flexibility and adaptability.

agency, at different times throughout their trajectories of displacement. Their approaches constantly changed depending on new information and opportunities presented to them along the way.

Moreover, *bahala na* goes beyond the Western paradigms of the refugee figure and agency, by challenging the essentializing and silencing narratives of IDPs as powerless victims with unknowable agency (Moulin and Nyers 2007, 370). Filipino IDP women and gender diverse individuals do not always rely on national refugee regimes and international systems of refugee determination and protection to guide their life in exile. They are consciously and actively engaged in social networks to navigate structural forces beyond their control (Harpviken 2009, 18), and improvise their “behaviour to make it attuned to [their] changing situations” of forced displacement (Lagmay 2018, 329).

## Chapter Three: Indigenous Filipino Methodology and Methods

### Introduction

I began this project with the aim of exploring different forms of qualitative methodologies to find approaches that would be culturally responsive to my project goals and setting. During my 'field' visit, I felt disconnected from my research participants and began to realize that I held a distorted geographic imagination of Zamboanga City. I carried a fixed image of 'home' when I left the Philippines eleven years ago, which is the focus of my discussion in this chapter. Accordingly, I explain how the direction of my project has shifted and transformed as I realized the potential of *kuwentuhan* (sharing of stories) in multisituated ethnography, defined by Kaushik Sunder Rajan (2021) as sensitive to the "descriptions of the world we live in and the stuff of the world our research projects interrogate" (5). The ordinary and ubiquitous nature of *kuwentuhan* allowed me to recognize how the research participants in this study reflected on why they still call Zamboanga City home, despite the precarious forms of belonging they described during our conversations. I also describe the project design, recruitment of research participants, interviews, and analysis conducted during my three-month long 'fieldwork' in Zamboanga City. I conclude with discussion of some of the challenges I encountered while conducting 'fieldwork' in the Philippines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Methodological Framework

Sometimes, I find myself staring at my mother's hands.  
She will never know the pain I feel inside.  
Her hands, covered in thick layers of callouses she accumulated throughout her lifetime of cleaning, cooking, and caring for others.

I wonder what stories and dreams I could find from shedding the dead skins off of her hands.

Hardworking women impatiently waiting in line at the jeepney terminal.  
A Tausug grandmother peddling colourful candles outside the shrine.  
And women who could hire other women to do their laundry.  
I wonder if they share my mother's stories and dreams.<sup>13</sup>

When I returned to Zamboanga City in late June 2021 after being away for over a decade, I wanted to fulfill my longing for stories that could embrace the contradictions of my younger self—stories that could naturally roll off my mother's tongue. Yet, when I began 'fieldwork,'<sup>14</sup> I learned that my interview guide, prepared before arriving in the Philippines, as part of the tedious research ethics process, did not encourage research participants to be frank and open during our conversations about their experience of displacement, home, and belonging. I felt a palpable disconnect from them, perhaps because I continued to hold an image of my 'home' from eleven years ago when I left Zamboanga City. The bazaar that once stood near the General Hospital had been razed by fire, and the pedicabs parked symmetrically outside of Waray Street had been evicted by rapid urbanization. Even though I did not return to 'go back' but to gather

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<sup>13</sup> This was a reflection I wrote based on what I observed about the mundane life in Zamboanga City and on my interactions with the residents including gatekeepers and research participants.

<sup>14</sup> Throughout this thesis, I put scare quotes in 'fieldwork,' 'in the field,' and at 'home' as a refusal to the notion that the field and self are separate. Kim V.L. England (1994) explains that in feminist research, "the researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork *is* personal" (249). For someone like myself with hyphenated identities (e.g., Filipino-Canadian, student-activist) my relationship to the 'field' is not only personal because I am an insider to the community I am researching, but also because I am situated within the larger political and historical structures of colonialism and capitalism. Whether my research participants and I are displaced voluntarily or otherwise, the underlying reasons of our uprootedness are inseparably tied from the interlocking systems of oppression and domination. When I speak of the 'field,' I simultaneously speak of my native 'home' in the Philippines that I could not return to for so long and of my 'home' in Canada where I am a native informant. By putting scare quotes in these words, I acknowledge the fluidity and contradiction of my positionality, including the ambiguousness of doing transnational work. See also Abu-Lughod (1991), Mullings (1999), Kobayashi (1994), Adeniyi-Ogunyankin (2019), Nagar and Geiger (2007), Nencel (2005), and Khan (2005).

research data as part of my thesis, I could not fully integrate myself into the mundane lives of the residents even after three months of 'fieldwork.'

I had forgotten that in my absence, the city and its residents had also changed. Zamboanga City was no longer the city of flowers and the city that sparkled at night. I learned informally that for eight years since the siege, residents could no longer celebrate with fireworks because the sounds of 'whistle and bang' bring unpleasant memories. Strangely enough, the traffic jam, noise pollution, and the smell of salt water in the peninsula have lived on, including my distinct memory of when people leave at sundown, the birds return to the *pueblo* (downtown).

I was a traveller in my own land, a status that carried "some degree of freedom in being able to return and leave at will" (Sircar 2020, 776), especially at a time of global disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This made me more conscious of how my ethnographic "practices are interwoven with processes of imperialism and neo-colonialism" (Nagar and Geiger 2007, 271). I did not want to engage in voyeurism and be another ethnographer involved in the extraction of knowledge from non-western societies (Agustín 2004, 6; Sherif 2001, 436; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 17).<sup>15</sup> Even though feminism has been critical of androcentrism in ethnography and has offered alternatives to the positivist model, some feminists continue to employ methods with vestiges of colonial and imperial domination (Adeniyi Ogunyankin, 2014, 61; Gordon, 2019, 54; Avishai et al. 2012, 405; Stacey 1988, 22; Bourgois and Schonberg

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<sup>15</sup> Historically, ethnography has been a handmaiden of colonialism. Positivist epistemology uses the West as the barometer of modernity, whereby non-Western societies can be ranked and measured. Through the ethnographic gaze, diverse indigenous cultures in the Global South have been essentialized as barbaric and primitive. To understand the connections between positivist epistemology, colonialism, Christianity, and the pseudo-science of Darwinism, see Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Hall (1992), Clifford (1998), Haraway (1998), and Wynter (2003). As for information about the history of ethnography, see Bourgois and Schonberg (2009).

2009, 17; Wynter 2003, 266). Women from non-Western societies have been discursively framed as 'Third World Women,' succinctly described as traditional bound, domesticated, ignorant, poor, and unaware of their agency (Mohanty, 1988, 80).

I want to dismantle this colonial practice of epistemic violence that "reduce[s] human beings to 'data' bearers (Kondo 1968, 61). Through the process of indigenization from within that is "anchored on Filipino thought and experience as understood from a Filipino perspective" (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000, 50), we can attend to the needs of ordinary Filipinos.<sup>16</sup> With this approach, I aim to generate counternarratives of the victimization of internally displaced Filipinos who are frequently linked to the logic of 'white man's burden.' This is not to diminish their experience of violence, but by controlling their images as simply victimized and reliant on humanitarian aid, we are stripping them of their human agency and ignoring the non-normative ways they enact their aspirations in life.<sup>17</sup>

A breakthrough in my ethnographic research happened when I came across *kuwentuhan* (sharing of stories) while "imagining alternative ways of seeing the world and [our]selves differently" (Jocson 2009, 34). In indigenous Filipino culture, *kuwentuhan* is a natural practice used in the telling and retelling of everyday experiences with family and community members (Orteza 1997, 2; Jocson 2009, 34). Although Filipino vernaculars have been historically dismissed as inferior to the

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<sup>16</sup> "Indigenization from within" is an approach developed in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (indigenous Filipino Psychology), which means to derive ideas from the Filipino language, culture, history and socio-cultural conditions, emotions, habits, behaviours, surroundings, and the soul (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000, 50-52).

<sup>17</sup> Eve Tuck (2009) describes that most social science research driven by theories of change are damage-centered. While documenting stories of pain and oppression of marginalized communities may reveal colonial exploitation, they can also essentialize these communities as broken. Thus, Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2014) urge research communities to utilize a desire-based framework of looking at the past and the future with a sense of hope (231).

language of our colonial masters, regarded as unrefined and non-scientific (Rafael 2021, 123), ‘indigenization from within’ requires us to reject the dominance of Western methodology alone to articulate our lived conditions.<sup>18</sup> Using and relying on the same approaches used to control us is a form of erasure, and Filipino epistemology “cannot live or flourish in a borrowed tongue” (Fernandez 2006, 5). With the revalidation of indigenous Filipino ideas, we can develop “approaches that do not silence us” (Anzaldúa 1992, 277); we can refuse research (Tuck and Yang 2014, 223); and can bring knowledge and “worlds that otherwise would not be here” (Ahmed 2017, 10).

In reclaiming *kuwentuhan*, we not only illustrate how stories affect us collectively, but we also honour the lives of others who made it possible for us to indulge in the joy of sharing stories. In the three months I spent researching ‘in the field’ between July and September 2021, I learned the myriad ways *kuwentuhan* travel through “continuous and constant interaction with others” (Jocson 2009, 31). What residents truly liked and disliked about living in Zamboanga City was expressed when doing mundane things, such as selling street foods or listening to a battery-operated radio. *Kuwentuhan* was also etched on the walls of Fort Pilar that survived 386 years of colonial erasure, serving as an archive of stories about our love and dream for freedom. I carried *kuwentuhan* around Zamboanga City with me, sometimes concealed underneath the masks I wore, bringing me back to the realities of a global crisis. Although *kuwentuhan* became less visible, it was not less expressive, less magical, or less powerful.

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<sup>18</sup> See Feliciano (1982) for the limitations of Western social science research methods in rural Philippines. See also Cesar Espiritu (1982) for the inapplicability of Western social science research methods in Asian societies.

## Research Design

Before I embarked 'into the field' and while still in Canada, I conducted pilot interviews online, with three Filipino women from Zamboanga City in February 2021. These pilot interviews were useful to test and revise my interview guide. My primary concern was designing questions that would enable research participants to reflect on their experience without evoking unpleasant memories. Two of the women I interviewed are from my old neighbourhood in Waray, who are in their mid-forties with similar socioeconomic status and educational attainment; one is a widow and the other is separated. These women directed the flow of our conversations without any hesitation. The third woman I interviewed was only 19 years old during the Zamboanga City siege. She is now employed as an administrative aide in the local Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). When asked of what she dislikes about living in Zamboanga City, her response contained several pauses, silences, and word whickers (e.g., ahh, uhm). Their stories of involuntary displacement were directly tied to their identities and connection to Zamboanga City. The research participants in the pilot interviews who are older than me, claimed more experience and expressed a stronger connection to home. They felt more confident in telling me what they wanted me to know. The age and place in the bureaucracy of the third research participant made her cautious in what she shared with me and suspicious of what I might do with the information.

To facilitate "a more informal, relaxed encounter" with my research participants while 'in the field,' I adapted *kuwentuhan* into my semi-structured interview format (Ong 2018, 14). This was supplemented by observation, fieldnotes, and discourse analysis as

commonly espoused in ethnography (Craven and Davis 2016, 81-95). Since I was born and raised in the Philippines, I speak some of the languages widely spoken in Zamboanga City. I facilitated *kuwentuhan* in English, Tagalog, Chavacano, and Cebuano languages to allow research participants to recollect, in their own words, their experiences of the armed conflict in Zamboanga City. Letting participants articulate their experiences in their mother tongues was intended to encourage a sense of empowerment and liberation, because it facilitated their capacity to “perceive [themselves] as people who feel, people who will, people who think, and people who act as a whole” (Mendoza Strobel 2005, 27). This created space for research participants to centre their stories of displacement, home and belonging from their own standpoint, producing specific knowledge (Rose 1997, 307) that could be recorded for research.

## **Recruitment**

As a student-activist-scholar, “my work is grounded in the politics, practices and languages of the various communities I come from, and the social justice movements to which I am committed” (Thobani 2001, 140). When I began my ‘fieldwork,’ I had already been involved in community organizing with the local chapter of Anakbayan in Ottawa. Anakbayan is a mass organization of Filipino youth that aims to mobilize youth workers, farmers, urban poor, students, women, and migrants for national democracy with a socialist perspective. In the Philippines, social activism has been framed by the government as synonymous to terrorism. Thus, to publicly identify yourself as an activist is to mark yourself as a terrorist, who is non-livable and non-grievable.

Many of my *kasamas* (comrades) in the Philippines have been arrested, detained, abducted, or murdered by the Philippine security forces for defending the

land, advocating labour rights, and resisting mining activities. Such events have intensified and become more frequent under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, who signed the Anti-Terror Law in July 2020, which gives the Philippine security forces the power to punish anyone suspected of “terrorism through speeches, proclamations, writing, emblems, banners and other representations” (Mccarthy 2021, par. 3). The overly broad definition of this law infringes on the exercise of civil rights, such as advocacy and protest. The Philippine government has been ‘red-tagging’ activists as terrorists, such as feminist organizations who are accused of recruiting young women to become militants.<sup>19</sup> The transnational power of such media studies was confirmed during a discussion I had in March 2021 with a Filipino woman in Ottawa. When I asked if she had ever heard of *feminista*, she replied by clarifying if I meant *comunista*.

The targeting of political dissent extends beyond community organizations; it includes the suppression of press freedom, such as the shutting down of ABS-CBN, a major news outlet in the country for being critical of the government in their reports. Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa, a journalist and founder of an independent news outlet, Rappler, has been arrested twice, accused of fraud and tax evasion, and convicted of libel by the government.<sup>20</sup> Since President Rodrigo Duterte came into power in 2016, 22 journalists have been killed. In addition, researchers who are based in the Philippines and express their criticisms of the government’s anti-drug campaigns have been victims of outright shootings and killings that remain unsolved, generating

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<sup>19</sup> See Ferreras (2019), Talabong (2020), and Rita (2020).

<sup>20</sup> News report about the verdict of Maria Ressa is available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/14/business/maria-ressa-verdict-philippines-rappler.html>

fear throughout the country. I anticipated that this generalized sense of fear would negatively affect the recruitment of research participants and data collection, as it had for other researchers conducting fieldwork in the country. Emma Porio and Justin See (2017) explain that in decades of conducting field studies throughout the country, they had never received calls from the local government officials asking about their personal information and the legitimacy of their project until recently.

The political violence in the Philippines requires field researchers to constantly reflect on the ethical impact of their methodological choices (Müller-Funk 2021, 2308). While I reflected on some ethical questions when completing the research ethics review process in Canada, I could not anticipate the full range of issues that could arise during 'fieldwork.' While there are ethical guidelines for conducting research with forcibly displaced communities, namely the Code of Ethics developed by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), these guidelines do not respond "to the everyday issues that can arise in the process of research" (Müller-Funk 2021, 2309). As a result, researchers like myself who are accountable to multiple communities are left to navigate the competing interests of various individuals and make necessary decisions.

To guarantee that no harm would come to my research participants for sharing their stories of forced displacement and to protect myself in the context of ongoing political violence and increased militarization as a result of the pandemic, I employed strategic non-disclosure (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin 2019, 1390), intended to mitigate the potential negative consequences of my project (Abdelnour and Abu Moghli 2021, 2). While I recognize the potential harm in removing the opportunity for research

participants to respond to aspects of my hidden identities (Sou 2021, 473), partially concealing my current studies (MA in women's and gender studies) and affiliation with Anakbayan Ottawa was an important and difficult decision. The ongoing practices of red-tagging of activists in the Philippines and heightened military presence severely restricting movements in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, led me to believe that strategic non-disclosure was vital to prevent my research participants and myself as a scholar-activist from facing public humiliation or state-sanctioned violence. Additionally, I did not want to leave a bad impression on some of my gatekeepers whom I relied on for access to information.

Many of my gatekeepers, identified through my network of personal contacts, including my friends, family, kin, and community members, are politically conservative, supporting controversial figures, notably President Rodrigo Duterte who has instigated genocide against the poor under the guise of the war on drugs. This also includes Manny Pacquiao who publicly condemns homosexuality by describing us as worse than animals. Majority of the residents in Zamboanga City I interacted with believe the propaganda being circulated by presidential candidate Bongbong Marcos Jr., who promises a return to the golden era when the Philippines was the barometer of modernization in Asia during the dictatorship of his late father, Ferdinand Marcos Sr. On one occasion, I had to sit in the living room of one of my gatekeepers to watch a 20-minute YouTube video describing how the first People's Power Revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos Sr. was staged by liberal party. What these public figures share is their strong criticism towards community organizations with feminist principles. While my *kasamas* in Anakbayan Ottawa and Migrante Ottawa connected me with some local

community organizations in the Philippines (e.g., Katribu Youth, Gabriela Philippines, and Bahaghari) who could help me circulate my recruitment poster, I was not successful in securing research participants from them.

Despite the politics of my gatekeepers, they played a critical role in helping disseminate my recruitment poster and in identifying individuals who met the inclusion criteria (see Appendix F). Potential research participants could show their interest in participating by contacting me directly via the email in the recruitment poster. Only research participants who agreed to be audio-recorded were chosen for the interview. They were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and provided with written copies of the consent form, alongside a letter describing the thesis project (see Appendices A and B).

My gatekeepers had a wealth of information about the siege from their individual experiences of being forcibly displaced, by assisting some IDPs, and by following the news that unfolded until the city was reconstructed. Being privy to this wide-ranging information also meant that they had preconceived notions about my project and much advice to shape its direction. A primary avenue for them to exert their influence was in their suggestions of who to recruit. In one instance, someone expressed that he knows of people who had been held hostages and used as 'human shields' during the fighting between the MNLF, AFP, and PNP. I explained to them the potential danger in this, as I did not want to violate my ethics protocol by evoking traumatic memories during the interview. Although I could not identify their agenda in suggesting this story, I assumed it had to do with the fetishization of victimhood.

Another gatekeeper recruited two men for the project, but I only learned of this on the day of the interview. Rather than declining them, I asked if I could interview their wives instead. I also offered to reschedule the interview in case their wives could not make it because of other commitments. This was surprising because I was very clear about my inclusion criteria. I interpreted this as a demonstration of the tension between the undue influence of my gatekeeper and my research goals.

One gatekeeper also implied that she could help me recruit research participants, if I would buy the sacks of rice I would give my participants as compensation for their time, from her. In my attempt to decline politely this request, I expressed that I wanted to give my research participants money to compensate for their time, considering that many lost their jobs because of the Covid-19 pandemic. At this suggestion, the same gatekeeper was critical of this approach and advised against giving honoraria. The reasons stated for this was the potential for undue/ill-advised personal gain, in that the money would only be used by research participants for gambling or taken away by their husbands who would use it to buy liquor. During this exchange, the gatekeeper was unable to see the irony in their demands of me. Similar hypocritical narratives were also expressed by some people I know who work for the DSWD, including social workers themselves.

Due to these lingering concerns, I was afraid that research participants recruited through my gatekeepers would carry preconceived notions of me and my project, limiting their willingness to participate and/or restricting my ability to build rapport. To minimize these potential biases, I also recruited research participants by calling some establishments in Zamboanga City. I asked banks, boutiques, and restaurants located

in the town centre if they have employees who had been displaced by the siege and would be interested in an informal discussion about their experience. I was successful in securing one participant who identified as a man but proposed his wife be interviewed instead, to which I enthusiastically agreed. I later learned that we share a mutual acquaintance and asked this person if she could help build trust with the participant I had recently secured. In addition, when I asked her if she had any Muslim coworkers I could potentially interview for this project, she nonchalantly said that they “do not hire their kind here.” This blatant discrimination left me feeling angry and representative of why I sometimes find it hard to love the Philippines even though I still call it ‘home.’

Given these numerous challenges, recruitment had both successes and failure, both of which challenges the traditional boundaries of ethnographic research. In the process of recruiting from local establishments, a contact asked if I was a journalist as she would be interested in sharing her story. When I asked for her contact information and informed her that I was a graduate student, she did not respond to my invitation to meet. Conversely, I recruited a drag performer at a birthday party I attended. On the day of the interview, she brought someone else with her. He was a gay man and was also displaced by the siege in Zamboanga City. Although he did not meet the inclusion criteria, I still proceeded with the interview as I was afraid that refusing him may discourage the other respondent from participating.

I initially perceived the action of the drag queen as a way of challenging the research boundaries and the power relations between us. At the same time, I reflected on our previous communications and realized there was nothing to suggest that she could not bring a friend for support. In fact, two other research participants brought their

husbands with them during the interview and notified me in advance. Alternatively, this decolonizes the requirement of research institutions and ethics demands concerning individual participation. The realities ‘in the field’ and the nature of this project involved the recollection of sensitive topics, which was often aided by having someone else present, including safety concerns.

## **Interviews**

I began each interview by introducing myself, explaining the consent form, which the participants signed. All interviews took place at mutually convenient, safe locations that included the home, workplace, school, and restaurants. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, public facilities had reduced capacity, allowing us to observe social distancing and have some privacy. I planned the interview questions to last for one hour, but participants had the right to stop the interview at any time, skip any questions they did not feel comfortable with, or withdraw their full participation from the project without penalty. I also assured that they would still receive the sack of rice (25 kg) as promised in recognition of their time, regardless of whether they completed, withdrew, or ended the interview. Research participants were also provided with a list of community resources offering mental health services (see Appendix E). While they appreciated the list of community resources, they did not ask any questions about it. I suspected that they were already aware of these services. More importantly, there is a stigma surrounding mental health in the Philippines and seeking these “services come with the acknowledgement that they have a problem” (Nguyen 2021, 24).

Almost all interviews I conducted followed a similar structure and allowed me to identify which language(s) research participants could speak fluently. Typically, I started

with questions about their identities and backgrounds. Next, I asked research participants to describe their trajectory of displacement, based on what they could remember from September 9th, 2013, when the siege erupted, including questions about their lives in exile and stories of return or relocation (see Appendix D). During interviews, I also asked research participants probing questions about politics, women's empowerment, LGBTIQ rights, and religion to understand how they made connections between various social issues in the Philippines.

It was during the last set of questions that I noted some issues with language and translation. While I translated my interview questions in Tagalog with the help of a Filipino high school teacher, I did not translate them back to English to allow for "accuracy and cultural sensitivity" (Rizkalla and Segal 2019, 3). As a result, some research participants did not fully understand what I meant by women's rights. Some of their responses resonated with heteropatriarchal norms, such as "*responsable pagka babayi*" (responsible womanhood) while others associated it with respect for others and of self.

I relied on *pakikiramdam* (shared inner perception) to sense nonverbal cues of research participants. During colonial times, the "indirectness of Filipino communication was regarded" as a form of dishonesty, instead of "a concern for the feelings of others" (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2009, 50). *Pakikiramdam* complements *kuwentuhan* in ambiguous or unfamiliar situations, "wherein conflict may likely arise or when the use of direct language is deemed inappropriate" (Gastardo-Conaco 2007 as cited in Rosario n.d., 1). Given the context of my research project, it was important for me to be hyper-vigilant during interviews as I did not want my research participants to feel overly

vulnerable. I found myself skipping several questions to avoid bringing up painful memories. I made eye contact when asking research participants questions, listened to their breathing pattern, and observed their body language (e.g., hand gestures). I also considered *pakikiramdam* to incorporate “access intimacy” during my *kuwentuhan* with research participants. Mia Mingus (2011) explains that “access intimacy is not just the action of access or ‘helping’ someone” (par. 8), it is subtle and “hard to describe feeling when someone else ‘gets’ your access need. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level” (par. 4). I wanted to create an environment where research participants did not feel obligated to disclose accommodations they required.

In *kuwentuhan* with Poppy, I immediately noticed the shake and cracks in her voice as she recalled her experience of the conflict when she was at the General Hospital with her son, who suffered from Thalassemia and later passed away. I took this as an indication to avoid questions pertaining to motherhood, as I did not want her to relive the painful memory of losing a child. But Poppy kept on returning to the story of her son. I suspected that there was something she wanted me to know that she could not express otherwise or under different circumstances, and the interview provided a space away from the silence that had become a part of her mundane life. I was also cognizant that her stories may be incomplete or fragmented because of the enduring effects of war and displacement (Nguyen 2021, 19; Nguyen 2009, 5). But the gaps in her narratives were also part of *kuwentuhan* and offered a new avenue of seeing the world from the perspectives of those who had been displaced by war.

Similarly, in *kuwentuhan* with Camellia, I found her going back to questions I had already asked seeking clarification. She also preferred to complete the interview in the English language. While she was consistent in answering the interview questions in English, she would sometimes whisper to me the translation of some Tagalog words in English. Although this interview was fun and delightful, Camellia was also assertive—she even took the audio-recording from my hands and spoke directly to it.

Camellia: I'm calling all the attention of all the leaders in Zamboanga City. I'm calling the attention of all the leaders who ruled Zamboanga during that time. Why did they allow [the siege to happen]? I really have that question [in mind] because although it's been 8 years since that happened; that trauma is like a tattoo in our mind already. So, it remains [a] question mark.

My mind is always asking why, because there are things really happened very traumatic, and of course, unforgettable, and of course, very sad. Because things changed. So many things have changed. So, I just hope that we can re-gather, recollect, we can reconstruct ourselves to be a better person this time. And to be more open; will be more understood to their platforms.

I hope this time, it would be easy for us. It will no longer [be] hard for us to reach out to them [the leaders]. Uhm, letting them know what we really need. What Zamboanga really needs, especially those small people—those people who are less fortunate. I hope they can do something for [them]; not just focusing on themselves [the leaders in Zamboanga City] [but] the serious things in others.

There was also an instance when she could not differentiate indigenous people from indigent people. When I clarified to her the difference in their meanings, she disregarded my explanation and proceeded with using indigenous people when describing people in situations of homelessness and unemployment. At the end of the interview, when I asked if there was anything else she wanted me to know, she said that I should have also covered stories about love. What this suggestion revealed is the privileged position I have in “directing the flow of discourse” (Rose 1997, 310). I

reflected on the interview process and asked myself that if I could not connect my research goals with the everyday realities of people in Zamboanga City, how could I “uncover the knowledge that [they] produce [?]” (Rose 1997, 310).

The separate interviews I conducted with Poppy and Camellia are some examples of what it was like to negotiate power relations between myself and the research participants. Had I used a different methodological framework and methods, I might not recognize the subtle ways in which participants challenged the boundaries of research ‘in the field.’ More importantly, since the research participants were aware of *kuwentuhan*—its nuances and operations—they felt comfortable to be themselves. I had one participant who smoked tobacco in some parts of the interview, others directly asked me to only speak to them in Tagalog, while some offered beverages before we commence the interview. What made these acts part of *kuwentuhan* is that they defy formality, allowing research participants to recognize me as their *kapwa* (together with the person) rather than a stranger.

### **Characteristics of Research Participants**

The research participants in this study come from different ethnoreligious and linguistic communities and occupy diverse experiences and identities. I interviewed 11 research participants, who were at least 18 years old when the Zamboanga City siege erupted in September 2013. One participant identified herself as a transwoman, two embraced a fluidity of gender expression and identity, while the rest labelled themselves as cis-women. They were all forcibly displaced by the armed conflict and still reside in the city after the war. With the exception of one research participant, almost all were registered IDPs with the local government unit. Seven were classified as transitory site

IDPs, or those who sought refuge in evacuation centres (e.g., schools, churches, sports complex). Four were home-based IDPs, referring to individuals who stayed with relatives or friends who were unaffected by the fighting.

Four of the Tausug women I interviewed were former residents of Santa Barbara, where they either lived as sharers or informal settlers. Three of them were born and raised elsewhere in Mindanao and moved to Zamboanga City with their families to pursue better economic opportunities. Due to colonialism, many of the indigenous inhabitants in Zamboanga City had been dispossessed from their ancestral lands. This is one of the many reasons why they did not have claim on the land where they previously dwelled in Santa Barbara. Even though they could not return to their homes, they were offered the opportunity to relocate to one of the resettlement housing projects within the city by the National Housing Authority (NHA). At the time of the interview, all Tausug women could not secure durable solutions and experienced prolonged situation of displacement. In addition, they are mothers with a low educational attainment, usually performing unpaid domestic labour, except for one participant who was employed as a custodian.

The rest of the research participants practice the Roman Catholic faith. Two lived in Tetuan, another two lived in Mampang, while the remaining three lived in Santa Catalina. Almost all are unmarried with a fairly high educational attainment and worked in a range of industries as a community leader, teacher, performer, and sales associate. In contrast to research participants who lived in Santa Barbara where there is a high concentration of ethnic Muslim minorities, residents of Tetuan and Mampang were able to return to their homes. The process was slower or delayed for some residents of

Satan Catalina and Santa Barbara since a portion of the barangay were being rebuilt after the burning down of the 'ground zero.'

There is a clear class division between the members of the two ethnoreligious groups in Zamboanga City that I had the opportunity to interview. This is also associated to their description of what they like and dislike about living in the city. While almost all of them still called it 'home' and explained the affordability of living in Zamboanga City, others had no choice but to call it 'home.' The married Muslim women in this study with low educational attainment also have many children. While some of their children stopped their schooling to work in menial jobs to support the family, others continued their education through the help of poverty alleviation programs.

The standard military procedure requiring the burning down of the ground zero to eliminate some members of the MNLF who were in hiding, left Santa Barbara and parts of Santa Catalina in wreckage. But since IDPs in Santa Catalina own the land where they lived on before being forced out by conflict, they were eligible for the reconstruction housing project. Even though they had returned and had the time to adjust and develop routines in their environments, they described a continuing sense of living in imminent danger with the threat of another tragedy happening again in Zamboanga City always looming.

**Table 1: Description of Research Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Barangay</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Education</b>
Ivy	Registered Home based IDP	42	Single	Community Leader	Santa Catalina	Mixed Zamboangueño and Tausug	Converted Roman Catholic	Bachelor's Degree
Daisy	Registered Home based IDP	44	Separated	Teacher	Santa Catalina	Visayan	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's Degree
Lily	Unregistered home based IDP	25	Single	Sales Associate	Santa Catalina	Visayan	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's Degree
Hyacinth	Registered transitory site IDP	50	Widow	Custodian	Santa Barbara	Tausug	Muslim	Elementary (Incomplete)
Rose	Registered transitory site IDP	38	Married	Housewife	Santa Barbara	Tausug	Muslim	High School (Incomplete)
Iris	Registered transitory site IDP	50	Married	Housewife	Santa Barbara	Tausug	Muslim	High School Graduate
Poppy	Registered transitory site IDP	34	Married	Housewife	Santa Barbara	Tausug	Muslim	High School Graduate
Jasmine	Registered Home based IDP	46	Married	Housewife	Mampang	Visayan	Roman Catholic	Bachelor (Incomplete)
Aster	Registered transitory site IDP	41	Common Law	Housewife	Mampang	Visayan	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's Degree
Camellia	Registered transitory site IDP	37	Single	Performer	Tetuan	Visayan	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's Degree
Magnolia	Registered transitory site IDP	42	Single	Unemployed	Tetuan	Visayan	Roman Catholic	College Diploma

## Data Analysis

I used elements of *pakapa-kapa* to guide my data analysis. It is “characterized by groping, searching, and probing into an unsystematized mass of social and cultural data to be able to obtain order, meaning, and directions for research” (Torres 1982, 171). *Pakapa-kapa*, by design, encourages the use of several approaches to data analysis, allowing me to employ open coding, write journal entries, and list categories and subcategories. It took me an average of three hours to complete the transcription of each interview, but I only translated the responses used in the discussion here. While transcribing the interviews, I wrote reflections in my journal about the meanings of word whickers, pauses and silences, and inflections such as *ano* or *kwan* (you know what I mean). *Ano* and *kwan* were used by Cebuano, Tagalog, and Chavacano speakers to refer to anything that they could not articulate. They used it in numerous ways to mean a person, place, or thing.

In addition, *pakapa-kapa* allowed me to discover cultural particularities (Toress 1982, 173), to improvise the data analysis process, and to embrace my creativity (Jamison 2018, 154). I noticed that *tawanan* (laughter) was a recurring response that accompanied *kuwentuhan*. Perhaps, because of rampant poverty, crime and violence, residents of Zamboanga City have learned to search for joy outside of normative ideas of a lovable and livable life. Research participants expressed their joy through laughter, sometimes including their feeling of sadness. They also deployed *tawanan* to disrupt the power relations between ourselves during interviews. When I found myself asking intrusive questions, some of my research participants either chuckled or giggled. This was effective in making me realize the contradiction, mess, and potential abuse of my

interview questions (Stacey 1988, 22-23; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 12-17; Nencel 2001, 85). Thus, *tawanan* led us in a “collaborative, reciprocal quest for understanding” (Stacey 1988, 23). I also reciprocated *tawanan* by sharing stories of my family members who were also displaced by the armed conflict.

Romeo: Who barricaded [ground zero]?

Daisy: The soldiers. No in, no out. They don't let you out, they don't let you in. She had to escape [pointing to her sister who was seated beside her]. We met Tuesday morning. Her feet were covered in mud.

Romeo: My uncle also lived in Santa Catalina, but he passed as Muslim because he had long hair and beard. Then, the police detained him and brought him to the police station. He told them that: “*Bisaya ko, ipagawas ko*” (I'm Bisaya, let me out).

Laughter from respondents.

“*Primo yo di Linao, primo yo di Linao*” (I'm the cousin of Linao, I'm the cousin of Linao) ...but my uncle Linao was in Pagadian for a training. He drove back to Zamboanga City the next day so that my uncle who was being held in the police station could be released. At the police station, uncle Linao told his colleagues: “*Uy! Manda cunese sale, primo se dimiyo*” (Uy! Let him go, he is my cousin).

Laughter from respondents.

The police at the station did not let my uncle go because he could not provide them with a piece of valid I.D. Moreover, when they asked him to describe his relationship with uncle Linao, he told them that he looked like a celebrity: tall, handsome, and has light skin, like Edu Manzano.

Laughter from respondents.

Laughing alongside research participants as they reflected on their experience of displacement do not undermine their situations of precarity and violence. Rather, it is a collective practice of hope, of weathering the storm, and a display of being *matatag* (resilient). This was made possible by *kuwentuhan* which fostered an informal and relaxed environment, underlining the idea that there is joy in sharing stories.

For open coding, I used the software NVivo 12 by assigning “selections of data to new or existing concepts” and in organizing participant quotes (Jamison 2018, 145). The process of open coding was shaped by the knowledge I previously acquired in refugee resettlement,<sup>21</sup> awareness of some themes about forced migration, and the pilot interviews I conducted (Jamison 2018, 144). The next stage of coding involved the breaking down of themes into categories and subcategories to analyze similarities and differences (Dey 2016, 3), I embraced the fact that some categories would inevitably overlap with one another, and some narratives would stand out. (See Appendix G for examples of codes and subcategories from interviews with IDPs in Zamboanga City).

### **In and Out of the Philippines: Negotiating Research Legitimacy and Positionality**

Where are you from? When are you coming back? I am often asked these two questions as a *halfie* or one whose “cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration” (Abu-Lughod 1991, 466). I have come to embrace that whether I am in Canada or the Philippines, I simultaneously experience spatial exclusion and financial inclusion because of the intersection of my embodied identities. This has also allowed me to recognize the fluidity and contradiction of my insider/outsider positionality. Bahira Sherif (2001) explains that “boundaries [in the field] are blurred with shifting and ambiguous identities...[and] research is infinitely layered and interwoven” (438). I anticipated that there would be a gap between how I express my identities and how my gatekeepers and research participants perceive them based on our social interactions.

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<sup>21</sup> I worked for two years processing resettlement applications for privately sponsored and government assisted refugees in Canada, where I learned firsthand some of the issues surrounding forced displacement induced by war, including international responses to provide durable solutions of return and resettlement. I also volunteered as an afterschool tutor with refugee and immigrant newcomer children where I learned some of their integration challenges.

This inevitable gap needed constant negotiation with each research participant to acknowledge our differences without it becoming a source of tension. The residents I interacted with felt delighted that I returned home to document their stories of displacement, while still able to fully converse in my mother tongue even after being a naturalized Canadian. This was useful in starting a conversation with research participants, as some of them were curious about what my life is like in Canada. They asked me questions about the possibility of staying in the Philippines permanently. Others jokingly enquired if I could find them an AFAM—an abbreviation for ‘A Foreigner Assigned in Metro Manila,’ coined by sex workers to describe wealthy old White men.

Some residents also expressed that the solutions to poverty and social inequalities is getting out, thus equating my research project of ‘going home’ with ‘going backward.’ I tried to refute this by discussing the gender-related exploitation experienced by Filipino migrant women in Canada, including the associated stereotypes of the victimized nanny and mail-order brides as unskilled, poor, and submissive. Yet, as a *balikbayan* (returnee) I could not deny that nearly everyone in the Western world, “has something someone else doesn’t, something someone else yearns for” (Gay 2014, 16). Some found this hard to believe because they carried an image of Canada as a wealthy country, where education and healthcare are free. I explained to them that even though we earn in dollars, we also spend in dollars. More importantly, many were convinced when I talked about the issue of racism, as this was something they heard on the news about the United States.

During recruitment and interviews, I recognized how I used different versions of myself and identities to legitimate my fluid insider or outsider status. During my

interviews with participants who expressed a diversity of gender identities, I relied on *gay lingo* (LGBT slang lexicon) to demonstrate my knowledge of LGBTIQ-related concerns. I also named some local drag queens I know personally to show that I belong to the queer community in Zamboanga City, and that my research is not a 'hit-and-run' but genuinely aspires for social change. Similarly, because the women I interviewed could read my *kabaklaan* (queerness) from my demeanor as I make my "way against the stream of crushing heteronormative tide" (Muñoz 2009, 74), they felt comfortable to discuss some concerns pertaining to women's reproductive health, such as access to contraception and sanitary products while in evacuation centres.

Since I grew up on Waray Street, a place notorious for crimes and gangs, research participants who were aware of this neighbourhood saw that we shared identities, signalled in their response of "you know what it's like there." My class and location legitimated my access to some of these participants. Yet, these same features, enmeshed with my gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion led to being perceived as an outsider by Muslim Filipino women. They addressed me as 'sir' even though I repeatedly asked them to use my nickname. In addition, since they were recruited by my gatekeeper who informed them of my research project and the incentive for participating, some Muslim Filipino women I interviewed presented themselves as poor and needy, by describing themselves as *palaboy* (outcast/houseless), *madumi* (dirty), or *skwatters* (squatters). While I empathized with their experience of forced displacement, I did not feel comfortable expressing pity for their situation and did not want to view or present them as voiceless victims. I was rather captivated by their strong sense of awareness. Their performance of victimhood, or what Megan Rivers-Moore (2018)

describes “pragmatic penance” in her research with sex workers in Costa Rica, is a strategy within “the broader context that frames the ways in which they are helped” (855). In other words, performing a label that is inevitably ascribed to IDP women is a form of situated agency outside the Western model of active and independent resistance.<sup>22</sup>

### **Fieldwork Challenges during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

While international travel involving research and fieldwork had been suspended by Carleton University because of the Covid-19 pandemic, I still possessed some degree of freedom to return to the Philippines as I have Filipino citizenship. With the necessary ethics clearance and the Dean’s permission, I arrived in Manila and remained in quarantine for ten days and spent the remaining four days in Zamboanga City.

Zamboanga City was under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) before my arrival. The city was under complete lockdown, including the suspension of work, limitation of transportation, and closure of non-essential services, increasing the numbers of unemployed residents, many of whom worked in temporary and precarious industries without benefits. While the local government unit provided residents with relief items, they were inadequate. When I arrived, the city was under a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) that lasted throughout the duration of my fieldwork. This meant restrictions on mobility, as residents had to obtain a quarantine pass to travel within Zamboanga City, but only on designated days and within certain times.

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<sup>22</sup> I will revisit this in my discussion of empirical findings

Since I stayed in barangay Culianan,<sup>23</sup> I was assigned with quarantine pass A, which permitted travel outside the home for non-essential purposes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Holders of quarantine pass B could travel without restrictions on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Everyone must stay at home aside from frontline and essential workers on Sundays.

Despite the many implications of the pandemic on my research, I wanted to highlight three important ones: conducting interviews, compensation, and *kainan*. The most important consequence of the ongoing restrictions at the time of 'fieldwork' was scheduling and finding a location for an interview. As part of the research ethics process, I had planned for research participants to choose the time and date of our interview, but this was logistically difficult, and at times, impossible on the ground. My host family that I stayed with in Zamboanga City also shaped my decisions by discouraging me from visiting some communities where former IDPs reside, because they are in areas less monitored for Covid-19 transmission.

I hesitated about my original plan to compensate participants with a sack of rice. The local news and informal conversations revealed that the sacks of rice given to some households as part of relief programs were stale because they had been kept in the storage for too long. Even though it is a food staple necessary for daily sustenance, I did not want to risk the health of my participants by providing them with low quality rice. The gatekeeper who helped me arrange interviews with some research participants,

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<sup>23</sup> The distance between Culianan and Mampang is 17 kilometers. It took me and my gatekeeper about an hour to travel from Culianan to Mampang in the morning by car. This was also the time when the road was congested by traffic. The distance between Culianan and Tetuan is 12 kilometers, which took me 30 minutes to travel by car, but longer when I commuted as I had to ride two separate jeepneys which made multiple stops along the road to load and unload passengers.

guaranteed that I would be getting good quality rice from them, compared to what the government could provide its residents in Zamboanga City. I paid 1,200 pesos (30 Canadian dollar) for each sack of rice weighing 25 kilograms. This exchange also contributed to developing better rapport with the gatekeeper; she gave me a discount of 50 pesos (1.25 Canadian dollar) for every sack of rice I bought from her.

Another obstacle during the pandemic was the absence of *kainan* (sharing of food) that is usually combined with *kuwentuhan*, which plays an important role in creating a space where research participants and I can coexist together. In response to the absence of *kainan* with *kuwentuhan*, I offered my research participants beverages and snacks for them to take home (or as *pasalubong*) after the interview. I explained to them that had there not been a pandemic and restrictions of social gathering, we would be bonding over food.

Finally, my 'fieldwork' observations were limited to my interactions with research participants during interviews. I could not engage in their daily routines, which was an integral part of my initial research design. Nonetheless, I tried to immerse myself in some of the daily activities of other residents of Zamboanga City. I took public transportation (negotiating the fare and distance), went to the flea market and bargained the price of goods, visited some parks, lit candles in the Fort Pilar shrines, and explored the night life until curfew. Despite the 'fieldwork' challenges I encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic, I still collected rich narratives that I am tremendously grateful for, which I discuss in the next chapters.

## Chapter Four: Forced to Flee? Agency in Trajectories of Displacement

### Introduction

While walking through the crowded street of Buggok in barangay Talon-Talon, where some formerly displaced persons in Zamboanga City had been relocated and resettled, I was astounded by the lively economic activities strategically dispersed around me. On one side of the street, there were parked motorbikes that functioned as transportation in lieu of traditional tricycles and jeepneys<sup>24</sup> that could not go through the narrow street of Buggok. Alongside them were carts selling assorted deep-fried foods in skewers like tempura and fish balls. On the other side, there were street vendors selling freshly caught fish. The residents in this settlement live in stilt houses built on the ground where mangroves used to grow. The IDPs resettled in the area modified their houses to include a *sari-sari store* (convenience store) and an automotive repair shop, known to local residents as a vulcanizing shop.

I glanced at a kid in a red t-shirt who was making a boat out of what seemed like a carton box to me. I then wondered if the paper boat made by the kid would sink when the stilt houses in Buggok Street are covered in water because of heavy rainfalls brought by typhoons? Would the mangroves regrow after the storm surges end? Would the stilt houses remain rooted or be uprooted, compelling the residents in yet another displacement? What would happen to the kid in the red t-shirt? Even though I only observed snippets of the everyday life in this enclave, there was something about the

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<sup>24</sup> Tricycles consist of a motorcycle and an attached passenger sidecar, while jeepneys are small bus-like vehicles. Both serve as the most popular means for public transportation in the Philippines. Jeepneys in particular are called the 'King of the Road' because they are ubiquitous throughout the country. They can be found in busy streets of urban areas, rural back roads and the countryside.

residents in Buggok Street that allowed me to measure my temporal and geographical distance from my past, enabling me to connect my childhood in the Philippines with my adulthood in Canada. In some way, I could forge a link to my childhood when my family and I lived by the river side in Bulacan. I remembered that during monsoons we had to temporarily evacuate before the river starts to overflow. Perhaps this is why the kid in the red t-shirt and the disorder in the 'site' brought me a feeling of multiple belonging to the uncertainty of the past, present, and future lived at the same time, that I had not experienced in so long.

Although my experience of forced displacement was different from the kid in the red t-shirt, as his was induced by armed conflict and mine by climate change, I felt that we both long for homes where we feel a sense of relief, which is at the heart of my empirical discussion in this chapter. The research participants in this study, especially Muslim Filipino women who face prolonged conditions of displacement,<sup>25</sup> do not see their homes as being in the present. This is connected to their trajectories of forced displacement which are shaped by the long history of ethnic tensions and class divisions in southern Philippines. Although their trajectories of displacement are on a continuum, it does not imply a uniform experience when we consider their class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, religion, and location.

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<sup>25</sup>I refrain from using protracted refugee situation, a term commonly used by the United Nations of High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) because of its restrictive definition that is based on legal and temporal frameworks. The term protracted refugee situation only applies to individuals granted with refugee status (people who cross an international border), who have not reached a durable solution of (re)settlement or return within five years (Doná 2015, 68; World Bank 2017, 99). On the contrary, prolonged conditions of displacement is centred on the experiences of people outside the UNHCR definition, embracing the spatial, temporal, bureaucratic, emotional and relational embodiment of forced migration. This includes "asylum-seekers waiting to be granted protections; undocumented migrants living in 'hiding' in urban areas; asylum-seekers in detention centres; individuals caught in 'temporary' administrative vacuums such as unresolved residency permission; others waiting to be repatriated" and those who are in transition from one territorial boundary to another (Doná 2015, 68).

In addition, as the participant narratives I share here show, this dislocation and displacement of home does not mean that my participants do not have a sense of home beyond physical shelter. In this chapter, I emphasize the everyday practices they use to create and maintain a sense of belonging and home. As kindly suggested by David Turton (2003), we must always think of forced migrants as ordinary people with whom we can identify as potentially one of us (14), who are purposive actors capable of “making choices in whatever and however constrained the circumstance” (18). Forcibly displaced people also carry “routines that they cling onto to recreate spaces where they can regain everyday practices” (Ozkaleli 2021, 3). Structurally, I begin by mapping out the trajectories of displacement I identified in the narratives of research participants, including temporary, circular, and prolonged displacement. In the next section, I explore how research participants exercised agency in relation to the unequal nature of forced migration.

### **Trajectories of Displacement: Temporary, Circular, and Prolonged**

Forcibly displaced individuals make careful considerations of how, when, and where to move. While perception of threat to physical life is an indication of displacement, as documented in a plethora of case studies from El Salvador, Colombia, Nepal, Indonesia, Syria, and Nigeria,<sup>26</sup> individuals also evaluate their access to financial and social resources since moving usually comes with a cost (Vignal 2021, 158; Adhikari 2013, 88; Steele 2009, 422; World Bank 2017, 43; Schon 2019, 13). For many

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<sup>26</sup> It has been found in these case studies that the geographical spread and intensity of armed violence strongly correlate with the decision of civilians to flee. For case studies from El Salvador and Colombia, see Stanley (1987), Lozano-Gracia et al. (2010), Engel and Ibanez (2007), and Perez Murcia (2020). For Nepal and Indonesia, see Williams (2008), Bohra-Mishra and Massey (2011), and Adhikari (2013), Czaika et al. 2009. See also Vignal (2021) for Syria, and Ajayi (2020) for Nigeria.

people in the Global South, their homes and lands are their main sources of capital (Wigle 2008, 197), which is why some people are willing to tolerate armed violence to protect their material and financial assets (e.g., income, employment). Some cling on to the hope that they can “ride out the storm” (Moore and Shellman 2006, 599), while for others, it is simply because they have a strong attachment to home (Vignal 2021, 169; Adhikari 2013, 84).

In one of my many neighborhood walks, I learned during an impromptu conversation that an elderly man on Waray Street refused to abandon the neighbourhood because of his strong connection to the place. His daughters explained that it is their ancestral land that they inherited from their grandfather. It is where they and their children had been raised. For these women, their ancestral land has become a family heirloom that they plan on passing down to their children, in hopes that they continue to preserve the family history. When they invited me inside their home on ancestral land, I saw three congested houses built on top of one another like a Jenga puzzle. The first house I saw after entering the gate was their ancestral home. The main floor was built using bricks, while the second floor was enclosed by plywood. Looking at the physical structures of the other two houses, I could tell that the people living in the house covered in tiles are wealthier than the house beside them that has linoleum flooring. What this signifies is that home, beyond the physical shelter, is also part of a larger network of kin and family history. Like a Jenga Puzzle, they are held tightly by one another’s presence, and by abruptly removing a block or a family member, it weakens the stability of the home they know and protect.

## Ivy's Trajectory of Displacement

The explanation shared by the two women about their attachment to home and its significance for their father, overlaps with the stories shared by some research participants in this study. I begin with the narrative of Ivy, whose pattern of displacement illustrates that forced migration is not a linear response to its drivers (e.g., war, climate change, etc.), instead it is “multidirectional and usually involve[s] more location than simply home and one place of shelter” (Vignal 2021, 157).

Noontime, July 07, 2021  
Tetuan, Zamboanga City  
Field Journal Entry<sup>27</sup>

My meeting with Ivy starts at 2pm today. I prepare by writing down the questions so that I can memorize them and allow the interview to flow naturally. I arrive at the intersection of Estrada Street and Cabato Road a little early. I use this time to visit my uncle's second family who resides beside a metal craft shop. I am surprised by their living situation. The five of them are packed like canned sardines in a very small room the size of Hanna's bedroom where I'm currently staying at. I find this ironic because my uncle designs and builds houses for a living but hasn't built one for this family. After catching up with them, I walk towards the Mujer Community Centre on Cabato Road to meet with Ivy and learn from her story of displacement, home, and belonging.

The Community Centre is easily recognizable from afar. It has a huge rainbow flag and is a 3-storee fully air-conditioned building, with ample supplies of food and water. Ivy introduced herself as a community leader, an LGBTIQ and HIV advocate. When Ivy expressed her plan to transition, her father advised that she converts into the Catholic religion from Islam as they are more tolerant of transgender people. Although Ivy changed her religion, this does not change her ethnic identity. She still considers herself Tausug and would sometimes describes herself as 'translumad' (indigenous transwoman).

Ivy: Recalling back those, September 9, 2013, I was so brave that time because thinking noh, I'm a transwoman who happens to be trapped in the siege. Eh, ako na yung natirang babae doon for that longest day (*Eh, I was the only woman who stayed there for that longest day*). It started Monday, so I experienced everything there, yung putukan, yung bombahan (*the shooting, the bombing*). I didn't [evacuate]. Actually, sa pamilya namin, ah, all the women and child yung mga bata ang naunang

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<sup>27</sup> I combine fieldnotes with long excerpts of the interview transcript to ensure that the voices of IDP women and gender diverse individuals are not as edited or filtered out into codes and subcategories. Even though interpretations of research data ultimately rely on the researcher (Stacey 1988, 23), presenting their sacred stories this way allows individual voices to shine through.

umevacuate. *(Actually, in our family, ah, all the women and child those children were the first to be evacuated).*

So, here comes my father and brother who happens to be police PNP, and my father is already old enough na meron na syang maintenance, so if I ever going with the women, sino ang mag alaga sa tatay ko? *(So, here comes my father and brother who happens to be [part of the Philippines National Police] PNP, and my father is already old enough that he has maintenance, so if I ever went with the women, who would look after [the wellbeing of] my father? So, I decided to stay and look for [after] my father).*

All the men na tumira sa bahay, hindi kame umalis including myself. Ayun, that's why na trapped din ako dun. But I was so brave, anu, hindi ko sya...parang normal na sakin yung putukan, bombahan na yan. Walang...not thinking of it naman. *(All the men who live in the house, they did not leave including myself. There, that's why I also got trapped there. But I was so brave, anu [word filler], I do not...like those shooting and bombing have become normal to me. Not...not thinking of it naman [word filler]).*

The three of them remained in Lustre Street, Santa Catalina<sup>28</sup> one of the barangays in ground zero where the shooting and bombing was active, for another four days until they had realized that the situation on the ground had reached a vital threshold. This is a strategy employed by many people in situations of armed violence. They constantly evaluate the threats they are exposed to, in combination with their access to immediate needs like food, water, electricity, and basic services (Vignal 2021, 161; Steele 2009, 420; World Bank 2017, 44-45; Schon 2019, 13). While access to information about potential places of residence is also important, it is often confusing and fragmented (Vignal 2021, 160-161; World Bank 2017, 45; Schon 2019, 13). This made it difficult for Ivy to compare the situation in ground zero to the conditions in

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<sup>28</sup> Lustre Street is a long street that connects Santa Barbara and Santa Catalina together. During my 'field' visit, I could not identify the boundary that separates the two barangays apart. This observation was also confirmed by the residents of both barangays. Since Santa Barbara is spatially smaller than Santa Catalina, one may temporarily find it hard to recognize when it ends and when Santa Catalina begins.

Sports Complex (locally known as Grandstand) where they intended to seek temporary refuge.

Ivy: It's because my father doesn't want to leave. Yun ang gusto nya eh, kasi we have our house there, so syempre yung investment mo nandun ang lahat. So, ako din, why should [I leave], baket ako matatakot kung nandun naman ang tatay at kapatid ko. So yun, actually, I was a great help that time, really. Napakinabangan ko yung pagiging trans[woman] ko kasi that good thing here, the Moro has this perception of, pag nirerespeto nila yung mga babae...I have to cut this story short. *(It's because my father doesn't want to leave. That was what he wanted eh, because we have our house there, so of course all your investments are there. So, I also, why should [I leave], why would I be afraid when my father and brother were there with me. So, there, actually, I was a great help at the time, really. I benefited for being a trans[woman] because the good thing here [in Mindanao], the Moro has this perception of, if they respect a woman...I have to cut this story short).*

Thursday, uhm, the blasting, grabe na yung bombing. Palapit na ng palapit sa bahay namin, so here comes the rebels telling us na to evacuate na nga daw. Sabi ko sa tatay ko, "Pa let's move na kasi the splinters na parang palapit na ng palapit and we can hear already yung mga buhangin sa bubong namin, nababasag yung mga jalousie namin." Sabi ng tatay ko, "sige na, let's move." *(Thursday, uhm, the blasting, the bombing was too much. It kept on getting closer and closer to our house, so here comes the rebels telling us that we had to evacuate. I told my father, "Pa let's move now because the splinters are getting closer and closer [to us] and we can hear already the sand on our roof, our jalousies were breaking." My father said, "okay, let's move").*

But then the problem at that time when we moved out yung mga rebels, yung mga MNLF meron silang check points. So here comes my brother and father who happens to be the opposite of their uniform, PNP sila noh, so hindi sila makakalabas. So on that time, I was carrying my luggage already noh, so, sabi ng tatay ko "I need you to save us." So yung mga baril nila, uniform, badges, ammunition, lahat, I was the one carrying it. *(But then the problem at that time when we moved out, those rebels, the MNLF, they had check points. So here comes my brother and father who happens to be the opposite of their uniform, they are PNP noh [word filler], so they could not escape. So, on that time, I was carrying my luggage already noh [word filler], so, my father said "I need you to save us." So, their guns, uniforms, badges, ammunitions, all, I was the one carrying it).*

Romeo: My god, buti hindi chineck *(good thing they didn't check).*

Laughter from respondent.

Ivy: Tootoo, isang bag na ganyan. So, I left my baggages carrying their luggage. Yun, dinala-dala ko yun kasi pag babae ka, hindi ka icheck. They [MNLF] won't body check you unlike pag lalake, icheck ka. So what if kaya kung father ko ang nag dala nun, diba, for sure. So itong tatay ko asked me to carry their things. So buti naman, lucky me, and thanks to God, nung dumaan ako ng check point hindi ako kinap-kapan. Hindi chineck ang baggage ko. Worried of course, yung fear ko dun, grabe!!! Parang narinig ko nga yung hear beat ko. *(True, one bag looked like this [she demonstrates the size of the bag to me]. So, I left my baggage [behind so I could carry] their luggage[s]. There, I was carrying it, because if you're a woman, they will not check you. They [MNLF] won't body check you unlike if you're a man, they would check. So, what if my father had carried those, right, for sure. So, this father of mine asked me to carry their things. So good thing, lucky me, and thanks to God, when I walked through the check point, they did not search my body. They did not check my baggage. Worried of course, my fear in those moments, overwhelming!!! I could hear my heart beat).*

Laughter from respondent.

Narinig ko talaga yung kaba ko. Tangina, kung mahuli ako if ever, patay talaga ako. Syempre nuh, I was carrying guns, ammunition, uniform, ganun. Pero I was so lucky, hindi naman siguro ako mukhang bakla, that's why. Very loud din ako dati, so what I did I dressed up revealing outfit, I was so blonde pa that time. They would think of me as a trans, so with that look alone nashock sila, ay! Babae...so ya manda lang comigo pasa without checking everything, and I saved ko somehow yung father at brother ko. [Sabay kameng lumabas] nasa likod nila ako. *(I could hear my fear. Fuck, if I had ever been caught, I would be really dead. Of course, nuh [word filler], I was carrying guns, ammunition, uniform, ganun [word filler]. But I was so lucky, I probably did not look gay, that's why. I [used] to be loud before, so what I did I dressed up revealing outfit, I was blonde at that time. They would think of me as a trans, so with that look alone they were shocked, ay! Woman...so they let me walk pass through them without checking everything, and I somehow saved [the lives of] my father and brother.*

The presence of security parameters and knowledge of their whereabouts are vital factors that also shape trajectories of displacement (Vignal 2021, 171). Therefore, access to information about the conflict is important. While the siege in Zamboanga City received international attention from news outlets,<sup>29</sup> and despite the large numbers of

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<sup>29</sup> Some international new outlets who covered the Zamboanga City siege include the BBC News, CNN, Al Jazeera, New York Times, and National Post.

Filipinos with smart phones and on social media,<sup>30</sup> the information pertaining to the scope of the blockage by the MNLF had not reached Ivy. I learned from another research participant who was also trapped in ground zero that the electricity had been cut off. Since Ivy had been trapped in Lustre Street for four days, I assumed that her phone had ran out of battery. In addition, Ivy had to 'pass' through a checkpoint at the territory held by the MNLF to exit ground zero. While borders function as territorial markings, they also serve as filters that categorize people into citizens, (im)migrants, or refugees based on the perception of their identities and documentations (Bonizzoni 2019, 218; Anderson et al. 2011, 6). As illustrated in the experience of my uncle who was detained at the police station, because he resembled the typical rebel portrayed in Philippine films and when he failed to provide them with an I.D. card, he was marked as 'illegal' and undeserving of protection even though he was only fleeing from armed violence.

Accordingly, geographical boundaries are not fixed. They are fluid and constantly reimagined (Bonizzoni 2019, 220; Anderson et al. 2011, 6). This allowed Ivy to negotiate her passage through the checkpoint by intentionally presenting herself as a cis-Muslim Filipino woman. She disguised herself as pious by wearing the veil, which was complemented by her ability to speak the ethnic dialect of Tausug. Ivy described that she looked extremely different in comparison to how she regularly appeared in public, that is, as a very loud person who wore revealing clothing and had blonde hair. By foregrounding her ethnicity and reconfiguring her femininity, Ivy was able to perform acts of dominant social norms that is commonly associated with Muslim Filipino women

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<sup>30</sup> For data on the numbers of Facebook users in the Philippines, see <https://www.statista.com/statistics/490455/number-of-philippines-facebook-users/>

and allowed her access to safe passage. In hindsight, I do not think that it was simply luck or a matter of coincidence that created the situation for Ivy to leave Lustre Street unharmed. The collective targeting of communities, a situation defined by Abbey Steele (2009) whereby “civilians who fit the profile of a rival sympathizer face a high probability of suffering violence than others in the community... is distinct from being caught in the crossfire of battling armed groups, indiscriminately targeted or selectively targeted for not collaborating or defecting” (422). The MNLF segregated civilians based on their ethnoreligious and linguistic characteristics. They accomplished this plan at checkpoints where they screened residents by speaking to them in Tausug. Those who could not respond in the same dialect were pulled out from the crowd to be held hostages and used as human shields.

Ivy’s trajectory of displacement did not end after she escaped from ground zero and reached the Grandstand. She described how upon arrival in the area, she and her family backed out of using the temporary shelter after seeing the uncomfortable living situation there. Following this, she decided to live separately from her extended family unit and sought temporary shelter from her friend, who was located near the downtown area. While it is rare for people to move alone, they sometimes do so to follow a collective strategy (Vignal 2021, 172). An example of this collective strategy is disclosed in the explanation of Ivy.

Ivy: Nung lumabas kame at first, we went to the Grandstand. Nakita namin ang situation dun, we backed out. We need a comfortable area or kahit place man lang. So, we decided to stay at my brother-in-law’s house. Pero ako, nag sarili ako. I went to my best friend’s house which is near sa pueblo kasi ang punto ko sa father ko is I want na ma-update ko sya, kasi gusto kong bumalik ulit kunin ko yung things ko. I’m really eager na dapat makapasok ako ulet. So, every now and then, nandun nakatutok ako sa radio or pupunta ako dyan malapit sa Budget Wise kasi it’s just near to

*us. (After we left [ground zero], we first went to the Grandstand. We saw the situation [and] we backed out. We need a comfortable area or even a simple place. So, we decided to stay at my brother-in-law's house. But I left solo. I went to my best friend's house which is near the downtown area, because my point to my father is I wanted to be able to update him, because I wanted to return again to retrieve my things. I'm really eager to sneak in again. So, every now and then, I was attentively listening on the radio or went close to Budget Wise because it's just near to us).*

For two weeks ginagawa ko yun, kasi I wanted to go back kunin ko yung mga things, pero hindi parin. Ang masaklap lang is after the siege, tapos na yung gera, nag karoon ng clearing. Nasunog ang bahay namin, not because of the rebels...it was burned because of clearing, kaylangan sya [ng Philippine Armed Forces]. Sila ang nag sunog ng bahay namin for clearing purposes daw, kasi nangyari daw may mga rebels na nagtatago sa mga bahay. The best thing is sunugin para umalis sila. Yun ang masakit saakin. *(I kept on doing that for another two weeks, because I wanted to go back to retrieve my things, but I still could not. What is harshly bitter is after the siege, when the war ended, they had a clearing. Our house was burned down, not because of the rebels...it was burned because of clearing, it was necessary [for the Philippine Armed Forces]. They burned down our house for clearing purposes, because there happened to be some rebels who were hiding among the houses. The best thing is to burn [them down] so that they leave. That is the painful part to me).*

By staying close to home, Ivy was hopeful that the crisis would end in a matter of days. She attempted to engage in circular migration by going back and forth to check the situation in ground zero, assessing whether it was safe or desirable to return. Yet, it was impossible for her to retrieve the things she left behind. The level of armed violence in the area had not de-escalated; rather, it had gotten worse when the AFP razed the area to the ground with fire. When I asked Ivy if this is a common practice by AFP during wars, she explained that it is part of their standard operating procedure to drive out the rebels who remain in hiding in the area. While I expected that some of the infrastructure would be left disfigured by stray bullets and explosions, as this is oftentimes observed in many crossfires, I was stunned by the clearing out procedure that was ordered by the AFP (see Map 2). In a separate conversation I had with a friend

who was from another barangay, he said that some members of the MNLF concealed themselves by pretending to be residents of Zamboanga City. He cited this as another reason for the clearing out procedure. This also clarified my confusion about why some public areas, such as the Paseo del Mar, continue to require individuals entering the facility to show a piece of valid I.D. even after eight years since the siege happened.



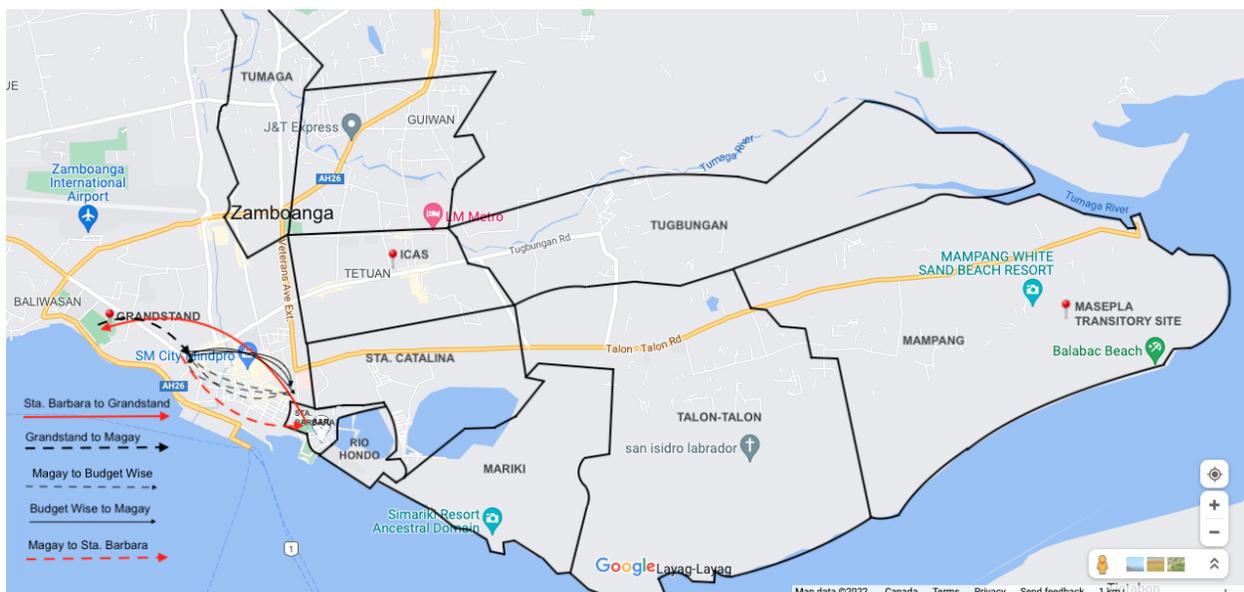
Map 2: Before and after Map of Santa Barbara, One of the Areas in Ground Zero  
Source: <https://peacebuilderscommunity.org/2013/10/the-2013-zamboanga-crisis-a-case-of-shock-doctrine-application/>

I was alarmed that almost all the people I interacted with while ‘in the field’ were unaware of the clearing out procedure on ground zero. They assumed that it was the MNLF who burned down the houses in Santa Catalina and Santa Barbara. I attribute this generalization to the othering of Muslim Filipinos in the country as unwanted citizens, whose communities are essentialized as savage and barbaric. Ivy poignantly shared that after the siege, their neighbourhood in Lustre Street had been homogenized as warlike.

Ivy: The whole Zamboanga City ay affected naman. Pero yung pag katapos na, iba na yung tingin, parang ang liit na ng tingin sayo... “parang ganito yan sila sa area na yan, buti nalang nasunugan na yan sila kasi madaming masamang tao ang nakatira dyan.” Nilalahat nila yun, without thinking na there are also good people living there, may pulis nga. Dapat sana hindi ganun ang tingin sa lahat. Yun ang unfair na treatment or sinasabi. (*The whole Zamboanga City was affected [by the siege]. But*

after it was over, they began to perceive us differently, like we have been reduced in their perceptions... “this is what they are like in that area, good thing it was burned down because there are many bad people living there.” They are generalizing [us], without thinking that there are also good people living there, like police [referring to her father and brother]. They should not perceive people that way. These are the kinds of unfair treatment or things that they say).

The racialization of Muslim Filipinos in Zamboanga City was ubiquitous. I observed it being reproduced in the homes of my gatekeepers and in our casual conversations. When I visited Waray Street and asked the residents what had changed in over a decade that I was gone, many of them shared that they now have a Moro neighbour, whose presence in the area bothered them because they considered them *mashushu*, *chichiun* or *hugawan* (dirty). For Ivy, who is of mixed ethnicity, she leads a life of an open wound or what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes “*una herida abierta*,” whereby her body represents the site of “historical trauma that continues to affect the present experiences of” herself and communities (as cited in Steele 2000, 40).



Map 3: Ivy's Trajectory of Displacement

## Lily's Trajectory of Displacement

Like Ivy, another research participant who was also trapped in Santa Catalina was Lily. But unlike Ivy who intentionally refused to leave ground zero, Lily and her brother could not immediately leave as the only exit route they knew had been blocked by the MNLF. As documented in other conflict zone areas, people are less likely to move if there is presence of violence in exit routes (World Bank 2017, 45). Due to the blockade and checkpoints established by the MNLF, Lily and her brother unwillingly extended their stay in Lustre Street until they had the opportunity to escape through another route. I also learned in the interview that Lily no longer lives in Zamboanga City but still considers it her home. She explained to me that: *“Siguro kasanayan na. Maskin na otro lugar tan miss lang yo syempre el Zamboanga”* (Perhaps because of familiarity. Even when I am in another city, I still miss Zamboanga).

Lily had secured a job in another province but would come to the city to occasionally visit her older sister, Daisy, who I had initially secured as my research participant. I was fortunate that Lily came to visit her sister after two months since the lockdown in Zamboanga City in the same weekend I had scheduled the interview with Daisy. But unlike with her older sister, who I had secured as a prospective research participant while I was still in Ottawa and had the time to develop rapport, I had never seen or spoken with Lily until on the day of the interview. As a result, I had to constantly rely on my interview questions to keep our conversation going, as it did not naturally flow since her response were not so descriptive. But her demeanor eventually changed when her sister came to join us.

Just before noontime  
Dunkin' Donut, KCC Mall  
Field Journal Entry

I arrive at the KCC Mall an hour early to browse for Philippine literature in the National Bookstore, but left the store in dismay since they have more collections of Western literature and Japanese manga in their shelves. I head to Dunkin' Donut to grab a coffee and to review my interview questions. It's already 11:50am but I haven't heard anything from Daisy or Lily. They mentioned over text that they are attending a mass until 9:45am. Perhaps they are running on Filipino time. But in another text, Daisy says that her sister's already at the mall but might be too shy to approach me. I send Lily a text introducing myself and describing what I am wearing: a black polo shirt with floral and pink short. She replies 15 minutes later, saying that she is outside of Dunkin' Donut. As cautioned by her older sister, Lily is shy and easily intimidated by strangers. She doesn't make eye contact with me and calls me sir. I break this formality by asking her to call me Jojo and offer her *merienda* (snacks).

Daisy walks in 20 minutes later. I notice Lily's demeanor shifts from being soft-spoken to outspoken in the presence of her older sister. She sometimes rubs her arms to ease the tension of reliving her experience of entrapment in the siege, but this does not stop Lily from sharing her story powerfully.

Romeo: Unsa ka kahinumdum katung September 9? (*What do you remember from September 9?*)

Lily: 11 plus ata tu ng gabii, ga-start na mag kwan, mag pusil-pusil. (*The shooting started at around after 11 of the night before [the siege]*).

Daisy: Monday, [September] 8 gusod na. (Monday, [September] 8 it had begun).

Romeo: Tulog na mo atu? (*Were you already asleep then?*)

Lily: Oo. Maayo gani, wala pa ni nauli oh. (*Yes. Good thing she had not come home yet*)

Daisy: Naingun na sya, poreso wala na ko nidayun kay [September] 8 palang naa nay pinusilan. (*She already informed me, that is why I decided not to go home because by [September] 8 the shooting was already happening*).

Lily and Daisy are talking, clarifying some information

Lily: Kasi 11 [pm] pa lang tiene ya daw ta tira, so dol nuay lang sila kasi normal yalang man akel alya. Normal nalang, parang wala lang. Abi nila testing-testing lang... Kabar nag start na siguro mga madaling araw hanggag 5 [am]. Didtu na, kabar gigising ko ni ano, ni manong nako. Ingun sya: "Lily sunog." (*By 11 [pm] there was already a shooting, they thought it was nothing because it is considered normal there. Normal, like it's nothing. Some said they were only testing [their guns]...then, it started happening at dawn until 5 [am]. That was it, then, my older brother woke me up. He said: "Lily there's fire"*).

Ingon naku: “huh, sunug, asa ang sunug?” Laughter... Sunug daw, sunug daw. Ingon ko: “huh, onde ang sunug?” Amo yakel, kabar, ya uwi yalang yo tan ulan ya mga kwan oh, mga bala. Tan kambyahan ya sila tiro. (*I replied: “huh, fire, where is the fire?” Laughter...He said there was fire, there was fire. I replied: “huh, where is the fire?” That was it. Then, I heard it was raining bullets. They were exchanging gunshots).*

According to the residents of Zamboanga City, violent crime is geographically concentrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods like Santa Catalina and Santa Barbara, where majority of the residents work in the informal economy and are likely ethnic Muslim Filipinos. Lily is an exception since they own a house and come from a working-class family background. But despite her class difference, she had come to normalize the criminality in the area as part of the mundane night life of the residents. She explained that they were less concerned about the active gun shooting than a potential fire in their neighbourhood. This is not to say that Lily or the people in Santa Catalina are compliant of oppressive structures that create and maintain inequalities. I observed in my impromptu conversations that many of them are aware of the material conditions in which they grow up and live. But there were also some residents who were less optimistic about the future of the city, whose perceptions in life reminded me of Aesop’s Fable of the Fox and the Grapes. More importantly, Lily was only 18 years old when the war in the city erupted. And like most young adults that age, her concern revolved around mainstream popular culture. Since Zamboanga City has high rise buildings, popular malls, and branded clothing stores that are comparable to Metro Manila, this reflected her image of the city as *“tan uso gayod, unlike na otro lugar parang behind sila”* (trendy, unlike in other places where they fall behind). Before the fighting, her daily routine typically consisted of *“skwela lang, kabar balay, computer”* (just school, then home, computer) until it was disrupted.

- Romeo: Pakilaya ustedes ya eskapa, yan evacuate? (*How did you guys escape, evacuate?*)
- Lily: Yan stay kame alya one night. (*We stayed there for one night*).
- Romeo: One night. Pero lockdown ya ustedes? (*One night. But were you already in lockdown?*)
- Lily: Mm-hmm. Lockdown ya. Nuay ya kame eskapa kasi mga around 5 to 6 [am], pensaba sila nuay lang, kasi abla sila pasa lang. As in ya pasa gad sila kay talya ba kame apuera alya...basta apuera lang na mga basurahan. Ya pasa gad sila kabar el losdemas...hala ta para dimiyo pelo... (*Mm-hmm. We were already in lockdown. We did not escape because around 5 to 6 [am], we thought it was nothing, because they said they were only passing by. As in they only walked by because we were outside [watching] nearby the garbage. They just walked by, then the rest...oh my I'm getting goosebumps.*)
- Romeo: Maayo wala sila nag knock-knock sa balay? (*Good thing they did not knock on the houses?*)
- Lily: Wala. Parang akel dila kasi akel yan hostage ya sila, kasi ta kaba ya liga [el mga polices]. (*No. They began to take people as hostages when the [polices were gradually arriving]*).
- Daisy joins in the conversation, saying that many of the hostages were their neighbours.
- Daisy: Naa, naingon si kwan oh, si Ronnie,<sup>31</sup> nangutana daw kay Ben.<sup>32</sup> Kani si Ronnie, ako second to the last [sibling]. Pag human si Ronnie, sya man ang next (pointing to Lily as the youngest sibling). Naka asawa tu ug Tausug. Ingon sya naa daw nangutana pero ang tubag nila ga rent lang, ga rent lang didtu. Kay unya ngano daw naa mga image [ni Kristo]. Ingon pa sila, ga rent lang me. Ang tag-iya daw Kristyano. Mugrag gigawas lang nila na ga-kwan, ga rent lang sila didtu. Kabalu man me mag Tausug, kani (pointing to Lily) dili man kaayo. Akoang duwa ka brothers, kabalo mag Tausug. (*They were. What he kwan oh [filler] Ronnie said that they asked Ben. Ronnie is my second to the last [sibling]. After Ronnie, she is next (pointing to Lily as the youngest sibling). He married a Tausug woman. He said that someone had asked [about their ethnicity and religion], his reply was they were only renters, they just rented there. If so, how come there were images [of Christ]. They said that "we just rent here." The owner of the house is a Christian. They showed that they were only renting there. We speak fluent Tausug, but this one (pointing to Lily) is not so much. The two other brother, they speak Tausug.*)
- Romeo: Oh, poreso naka lagpas sila? (*Oh, that's how they passed through*).

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<sup>31</sup> Assigned pseudonym

<sup>32</sup> Assigned pseudonym

Daisy: Oo. Kani diay nag tirong man na. Nag kita mi pag ka Tuesday na morning. *(Yes, this one was wearing a veil. We saw each other the next day, Tuesday morning).*

I can tell that Ronnie is a *jeproks*, a Filipino lexicon for someone who is cool, laidback, and streetwise. He displayed this quality when he misled some members of the MNLF who speculated about whether the people living in their house were from another ethnoreligious group. He was even more convincing because he spoke to them in Taugsug. While Lily is not so fluent in this dialect, she tried to adapt an alternative strategy to blend in with the crowd by wearing a veil. Ronnie and Lily's awareness of what they could and could not control in their environment is what kept them alive and allowed them to plan an alternative route.

Romeo: Pag human, katung naka hawa na mo, asa mu gi-dala? *(Then, after you left where were you taken?)*

Daisy: Didtu mo nidiretsyo sa Budget Wise. *(You directly went to Budget Wise).*

Lily: Oo, Budget Wise kame, kabar yan diretsyo kame, alya yata na Tetuan. Kabar, kaninyo ya na Sucabon. *(Yes, we were in Budget Wise, then we went to Tetuan. Then, to your place in Sucabon).*

Romeo: Nag-register ka, kay naa man registration for IDP? *(Did you register, since they had registration for IDP?)*

Lily: Wala, kasi mga 1 week o 2 weeks... *(No, because around 1 week or 2 weeks...)*

Daisy: Wala...nilarga man dayun sa Del Sur, kay nag huna-huna pud mi, traumatized. Kaylangan lain ang ambiance. *(No... she immediately left for Del Sur, because we were thinking, [she's] traumatized. What she needed was a change in ambiance).*

Romeo: Katung nilarga na ka, nag-stay ka sa family mino? *(After you left, did you stay with your family?)*

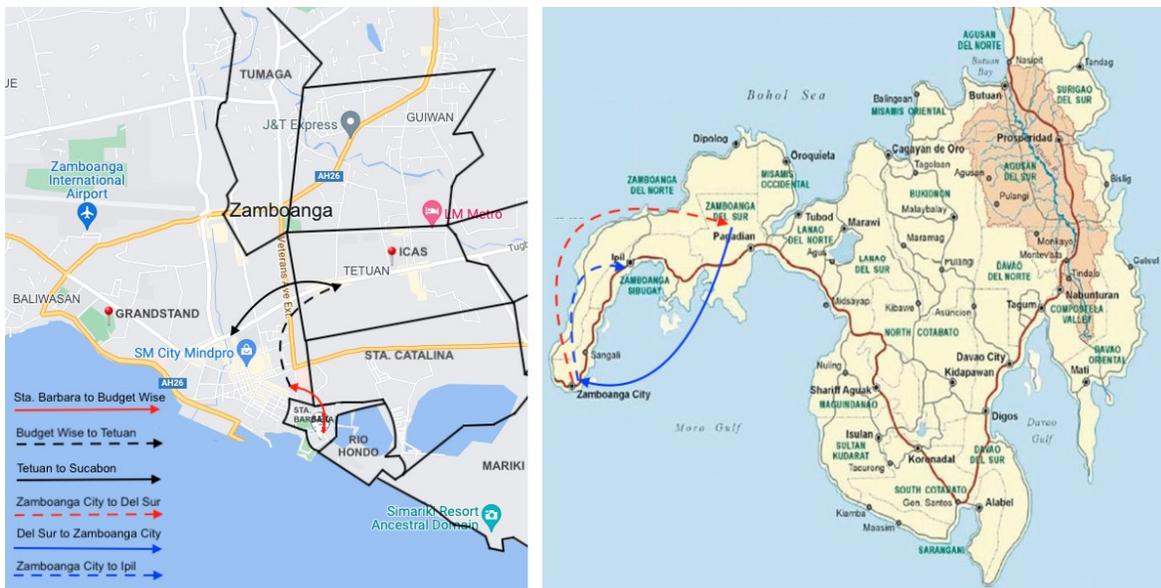
Daisy: Sa sister, ang eldest. *(At my eldest sister).*

While it is sometimes impossible to organize long-distance travel during emergency situations (Vignal 2021, 162), the Philippine security forces were able to contain the fighting in ground zero and prevent its geographical spread, but they could not reduce the intensity of armed violence. The local government offered some residents with free transportation to travel to the province of Zamboanga Del Sur, where the eldest sibling of Lily, Daisy and Ronnie lives. While most forced migrants choose to remain in relatively familiar environment and with their relatives (World Bank 2017, 48), others resort to family separation as a temporary strategy to “help a child escape from military recruitment or to send a politically active member into hiding” (Wilmsen 2011, 45). In the case of Lily and Ronnie, their older siblings collectively decided that a change in environment would be in their best interest, as it would help them cope from the trauma brought by armed conflict. In addition, since they no longer have both of their parents, they do not have strong family ties in Zamboanga City, except for Daisy who stayed because of work obligations. Their decisions were based on an assessment of positive and negative reasons to remain as close as possible to their home (Vignal 2021, 160).

Ronnie’s initial trajectory of displacement was intertwined with Lily; they were entrapped in ground zero, and together, they escaped and travelled to another province. In addition, even though Daisy was in another location during the MNLF occupation, she weaved her story of displacement with and in relation to Lily. This brings me back to my methodological discussion of *kuwentuhan* as “an abstraction of history, congealing experience into a chain of events” (Jocson 2009, 31). Daisy naturally inserted herself into my conversation with Lily to elucidate or add information, without talking over or

interrupting Lily’s rendition of events. In some instances, they even finished each other’s sentences.

This practice of *kuwentuhan* involves the exercising of agency by Lily and Ivy through their performance of gendered stereotypes, or what Deniz Kandiyoti (1998) calls patriarchal bargain. These are strategies deployed by women and sexual minorities to “maximize [their] security and optimize life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression” (Kandiyoti 1998, 274). Both research participants wore veils to intentionally present themselves as Muslim Filipino women to circumvent captivity and reach safety.



Map 4: Lily’s Trajectory of Displacement

### Iris’ Trajectory of Displacement

Although I do not have raw data to support this, and since relatively little is known about the conditions of residents who remained in war-torn areas, I can only assume that because of economic collapse caused by armed conflict, they live in situations of

deep poverty (World Bank 2017, 49; Vignal 2021, 166-167). As much as patterns of displacement are shaped by IDPs' access to material and familial resources, individuals with no access to them are forced into unwanted mobility. They seek refuge in makeshift shelters set up in public buildings and rely on humanitarian aid distribution (Vignal 2021, 160). In Zamboanga City, the largest IDP evacuation facility was in Grandstand, the same location that Ivy arrived at and left due to its dismal conditions. It operated for as long as four years until some IDPs were relocated to a transitory site in Masepla, barangay Mampang, to await permanent resettlement.

Iris, a mother of ten children who lived as *skwaters* (squatters) in Santa Barbara, fled to Grandstand at three o'clock in the morning of September 9, 2013, to seek sanctuary. She moved to Zamboanga City with her family in 2008 for better economic prospects. She explained that "*nagustuhan ko dito ay mura and bilingin, pwede kang mag ano, mag hanap buhay dun sa tabi-tabi*" (what I have come to like here is the affordability of things, you can ano [word filler], you can have sideline business).<sup>33</sup>

Romeo: Ano po yung na-aalala nyo nung nangyari yung Zamboanga siege, September 9. Nasan po kayo, anong ginagawa nyo? (*What do you remember from what happened in the Zamboanga siege, September 9. Where were you, what were you doing?*)

Iris: Takot na takot po kami, sir. Lalo na po yung, may naririnig na po kame sir namga putukan. Parang natataranta na talaga ako sir, kasi ang dami ko potalagang anak. 'Di ko po sir ma ano, paano ko lahat yung mga anak ko, kasi 10 sila anak ko... May malaki na pero yung iba, maliliit pa. Sabi ko, "okay lang, bahala na yung ano, yung Diyos kung ano-ano saamin." May nag tulong nalang sa amin mag punta kami doon. (*We were very terrified, sir. Especially when we heard the shootings. I was really panicking, sir, because I have 10 children...One is a grown up, but the rest of them are still tiny. I said, "that is okay, it is up to Allah if what will happen to us." [Then], someone offered help to drop us off there.*)

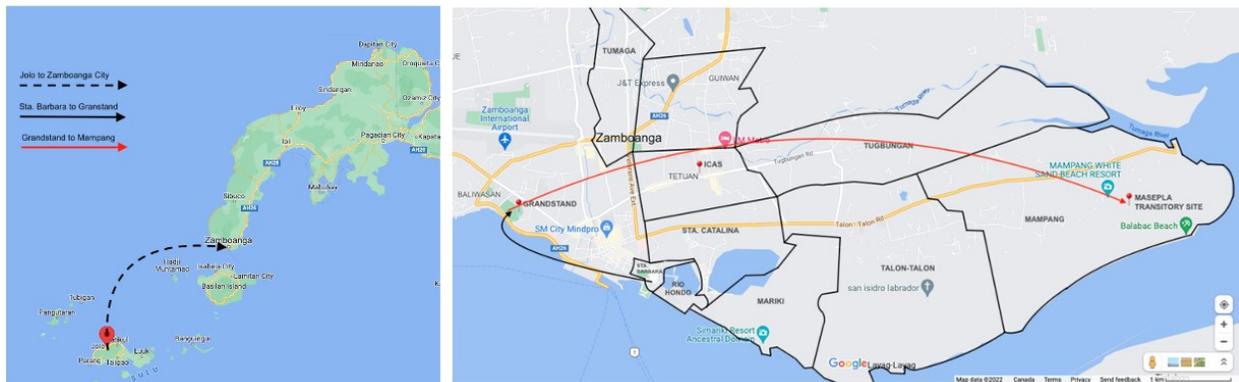
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<sup>33</sup> In the Philippines, sideline business can refer to a range of things. It includes jobs such as buy-and-sell, laundromat and/or cleaning services. It is considered part of the gig or solidarity economy.

- Romeo: Sta. Barbara po kayo diba? Mga anong oras po kayo, madaling araw?  
*(You were at Sta. Barbara, right? What time did you, at dawn?)*
- Iris: Mga three plus yata yung kame, sir. *(Around after 3 [am], sir).*
- Romeo: Saan po kayo dinala? *(Where did you get dropped off?)*
- Iris: Doon po sa main. *(There at the main)*
- Romeo: Sa Grandstand? *(At grandstand?)*
- Iris: Opo. *(Yes).*
- Romeo: Binigyan kayo ng option kung saan kayo pwedeng pumunta? *(Were you given with options of where you could go?)*
- Iris: Wala din, kasi wala naman kami alam. Ang alam namin ay doon na talaga. *(No, because we had no clue where else to go. We only knew to go there).*
- Romeo: Mga gaano po kayo nag tagal, mga ilang taon or buwan kayo nagtagal sa Grandstand? *(For how long did you stay, for how many years or months were you at Grandstand?).*
- Iris: Kame po sir, bale tatlong buwan po kami doon sir. Kasi hindi na makaya doon ang dumi. *(We were there for three months, sir. We could no longer endure the situation there because it was so dirty).*
- Romeo: Saan po kayo pumunta after? *(Where did you go after?)*
- Iris: Nag lipat po kami sa Masepla. *(We transferred to Masepla).*

The series of conflict in Jolo, induced by clan rivalry, military pacification, and the Abu Sayyaf group linked to Al-Qaeda, have created a climate of economic instability and political unrest in the region (Herbert 2019, 1-3). Many of the residents live below the poverty line (Philippine Statistics Authority 2009, 15). I did not ask whether Iris had a previous experience of forced displacement, as past displacement usually “leads to more displacement in the present or in the future” (Adhikari 2013, 83), but she

described moving to Zamboanga City out of economic necessity.<sup>34</sup> In addition, since Iris' family lived in Santa Barbara as informal settlers, with little material possessions because of the lingering fear of forced evictions and demolitions, they had fewer reasons to remain in place and develop a strong attachment to home as a physical location. But this did not mean that they lacked an emotional attachment to the place. In many informal settlements, residents engage in incremental investments to improve the aesthetic condition of their shelters (Furtado and Renski 2019, 284). Many of them have also formed interpersonal and cultural relationships with their community (Furtado and Renski 2019, 285). Nevertheless, Iris did not want to risk the safety of her children and made decisions based on the need to get through the danger unharmed.



Map 5: Iris' Trajectory of Displacement

<sup>34</sup> Contrary to the long-established literature in migration studies that separate different groups of migrants into skilled-unskilled, temporary-permanent, or forced-voluntary, Erdal and Oeppen (2018) claim that the decision to migrate oftentimes falls in the forced-voluntary spectrum (981). In line with this, Purkayastha (2018) explains that internal migration flow in a continuum with international migration. Drawing on the framework of 'glocal' (global-national-local), she argues that "[w]ith the rapid improvement in communication technology, many spaces of migrant's lives are organized in virtual spaces and range through multiple countries depending on their networks...their lives are part of, not apart from, their lives in tangible geographic (local, national, transnational) spaces" (Purkayastha 2018, 168). Similar observations can be drawn in the migration patterns of IDPs in the Philippines and of Overseas Filipino Workers, since both were facilitated by states policies of: (1) homesteading and resettlement and (2) export labour policy.

## Hyacinth's Trajectory of Displacement

Another research participant who is from Jolo is Hyacinth, where she had been displaced twice by the armed violence in the region. She relocated to Zamboanga City 20 years ago where she eventually met her husband. We held the interview in the morning of July 16, 2021, at Mampang Elementary School, right after the rain had stopped. I learned that she was recruited by my gatekeeper who is the school principal where she works as a custodian and where her children go to school. I was slightly concerned that her decision to participate in the study was based on the uneven power relations with my gatekeeper. This made it especially important to explain the consent form in detail, creating room for questions and discussion. I ensured that she was fully aware of her rights as a research participant and understood what was expected of her.

Even though we had received permission from the school principal to conduct the interview during the day while Hyacinth is on the clock, I noticed that she seemed in a hurry to complete the interview. While I could have offered to reschedule the interview at another time when she is not busy, it was logistically difficult because of Covid-19 travel restrictions. In addition, Hyacinth is a single mother of four children who works full-time hours. I did not want to take her day off away from spending intimate time with her children, so I decided to cut the interview short by 30 minutes.

Romeo: Uhm, bago kayo lumipat ng Zamboanga City po, na-displaced din po ba kayo sa Jolo dahil sa gulo? (*Uhm, before you moved to Zamboanga City, were you also displaced in Jolo because the disorder?*)

Hyacinth: Opo sir, meron din doon. Pero konti lang doon, hindi masyado basta nadoon lang kame sa loob ng Jolo. (*Yes sir, we had [experienced] that there. But only for a little, not so much, but we remained within Jolo.*)

Romeo: So lumikas din kayo, may gan'to ding nangyari. (*You also evacuated similar to what happened here.*)

- Hyacinth: Oo, may ganito din. Doon sa Jolo mga dalawang beses lang nag ano doon, nag alis na kame, natakot kame. *(Yes, similar to here. We were displaced in Jolo twice. We decided to leave because we were afraid).*
- Romeo: So, ang pangalawang tanong ko po, uhm, taga Mampang po ba kayo o ibang barangay? *(So, my second question is, uhm, are you from Mampang or from another barangay?).*
- Hyacinth: Sta. Babara kame, sir. Na-abutan kame ng gera, pumunta kame sa Masepla. Doon kame pina-padpad. *(We are from Sta. Barbara, sir. We were caught by the war, we went to Masepla. It was where were landed).*
- Romeo: Natandaan nyo po anong nangyari sa September 9, yung siege? *(Do you remember what happened on September 9, during the siege?).*
- Hyacinth: Laughter. Opo, ma'am, ay sir. Gera talaga sir. Mga bala yan sir. Nandoon lang kame sa loob ng Barbara, sa bahay po sir. Yang malinaw, linaw na sir, nag labas na kame sa grandstand...naglakad lang, sir. *(Laughter. Yes ma'am, I mean sir. It was war indeed, sir. There were bullets sir. We were inside Barbara, at home sir. When it was a little brighter outside sir, we went to Grandstand...we only walked, sir).*
- Romeo: Alam 'to ng mga autoridad? *(Were the authorities aware of this?)*
- Hyacinth: Opo. Alam nila din sir pero naghahakot lang sila ng tao para sa grandstand. *(Yes, they knew about it sir, they were loading people to Grandstand).*
- Romeo: Hindi na kayo sumakay sa truck? *(You didn't ride the truck?).*
- Hyacinth: Hindi na sir kasi madaming tao baka mawala mga bata... may tumulong na samin, nag sakay na kame. *(No sir, there were loading so many people. We were afraid that we might get separated from our children... Someone helped us, offered us a ride).*
- Romeo: Mga ilang araw po kayo or buwan nag stay sa Grandstand? *(For how many days or months did you stay in Grandstand?).*
- Hyacinth: Ilang taon yan sir! Taon! *(For years sir! Years!).*
- Romeo: Taon?! Ay, grabe pala...matandaan nyo po mga ilang taon? *(Years?! Ay, that's severe...do you still remember for how many years?).*
- Hyacinth: Mga 4 taon yun sir bago kame napunta dito [in barangay Mampang]. *(For 4 years sir, before we went here [in barangay Mampang]).*
- Romeo: Grabe po pala 4 years... sorry po talaga. *(Too much for 4 years...I'm sorry).*
- Hyacinth: Matagal sir. Yang tent namin mag baha, dun lang kame sir. *(Too long sir. Our tent was flooded we stayed there).*

Romeo: Ilan kayo sa isang tent? *(How many of you were in the tent?)*

Hyacinth: Madami sir. *(Many sir).*

Romeo: So hindi lang kayo ng family nyo, madami kayo? *(So it wasn't only your family, there were many of you).*

Hyacinth: Hindi, lahat kame. *(No, all of us).*

Romeo: Uhm, dalawang tanong nalang po. Yung isa, kabila sa anong nangyari sa inyo, na-displaced, tapos hindi na kayo nakabalik sa inyong dating tirahan, 4 years po kayo sa Grandstand...kabila sa nangyari, matatawag nyo parin ba ang Zamboanga City na home? *(Uhm, two more questions. First, despite of what happened to you, you've been displaced, then you couldn't return in your first home, 4 years at Grandstand...despite of what happened, would you still call Zamboanga City your home?)*

Hyacinth: *Laughter.* Sa akin wala nang magawa. Nandito nalang, matawag nalang maganda ang Zamboanga. *(Laughter. For me, I can't do anything. We're here, we'll just call Zamboanga beautiful).*

Romeo: Eh kung may iba pa po kayong lugar na ibang puntahan o manirahan, saan po iyon? *(Eh, if there's another place where you'd like to go or live, where is it?).*

Hyacinth: Sa akin lang sir, mag balik lang sa tirahan dati. *(For me, to return to our previous home).*

Romeo: Sa Santa Barbara? *(At Santa Barbara?)*

Hyacinth: Mm-hmm.

Romeo: Nandoon parin po ba yong mga kaibigan nyo? *(Are your friends still there?).*

Hyacinth: Oo, mayron doon sir kaibigan lahat. Nandyan lang. Mga kapit-bahay nanyan lahat sir. *(Yes, they are there sir, all my friends. They're just there. Our neighbour, all of them sir).*

Romeo: Huling tanong na po, may gusto kayong sabihin saakin na hindi ko natanong? *(Last question, is there anything you'd like to tell me that I hadn't asked?).*

Hyacinth: Wala na sir. *(Nothing sir.).*

Romeo: Kayo po, may tanong po ba kayo saakin? *(How about you, do you have any questions for me?).*

Hyacinth: Wala naman po. *(Nothing).*

Hyacinth experienced super typhoon Yolanda (internationally named hurricane Haiyan) in their first year in Grandstand, but they continued to remain in their tent even though it was already flooded. They had no other options but to persist through multiple layers of difficult situations. In addition, among the research participants in this study, Hyacinth spent the longest time in Grandstand with her family, and like Iris, she relocated to Masepla to await permanent resettlement. But since they have been displaced for over five years without any durable solutions of local integration, voluntary return, or resettlement, they are in prolonged conditions of displacement, or what the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calls protracted refugee situation (PRS) (Milner 2014, 152).

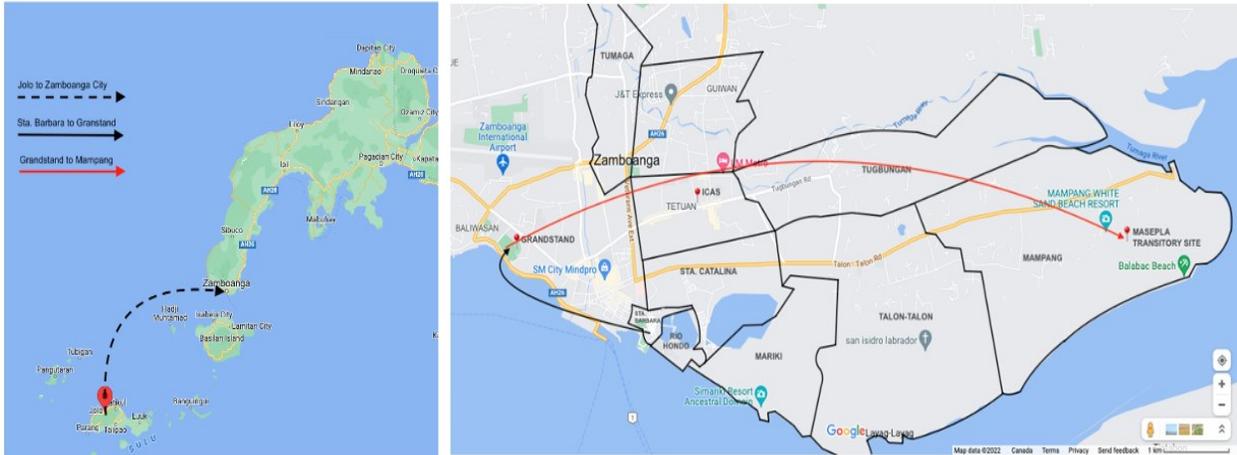
PRS as a concept that emerged in the 2000s to describe forced migrants in “long-term and intractable exile exceeding five years in which: ‘lives may not be at risk, but...basic rights and essential economic, social, and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile” (Hyndman and Giles 2018, 74). While Muslim IDP women in prolonged conditions of displacement may no longer be at risk of direct violence, they continue to experience slow and structural violence, which are attributed to the local government’s inadequate response and the long history of persecution experienced by ethnic minorities in the Philippines.



Image 1: Stilt houses in Masepla, barangay Mampang  
Source: Taken by Romeo Joe Quintero on August 16, 2021



Image 2: Stilt houses in Masepla, barangay Mampang  
Source: Taken by Romeo Joe Quintero on August 16, 2021



Map 5: Hyacinth's Trajectory of Displacement

**The Unruly and Unequal Nature of Mobility**

The ability to move to cope with war is influenced by a number of factors. As conveyed in the stories of Ivy, Lily, Iris, and Hyacinth, although they had similar experiences of armed violence in Zamboanga City and lived in barangays that became ground zero, their trajectories of displacement varied significantly, as they were shaped by their class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion, education, and available alternative housing arrangement in response to displacement. Their patterns of mobility were also influenced by their access to informational, financial, material, and social resources.

Ivy who has material, financial, and social assets did not leave her home during the siege regardless of her proximity to the battlefield. She had a stronger reason to stay and safeguard her belongings. When she did decide to leave, she had better options for where and how she could seek temporary shelter. She had opportunities to make frequent attempts to return home to retrieve some of her belongings. Although her actions may seem reckless, she understood the risk in delaying her evacuation and choosing to engage in this form of circular migration after displacement. Meanwhile, Lily left ground zero and the city as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Her trajectory

of displacement was also shaped by the material, financial, and social assets available to her based on her personal circumstances and her network of kin.

In contrast, Iris and Hyacinth who refused to take state-sanctioned options to leave ground zero in for fear of family separation and also because they had no cash to pay for alternative transportation, decided to travel by foot with their children to ensure that they arrived in the evacuation facility altogether. Choosing among “undesirable options under negative conditions does not negate the autonomy of the actors in making those decisions” (Showden 2011, 45). Moreover, some Muslim IDP women resorted to “*bahala na ang Diyos*” (it’s up to God), acknowledging that the situation was beyond their control, and they were choosing the best for themselves, and their family members given the circumstances.

Another interpretation of “*bahala na ang Diyos*” expressed by the participants is that somewhere along their journey in search of protection, they would run into well-meaning strangers who could help them get to safety; otherwise, they would continue to walk by foot until they reach the evacuation facility. Their demonstration of agency went beyond individual considerations, was specific to the social, political, and cultural context of the Philippines (situated) and depended on which aspect of their positionality was most salient (Showden 2011, 19). By leaving everything in the care of God, Muslim IDP women dispelled any possible worry (Gripaldo 2005, 206) to help them think resourcefully and creatively and readily improvise for solutions (Enriquez 1992, 89; Gripaldo 2005, 206). In addition, it brought them comfort and hope.

Overall, the decision-making processes of Ivy, Lily, Iris, and Hyacinth was shaped by their complex identities and social locations. This is in line with the view of

Umut Ozkaleli (2021), Saba Mahmood (2005), and Anthony Giddens (1979) who explain that agency is conceived through careful considerations of the past, present, and future. They calculated their situations every step of the way by weighing the consequences their decisions would have on themselves and families.

What lies at the heart of *bahala na* for Filipino IDP women and gender diverse individuals is the *kaginhawaan* (well-being) of their family (Samaco-Zamora and Fernandez 2016, 283). Regardless of their class background and ethno-religious-linguistic identities, Filipino IDPs in southern Philippines never made any decisions about their trajectories of displacement, without thinking of the impact their actions would have on those around them. Sometimes, they even had to sacrifice their personal desire to meet the needs of their family. The next chapter explores how Filipino IDPs deployed similar acts of situated agency while in evacuation centres to cope with their daily needs for survival. They developed alternative strategies to challenge their image as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance with limited ambitions for their future (signaling Agamben's bare life).

## Chapter Five: Looking for a Safe Haven in a City Torn Apart by War

### Introduction

The Joaquin Sports Complex (locally known as Grandstand) is in the southwest of the city, across the Cawa-Cawa Boulevard where sex workers, ice candy<sup>35</sup> and *balut* egg<sup>36</sup> vendors, and Badjao children who happily swam for coins, loomed under the dim city lights. It was a site of temporary utopia for people who had been displaced by gentrification; they would gather to trade misadventures while imagining the city of their dreams. For others who reaped the benefit of modern culture, the Boulevard was a site of decay where the rich could visit to get a glimpse of the Other.

During the warfare in the city, the Joaquin Sports Complex was turned into the largest evacuation facility for IDPs. Some residents and interview participants described the place as unlivable. One notable response was from Camellia, who explained that “it’s a good thing that we were not sent to Grandstand where you would be with the Badjaos, the Tausug, and other Muslims. You would be staying with them there at the evacuation centre which is very unhealthy. It’s not comfortable for you to live there because of the air, you know, it’s so polluted because it’s so crowded.” Camelia’s response and the general description of Grandstand reveals how the deep class and ethnoreligious divide of the city is also expressed spatially.

The ground zero of the conflict, Grandstand and Cawa-Cawa Boulevard, are sites of disorder, and the only haven available for marginalized displaced persons. The

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<sup>35</sup> Ice candy is a frozen juice in a plastic tube. It is the Philippine equivalent of a popsicle.

<sup>36</sup> *Balut* is a Filipino delicacy commonly sold as street food. It is made by incubating duck eggs for about 18 days. See Alejandria et al. (2019) for the historical and cultural significance of *balut* in the Philippines as a food icon.

majority of Filipino Muslim IDPs and those from low-income neighbourhoods were sent to Joaquin Sports Complex to be controlled, managed, and produced as desirable subjects (Hyndman 2000, 74; Ramadan 2013, 68; Turner 2022, 57). Filipino Muslims are stereotyped as warlike and troublesome in a long-Christianized settler colonial society (Madale 1998, 496), and as IDPs they are regarded as a “strain upon resources and a potential threat to stability, identity, and cohesion” (Loescher et al. 2008, 3). Their experience of displacement is contrary to that of Filipino IDPs who could seek temporary refuge at a Catholic high school. In this site, most IDPs came from one barangay and shared a similar working-class background and ethnoreligious and linguistic characteristics. Unlike Muslim IDPs seen as strains and threats to be controlled and managed or hapless evacuees, Christian IDPs were considered guests in evacuation sites and provided with ample supplies of food, shelter, and sanitation.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In part one, I explore the lives of forcibly displaced individuals in two separate IDP evacuation sites.<sup>37</sup> I argue that contrary to Giorgio Agamben’s (1998) conception of camps as “spaces of exception,” where individuals are denied rights and reduced to bare life (Bakewell 2014, 10; Ramadan 2013, 68), the IDP sites in my study were also vessels of hope and spaces for imagining futures where IDPs actively forge new political strategies (Turner 2022, 62). In part two, I analyze the living conditions of forcibly displaced individuals who were identified as home-based IDPs or those who stayed with family members or friends throughout the duration of the siege. While they did not receive humanitarian relief to

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<sup>37</sup> Both facilities were not built for the sole purpose of accommodating IDPs, but in the context of the Zamboanga City siege, they operated as temporary settlements and constituted elements of refugee camps as laid out in a UNHCR Emergency Handbook (2022).

alleviate their sufferings, they drew on their social networks to support their everyday necessities. It is in the third section where I address the issue of traditional durable solutions to forced migration, framed by the local government as build back better and safer Zamboanga. However, these conventional solutions of return, local integration, and resettlement did not reflect the realities of the people on the ground.

### **Camps as Sites of Confinement**

The Joaquin Sports Complex operated as an IDP camp site for almost four years and was shut down for a three-year renovation period. It reopened to the public in late 2019 but was closed yet again in early 2020, when it was turned into an isolation facility for individuals affected by the coronavirus disease. During ‘fieldwork,’ I was quarantined in Joaquin Sports Complex upon testing positive for Covid-19. I stayed there for seven days and requested to be transferred to a private hospital when my symptoms worsened. While in the quarantine facility, I was restricted to a tiny space surrounded by fences, where I could loiter around while being monitored by a surveillance camera. This led me to reflect on the strategy of encampment, a default policy response by states and aid agencies during war, natural disasters, and pandemic (Bakewell 2014, 3; Rozakou 2012, 568).

Historically, camps were established to control and oppress certain populations (e.g., re-education camps in Vietnam and Cambodia), and in extreme cases to obliterate an entire race (e.g., Nazi concentration camps) (Bakewell 2014, 3). For Giorgio Agamben, whose work has become a source of inspiration and contestation in forced migration studies, camps are ‘spaces of exception,’ in which forcibly displaced individuals are reduced to ‘bare life’ as “subjects to control” and “bodies without any

regard for their humanity” (Bakewell 2014, 10). Drawing on Carl Schmitt’s state of exception and Michel Foucault’s biopower, Agamben explained in *Homo Sacer* (1998) that within the nation-state framework, non-citizens—refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants—are marginal figures who are simultaneously excluded and included in the legal system of the host country (Agamben 1994, 4; Lauser et al. 2022, 6; Ramada 2013, 65; Turner 2022, 53). What makes the camp a site of exception is that it “relieves the host country of its obligations towards refugees within its territory,” except to govern and regulate their movement (Ramadan 2013, 69) and restrict their economic opportunities so that they do not flood the labour market or create violent competitions for resources (Bakewell 2014, 4; Black 1998, 5; Betts et al. 2016, 143).

While IDPs do not cross an international border and do not meet the legal framework of what constitutes a refugee as defined by the UNHCR, they experience similar forms of confinement and control. In the case of the Islamic separatist movement in southern Philippines, which emerged in response to the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (Ringuet 2002, 39), IDPs are rendered under the protection of the very same government that is responsible for their involuntary displacement. Much like with any other forcibly displaced individuals in refugee camps or detention centres, IDPs who live in evacuation facilities do so against their will. “They are forced into the confinement of the camps, where their lives are put on hold while they wait for others to make decisions on their future” (Turner 2022, 53). Even though forcibly displaced individuals are stuck in camps and excluded from the public life, their physical immobility does not equate with lack of freedom and agency (Turner 2022, 53). As shown in the narratives of IDPs in Zamboanga City, there are many nuances in the lives of IDPs in camp sites that

Agamben's theorizations did not fully capture. IDP camp sites are more than just carceral structures, they also serve as crossroads or junctures that lead to "new subjectivities and new trajectories" (Turner 2022, 55).

### **Aster's Life in Grandstand**

One logistical benefit of establishing camp sites is that they are located in known areas and are accessible, easing the provision of humanitarian aid relief and protection (Bakewell 2014, 2; Black 1998, 5; Salazar et al. 2018, 1). In addition, many forcibly displaced individuals arrive in refugee camps or evacuation facilities with very few material possessions having had to abandon them when they fled their homes (Ramadan 2013, 65; Bakewell 2014, 11). As discussed in the previous chapter, encampment may be the only option left for people with limited means. Therefore, even with humanitarian assistance, encampment by design may undermine the ability of forcibly displaced individuals to provide for themselves. Vulnerable groups—the elderly, disabled, pregnant, and chronically sick people—may struggle to support themselves and their families (Bakewell 2014, 11; Toole and Waldman 1990, 3296). For such people, the welfare and protection delivered in camp sites are their essential safety nets (Bakewell 2014, 11) while still being inadequate and difficult to access.

The above concerns were expressed by Aster, who fled to Grandstand with her parents, sibling, and partner despite having extended family members who were unaffected by the warfare in the city, so as not to put additional burden on their kin.

Romeo:           Onde ustedes ya anda? (*Where did you go?*).

Aster:           Na grandstand. (*To Grandstand*).

Romeo: Na grandstand tamen gale tu, pensabe 'yo na pamilya? (*You also fled to Grandstand, I thought you stayed with families?*).

Aster: Nuay sir kay malisud man tu man stay na pamilya kay el comida tormento gad tu. (*No sir, because it's hard to stay with family because the food is really difficult*).

Romeo: Di ken idea anda alya? (*Whose idea was it to go there?*).

Aster: Diamun ya sir, idea diamun nana kasi akel time ano man dimoyo tata, como ya ataka. Na nuay kame para kumida. Na ya pensa yalang kame na: "aqui kita man stay mang nuay kunatun kien dale kumida, nuay kita onde saka, so anda yalang kita mang na Grandstand para dale kunatun kumida el gobyerno. Risibi kita ayuda." (*Ours' sir, mine and my mother's idea because that time my father had a mild attack [hypertension]. Na we didn't have anything for food. Na we just thought that: "If we stay here mang [mother], no one will provide us food, we also have nowhere else to go get them, so let's just go to Grandstand so that the government would give us food. We'll receive help.*).

Romeo: Ya rehistra ustedes alya? (*Did you register there?*).

Aster: Si, ya rehistra. (*Yes, we registered*).

Romeo: So, registered ustedes IDP, uhm, amo se ustedes ya usa para ayuda, na kumida ta dale sila? (*So, you were registered IDPs, uhm, that's what you used to receive relief, the food they give out?*).

Aster: Si, si. (*Yes, yes*).

Romeo: Ta check-ya gad sila? (*Were they really checking it?*).

Aster: Ta check-ya se sila, sir. (*They were really checking it, sir*).

Romeo: Akel ya liga ya ustedes alya na Grandstand, naa mu mga kaila, mga silingan, mga lain tau? (*When you arrived at Grandstand, did you recognize other folks, your neighbours, strangers?*).

Aster: *Giggle*. Bien muchu gad klase-kalse hente...Pero hinde gad kel todo kame huntu. Como separtaw-separtaw. (*Giggle. There were many different kinds of people...but not all of us were together. We were separated*).

Romeo: Si, pero naa ka mga kaila? (*Yes, but did you know some people?*).

Aster: Naa mga kanila. (*Yes, I knew some people*).

Romeo: Sa tent, kinsa imoha kauban sa tent? (*In the tent, who did you share the tent with?*).

Aster: Akung mama ug papa. Katung akong ka live-in sir. Akoang igsoon. (*My*

*mom and dad. My live-in partner, sir. My sibling).*

- Romeo: Pag human, naa pa lain tao sa tent o kamo gad jud naa sa tent? *(Then, were there other people with you in the tent or just your family?).*
- Aster: Naa pa sir. Dili na nako kaila sir. *(There were some, sir. I didn't know them, sir).*
- Romeo: Ohh...daghan pud mga tao taga Mampang na adtu dadtu? *(Oh...were there many people from Mampang who went there?).*
- Aster: Oo, daghan. *Chuckle.* Daghan sir. *(Yes, so many. Chuckle. So many, sir).*
- Romeo: Akel talya ustedes, para contigo sapat naba yung tulong ng government or palta na pamilya si grande dituyu pamilya; dipisil kel? *(When you were there, for you do you think the government relief was adequate or lacking for everyone in the facility; was it hard?).*
- Aster: Mas dipisil gad kel, sir, kay primera okay man sila ta dale, kabar mga two months hinde man gad alba okay gayod. Pwede ya man pero hindi gad sir igual akel, otro kasi el kumida...*breathes and chuckles...*ta dale alya. *(It was even more difficult, sir, because at first what they provided was okay, then after two months you cannot say it was okay. They were edible, but still not sir, unlike, because the food they gave was very different...breathes and chuckles.)*
- Romeo: Especialmente si tiene ustedes mga medical needs, specific gad el kumida, diba? *(Especially if you have medical needs, food has to be specific, right?).*
- Aster: Ah na! Si, amo gad kel. *(Ah na! Yes, that's exactly it).*
- Romeo: Eh mga medisina, vitamins, tiene tamen sila ta dale? *(Eh what about medicines, vitamins, did they provide them as well?).*
- Aster: Ta dale man pero poko lang sir, como kuntawa lang ba. *(They gave them out, but only few, sir, they really rationed).*
- Romeo: Eh pakilaya el maintenance del dituyu tata, ustedes ya, own pocket ya? *(Eh, how was the maintenance of your father, your family, from your own pocket?).*
- Aster: Si, own pocket ya. Tiene gad kame akel sir como disuyu ya gad maintenance. Na nesesita gad tu kel dale. Amo gad kel importante ya liba kame kay highblood gad kel si papang. *(Yes, from our own pocket. We brought our own maintenance for him. You really need to carry it with you. That's also why it's important that we went to there because father has hypertension.)*
- Romeo: Para na mga mujer, na mga elderly pati na mga bata, safe ba el

Grandstand? (*For women, the elderly and children, was Grandstand safe?*).

Aster: Dol hinde man. *Laughter.* Como na first time tu kel pede man huntuhuntu alya mira otro-otro klase, otro-otro hente ba mira na nuay tu man anad. Kabar hinde tu anad mira muchu gad hente. (*I don't think it was. Laughter. It's like it's your first time to be with so many different people from different places, that you're not accustomed to. You're not used to seeing that many people.*)

Concern over food insecurity was the primary reason why Aster and her family fled to Grandstand. Since it was the largest evacuation facility in the city, it became a hub for humanitarian relief. Providing food supplies is very expensive however, which made relief workers very strict about rationing the limited supplies (Bakewell 2014, 4). In the case of Zamboanga City, this was systemically regulated by asking civilians affected by the armed conflict to register as IDPs with the City's Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO). Registered IDPs were rendered as 'tagged' and were given identification cards, which they would present to receive food rations and qualify for reconstruction or resettlement housing projects.

The use of an identity document featuring basic personal information, fingerprints and employment history was introduced in the colonial period by Europeans to control the movement of their subjects (Sinha 2022, 9). Otherwise known as *cedula* in colonial Philippines (Samonte 2021, par. 8) and *kipande* in colonial Kenya (Awenengo Dalberto et al. 2021, 16), these systems were comparable to laws in apartheid South Africa (Kosciejew 2015, 96), as well as settler colonial Canada (Razack 2000, 101) and Palestine (Abu-Zahra 2012, 93). Accordingly, vestiges of these policies exist in today's global refugee regime, requiring asylum seekers to record their fingerprints, biometrics,

and narratives of persecution, for immigration officers and adjudicators to later contest (Awenengo Dalberto et al. 2021, 18).

While Aster recognized that they were reliant on food rations to meet their daily needs, she also shared that the food provided to them was inadequate and unappetizing. Similarly, their living arrangement of sharing a makeshift tent with strangers in Grandstand disrupted her notions of home as a place of intimacy and privacy. Losing one's home, or what Angela Raven-Roberts (2013) describes the rupture of livelihood systems, which includes systems within the households that women "have developed over time to deal with crisis situations" (43), entails losing "the possibility of mutual care, feeling of connectivity and belongingness" (Kanal and Rottman 2021, 10). While this can result in high rates of alcohol and drug abuse, aggression, or intimate partner violence, studies also suggest that the effects of displacement can "increase self-reliance and shared decision making of couples [and other family members]... which in turn may enhance couple's intimacy, affection and communication" amongst themselves and with other members of their family (Rizkalla and Segal 2019, 2).

In addition, the story of Aster disputes the erroneous assumptions by humanitarian agencies that keeping forcibly displaced individuals in camps, combined with continued hand-outs of food, would foster a sense of dependency syndrome (Kibreab 1993, 323). Recipients of external assistance are viewed by humanitarian agencies as shameless and lazy, who cheat the system and undermine initiatives for empowerment (Harvey and Lind 2005, 4). But as demonstrated in the story of Aster and many others like her, they "are far from passive recipients, but remain engaged in a

wide variety of activities, of which aid forms only a part” (Harvey and Lind 2005, 4). In the context of refugee camps, many groups of forced migrants “make strenuous efforts to avoid being dependent on humanitarian aid to preserve their limited autonomy and control over their life...[they] go to great lengths to preserve their lifestyle and earn extra incomes where they can” (Bakewell 2003, 10). While concerns over dependency syndrome is continuously used by humanitarian agencies to scale back on the provision of food relief, it has been found in some war-affected communities of Liberia and Sudan that it increased their vulnerability to malnutrition and forced them into “erosive coping strategies” (Harvey and Lind 2005, 15) by seeking exploitative labour contracts (Duffield 2000, 33).

At the same time, I observed that Aster was a little hesitant to share this with me, as perhaps she did not want to come off as ungrateful. This is something I have identified in the narratives of other research participants. When I asked them about the quality of humanitarian relief that they received while in Grandstand, one respondent said to me: “[*hu*]wag nang madamot, sir. *Laughter*” (Let’s not be greedy, sir. *Laughter*). Being grateful and uncomplaining are gendered colonial mindsets, concealed as “Filipino values” that many Filipinos have internalized (Tungohan, 2021, 35).<sup>38</sup> But the story of Aster is more than just a tiresome complaint that is “distracting somebody from doing ‘*important* work elsewhere” (emphasis not mine) (Ahmed 2021, 2). It is also a story of refusal, sacrifice, hope and love. Aster fled to Grandstand with her household family members to prioritize the welfare of her father. They lived together in this site for

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<sup>38</sup> The discursive framing of this discourse is not only perpetuated in the Philippines by the government, but also reinforced in the diasporic Filipino community, requiring Filipina labour migrants to be “‘Maria Claras’ who are docile, quiet, and unassertive.” (Tungohan 2021, 48).

another two months even though the life was something they had not been accustomed to. The material conditions in Grandstand did not turn them into dependent subjects “who just sit down and wait” for hand-outs to come (Turner 2022, 59). They actively waited for the armed conflict to end so they could return home and resume to their mundane lives, where they could be self-reliant and self-sufficient once again.

### **Poppy’s Life in Grandstand**

Due to the limited availability of accommodation in host communities or countries, assigning forcibly displaced individuals to a specific evacuation facility is considered normal practice (Betts et al. 2016, 142). Typically, new arrivals are registered and provided with relief supplies (Betts et al. 2016, 142) but this is not always achievable or sustainable since not all camp sites are built for the sole purpose of accommodating and retaining forcibly displaced individuals. Like Aster, Poppy was sheltered in Grandstand, where she stayed with her family for three months. She was dropped off at this evacuation centre from the General Public Hospital<sup>39</sup> with her now late son who had been admitted for Thalassemia. Upon arriving in Grandstand, she described feeling confused and wondered if: “*end of the day na ba to?*” (Is this the end of the end day?).

Romeo: Nung andun po kayo sa Grandstand, uhm, maayos naman yung tulong ng government? Sapat po ba yung pagkain? (*When you were at Grandstand, uhm, was the government relief decent? Was the food supply enough?*).

Poppy: Opo. Yung pagkain po okay po yung pagkain. Yung first lang talaga yung September 9 ano lang yung binigay samin biscuit muna kase di pa man

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<sup>39</sup> The General Public Hospital is located close to the ground zero. Patients admitted at this hospital, along with the employees were transferred to Western Mindanao State University (WMSU), where they remained for the duration of the conflict. Some patients were transferred to private hospitals who were not seriously disrupted by the fighting between the Philippines security forces and MNLF.

yun ano. Nung September 9 ng hapon na sir, yun mga 6 o'clock na siguro yun, gutom na din yun baby ko. Wala pang pagkain, rebisco lang muna yun binigay samin. Tapos nag agawan pa talaga yung tao kase gutom na talaga. *(Yes. The food was okay. It was only on September 9 when they gave us biscuit because it wasn't still ano [word filler]. On September 9 in the afternoon sir, around 6 o'clock, my baby was also hungry. There was still no food, they only gave us rebicso.<sup>40</sup> Then, people were scrabbling for food because they were so hungry.)*

- Romeo: Kaya nga eh. Sobrang dami kaya ganun. *(That's why eh. It was overcrowded that's why [it happened])*.
- Poppy: Oo sobrang dami ng tao. Binibigyan din naming yun auntie ko, yun katabi namin, kase hindi sila nakakuha. *(Yes, it was overcrowded with people. We also gave some to our auntie, who was next to us, because they weren't able to get some)*.
- Romeo: Uhm, so nung lumipat kayo wala talaga kayong dalang mga damit? Gamit? *(Uhm, so when you moved you didn't bring clothes? Things?)*.
- Poppy: Wala. Wala po. Kahit ni isa wala. Wala kaming pera sir, kahit piso wala. *(Nothing. Nothing. Not even one thing. We had no money sir, not even a peso)*.
- Romeo: Eh pagdating niyo doon nagbigay naman yung government ng pera? *(Eh, when you arrived there did the government give your money?)*.
- Poppy: Pagkain lang. Sa tagal ko dun sir hindi ako nakareceive ng pera. *(Just Food. For the length of time that I was there I never received money)*.
- Romeo: Eh, may ibang binigay naman? *(Eh, did they give out other things?)*.
- Poppy: Opo. Pagkain sir okay na, sa gatas din ng bata, okay din, mag pila. Sa buntis okay din. *(Yes. We're okay for the food, they also gave out milk for children, it was also okay, you just have to line up. For pregnant women, it was also okay)*.
- Romeo: Ligtas naman po ba ang Grandstand sa mga bata pati sa mga babae? *(Was Grandstand safe for children and women?)*.
- Poppy: Hindi po, kasi sobrang daming tao sir. Tapos yung tent namin sir, sa lupa lang kame tapos yung ano namin, parang cellophane lang yung higaan namin. Wala pa man binigay doon, matagal pa bago nag bigay ng banig. So sa lupa talaga kame. *(No, because it was overcrowded with people, sir. Then our tent sir, we were on the soil, then our ano [word filler], it was like covered in cellophane where we slept. They still didn't provide us, it*

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<sup>40</sup> Rebisco is a brand of biscuit

*took some time before they provided us with banig.<sup>41</sup> So we were still on the soil).*

- Romeo: Binigyan kayo ng mga damit, kaldero? *(Were you provided with clothes, pot?).*
- Poppy: Damit, wala rin ako nareceived, pero yung gallon na mineral [water] binigyan kame sir, pati sabon. *(I didn't receive clothes, but they gave us a gallon of mineral [water], we were given sir, as well as soap).*
- Romeo: Yung bathroom po, ligtas din naman, malinis naman po? *(How about the bathroom, was it safe to access and clean?)*
- Poppy: Bathroom? *(Bathroom?)*
- Romeo: CR<sup>42</sup>
- Poppy: Sa ano lang kami sir, sa gilid. Pero yung CR ng Grandstand, hindi dahil sobrang tao. Sa gilid-gilid lang kame ng bahay yung sa tent-tent, doon kami na liligo. *(Just at the ano [word filler] sir, at the side. But the CR in Grandstand, no because it was overcrowded with people. We just used the side of our tent, it's where we took shower.).*
- Romeo: Sa gabi po, may ilaw naman po o madilim? *(At night, were there lights or was it too dark?).*
- Poppy: Wala. Wala po kaming ilaw. Yung ilaw naman yung light lang sa grandstand, yun lang. *(None. We had no lights. It was just the light in Grandstand, that's it).*

Objects and material possessions can reveal a great deal about the causes and conditions of displacement (Höpfner, 2022, 86). They carry promises and prestige, bring emotional closeness, and facilitate self-expression (Lauser et al. 2022, 1). My intention with asking Poppy and other research participants about their material possessions was not to elicit sadness by reminding them of what they had lost, but more so to understand their pragmatic needs. How can we expect refugees and IDPs to be self-reliant if they do not have adequate access to basic human needs or the means to purchase what

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<sup>41</sup> Pronounced as 'buh-nig.' It is a traditional handwoven mat used as a sleeping mat or a floor mat. Mass produced *banig* are made out of plastic materials.

<sup>42</sup> CR is the acronym for comfort room. It is the common term for bathroom, restroom or washroom in the Philippines.

they need? How can humanitarian work with refugees and IDPs be humane if they are trapped in camps reliant on supplies determined by governments and external humanitarian organizations who might have limited familiarity with the local cultural context? Within the humanitarian-development nexus, development programs offering livelihoods to forcibly displaced individuals are only relevant as part of a transition from humanitarian assistance to development (Betts et al. 2016, 140).

While I recognize that when camps were first established during the emergency phase of aid operations, evacuees are usually housed in makeshift tents that offer insufficient protection from the weather (Bakewell 2014, 2) (see Image 3 and Image 4). Yet, in the case of Poppy and other IDPs in Grandstand, even though they primarily relied on what the UNHCR and various aid organization could provide, these provisions were generally inadequate to sustain a good quality of life. Although food rations had improved from biscuits to packed meals and gallons of water, they still had no access to clothes, cash, and blankets, including lights and bathrooms. In addition, even if they could leave the camp site to buy resources, they had no money to spend on anything. The humanitarian aid relief provided to IDPs in Grandstand were “used to prolong survival rather than promote a sustainable quality of life” (Patterson 2020, 108).

It may seem that the level of insecurity in this camp site was unpredictable and inevitable, but as shown in the story of Poppy, this also made them deeply conscious of others’ suffering. Poppy and other research participants engaged in family and community solidarity through the sharing of food (or *salu-salo*<sup>43</sup>), as demonstrated by Poppy when she shared the tiny food they had with her aunt. Much like with any other

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<sup>43</sup> Salu-salo is the Tagalog word for gathering and eating together.

food sharing economies, *salu-salu* is based on reciprocal exchange that can facilitate a sense of relatedness (Hutchinson 1996 as cited in Patterson 2020, 105). This form of informal economic engagement is not unique to this IDP camp site. South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma, Kenya share the few resources they have with other members of their community “not simply because it [is] perceived to be the morally right thing to do, but also because it [is] inevitable that they would need similar help from their community in the future” (Patterson 2020, 115). Similarly, Congolese refugees in Rwamwanja, Uganda have developed economic strategies by engaging in commercial farming, carpentry, livelihoods, small shops, and hawking (Betts et al. 2016, 139). However, these economic activities and systems are overlooked because there is still “no conceptual frameworks with which to make sense of the economic lives of displaced people” (Amanda Hammar 2014, 3 as cited in Betts et al. 2016, 40).



Image 3: Displaced residents of various barangays build makeshift tents in Grandstand.  
Source: <https://www.hrw.org/modal/18720>



Image 4: Some villagers displaced by the fighting are housed in several huge tents in Grandstand, which they shared with other IDPs.  
Source: <http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/zamboanga-siege-the-fire-this-time>

### **Rose's Life in Grandstand**

Excess mortality due to preventable infectious diseases and micronutrient deficiencies have been shown to outnumber violent deaths regardless of the scale of conflict and care settings (Heudtlass et al. 2016, 1; Toole and Waldman 1990, 3296; Gasseer et al. 2004, 8). While it affects all age groups, children between 1 to 14 year(s) old are prone to die from “measles, diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory tract infections, and malaria” (Toole and Waldman 1990, 3296). This concern was reflected in the narrative of Rose, who described that the spread of communicable diseases in Grandstand was pronounced in the first two-months of the disaster response period.

Morning, July 16, 2021  
Mampang Elementary School  
Field Journal Entry

Just after the rain. I leave the house before the sunrise to meet with my gatekeeper who will introduce me to Rose. In her text message, she asks me to come to their house before 7 o'clock in the morning so we can leave early and avoid the traffic jam at the intersections of Divisoria, Putik, Lunzuran, and Tumaga.

I arrive at their house on time. She invites me inside their home and introduces me to her husband and three children. They offer me *pandesal* (bread) and a cup of Nescafé 3 in 1 coffee. While they are getting ready for work, I scan the house and notice that they own a sedan, an SUV, and three motorcycles. My eyes glance at the framed photographs hanged on their living room wall. The eldest child is a high school teacher while the middle child is a policewoman. My gatekeeper sees me staring at their photos. She points at the 8 x 10 photo of herself when she obtained her law degree. She tells me that she also has a master's degree in values education that she earned in Manila.

We drive through the busy streets of six barangays before finally arriving at Mampang Elementary School. In what seems like a 45-minute journey, I see the housing arrangement and infrastructures transition from being spacious into congested roads and stilt houses covered in smell of dried fish.

Romeo: Ang tabang sa government, pati sa mga lain tao, sapat ba or one day a meal? (*Was the government help, including from strangers, was it adequate or one day a meal?*).

Rose: Yung una sir sapat. Pero yung paano-paano na, kami, sariling amin na. (*At first, they were enough. But gradually, we had to provide for ourselves*).

Romeo: Nagpangita na mo trabaho? (*You went to look for work?*).

Rose: Oo, yung nakapasok na sila sa pantalan. (*Yes, they [husband] were able to get into the port*).

Romeo: Ahh, so hindi pala buong three years [*ang tulong*], hindi buong taon? (*Ahh, so [the relief] were not provided for the entire three years, not even for a year?*).

Rose: Hindi, siguro sir mga months lang yung support. Yung una lang talaga na bugso ng gera. Tapos, pakonti-konti nang makalabas ang mga tao, kame na, sarili namin. Tirahan lang namin ang nandoon kasi no choice, walang bahay balikan. (*No, perhaps sir they only provided us support for a few months. It was only at first when the war erupted. Then, it was gradually reduced until people could return, but us, we had to provide for ourselves. What they provided was only shelter, because we had no choice, we had no home to return to*).

Romeo: Gihatagan mu'g kwarta, pag kaon, medicina, tambal, ana? (*You were provided with cash, food, medicine, those things?*).

- Rose: Wala. Yung lactating makapasok ako kasi may anak ako one year pa yun. *(None. I qualified for the lactating [program] because I had a one-year-old child).*
- Romeo: Programa po yan sa government? Unsa naa sa lactating program? *(Was that a government program? What was included in the lactating program?).*
- Rose: Mga vitamins ana, mga hygiene kit. Mga bigas. *(Some vitamins, some hygiene kit. Some rice).*
- Romeo: Eh pa unsa na na 'te kay wala man mo nakadala sa gamit ninyo. Nipalit mo bago mga kaldero o ginatag na? *(Eh what did you do since you could not bring things with you. Did you buy a cooking pot or was it provided?).*
- Rose: Oo sir, yung mga two months, one month kame, support lang. Mag pila-pila man yan sir, mga bata gutom man matagal pa mag pila. Tapos yung hipag ko, mag bili tayo nya'n para lang sa mga bata. Kasi mahirap talaga sir sa mga bata. Nakabili kame ng isang kaldero. Nah yun na, unahin namin ang mga bata, kame ng mag pila. Mahirap talaga sir sa Grandstand. *(Yes sir, around two months, one month, just support. You had to go in line sir, the children were already hungry because you had to stay in line for a long time. Then, my sister-in-law suggested that we buy something just for the children. Because it was really hard sir for the children. We were able to buy a cooking pot. Nah, that's how, we had to prioritize the children, then we go in line for ourselves. It was really hard at Grandstand.).*
- Romeo: So, kamo pa ang mag luto naa? *(So, you had to cook your own meals?).*
- Rose: Oo, kame pa, kaya nga yung walang kaldero hindi makaluto. *(Yes, we had to, that's why those without cooking pots could not cook [eat]).*
- Romeo: Safe ba for you, pati sa mga bata ang grandstand? Para sa mga babayi? *(Was Grandstand safe for you, including for children? For women?).*
- Rose: Mahirap sir kung may dalaga ka. Yung mga anak ko na dalaga, mahirap kasi sa time na yun, maraming accident na—alam mo na mga tao. Kasi iba-iba nang barangay nag salo na doon. *(It was hard sir if your child is a young woman. My children you were young women, it was hard, because during those times, there were so many accidents—you know what people are like. Because different barangays were congested there.).*
- Romeo: Mao, dili jud nimo kaila tanan. *(Right, you don't really know everyone).*
- Rose: Dili, pero ang sa unahan namo, puro kaila namo. Pero ang sa iba, lain-lain na. *(No, but those in front of us, I knew them all. But the rest, they were different).*
- Romeo: Limpio ba, sanitary? Ang mga bata wala nag kasakit? *(Was it clean, sanitary? Did the kids get sicked?).*

- Rose: Sa akong mga anak nako. Pero sa uban daghan sir nangawala kasi diarrhea. *(My children didn't [get sick]. But the others, many of them sir passed away because of diarrhea).*
- Romeo: Daghan diay nangamatay na mga bata. *(There were many children who died.)*
- Rose: Mga one-month kasi sobra ang abot-abot ng patay ng bata. Hindi pud kami pwede umalis doon kasi every week, every two weeks nag survey sila kung nandyan kapa ba. *(In our first month, so many children died. We could not also leave because every week, every two weeks they [social workers from CSWDO] would conduct survey if you were still there).*
- Romeo: Ngano diay kung muhawa ka, unsa mahitabo? *(What if you left, what could happen?)*
- Rose: Nah, mawala na pud ka sa listahan. Mag update sila kung nandyan ka pa, kung nakatira ka talaga dyan. Kung wala na daw nakatira, wala na. Nah! sayang din sir. *(Nah, you would be removed from the list [of eligible for resettlement housing project]. They would update if you were still there, if you really lived there. If no one live there anymore, gone. Nah! It'd be wasteful [of time spent in Grandstand] sir.)*

Rose explained that even though vitamins, hygiene kit, and rice were provided to mothers participating in the lactating program, it did not avert children from dying to preventable infectious diseases. The transmission of these diseases is caused by poor water supplies and lack of sanitation in the facility, but also by undernutrition from the increasingly scarce supplies of aid packages (Toole and Waldman 1990, 3296). Rose and her family had to invest in a cooking pot so that their children could eat on time, without having to wait for the food rations to come. The situation of Rose draws attention to the common, yet problematic practice of lumping women and children together, or what Cynthia Enloe (1993) refers to as “womenandchildren,” in which refugee women are essentialized in humanitarian discourse as maternal (165-166 as cited in Hyndman 2004, 205).

In addition, Rose was concerned about the occurrence of gender-related violence and sexual harassment in Grandstand, which are also ubiquitous in many other refugee and IDP camp sites. Although I do not have raw data to support this as Rose did not elaborate on her response, it has been documented in both academic and grey literatures that perpetrators of gender-related violence may include fellow forced migrants, aid volunteers, and authorities.

In her fieldwork involving Somali refugee women in Dadaab, Kenya, Jennifer Hyndman (2004) learned of how refugee camps are also sites of gendered violence. Women and girls who go outside the camp “in search of firewood with which to cook...are vulnerable to bandit attacks” (Hyndman 2004, 204). Similarly, households headed by women “have been the easy target of bandits from within the camp itself” (Hyndman 2004, 204). But what is striking in her ethnographic insights is the shame and stigma that follow for women who had been “found out” (Hyndman 2004, 205). While the UNHCR has established a special project on Refugee Women Victims of Violence (WVV), affected Somali refugee women refrained from accessing the resources or opportunities offered here, unless there is the possibility that they could be “transfer[ed] to one of the better coastal refugee camps, or even a chance at resettlement abroad through the Canadian or Australian ‘Women-at-Risk’ programs” (Hyndman 2004, 205).

Accordingly, in a report published by the Refugee Rights Data Project (2017), where they interviewed 300 refugees and aid workers from nine different refugee camps in Greece, they found that refugee women did not feel safe leaving their shelters at night. Their social surroundings and the poor lighting in the facility left them vulnerable to attack (as cited in Wetherspoon 2017, par. 1). In addition, one notable case of sexual

misconduct by aid workers was in 2018 when some humanitarian staffs of Oxfam who were deployed in Haiti had been accused of sexually exploiting young women and girls by promising to pay for their tuition fees in exchange for sex (O'Neill 2019, par. 1; Gayle 2018, par. 2).

Despite these serious safety concerns, many IDPs whose homes had been destroyed by the fighting in ground zero, prolonged their stay in Grandstand and endured many difficult situations where they suffered further loss of dignity and privacy to receive the resettlement housing project promised to them by the government.<sup>44</sup>

### **Camps as Sites of Hospitality**

There is a long tradition in the Philippines of temporarily using school buildings as emergency evacuation shelters and “aid distribution hubs where supplies are delivered, sorted and distributed to those in need” (Tsioulou et al. 2021, 1837). While not all school buildings are suitable to become evacuation shelters, they are ideal because they offer sufficient space and privacy, access to clean water and sanitation, and infrastructure for waste disposal to manage the spread of preventable infectious diseases (Tsioulou et al. 2021, 1836). The Saint Ignatius Institute<sup>45</sup> was one of the schools in barangay Tetuan that was turned into an evacuation facility for three months, exclusively offering temporary accommodations to IDPs from three neighbouring settlements. As a long-established private Catholic school in an area with the highest concentration of wealthy residents, I anticipated that it would have amenities that did not generally exist in publicly funded schools. This speculation was confirmed when I visited

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<sup>44</sup> I will return to this discussion in the third section of this chapter on durable solutions to forced migration.

<sup>45</sup> This is an assigned pseudonym.

the school and saw that it had a basketball court, chapel, hotel, and two fully airconditioned three-story buildings with Wi-Fi. I learned at the registrar's office that the tuition fee in this institute was the equivalent of an ordinary working-class Filipino's annual income. Perhaps this is why Camellia and Magnolia described feeling blessed, grateful, and overfed during their time as IDPs in Saint Ignatius Institute. As a landmark with a strong reputation, it attracted the attention of many donors within the city.

Romeo: Did you receive any help from the local government, UNHCR, churches, and NGOs?

Camellia: We were so blessed and grateful during that time because we have a lot of sponsors coming in and extending their generosity to all the evacuees there... *(inaudible from the sound of pouring rain)*. And in fairness, I mean, just to justify somehow, the office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development actually sent their help there by giving us some pills, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste...including mat, blanket, so we can somehow sleep comfortably.

*(Magnolia was adding to the list of relief items they received from DSWD but I could not properly hear him from the sound of the pouring rain).*

Some individuals, non-government organizations, were actually also there sending their help as well through Arroz Caldo.<sup>46</sup> They made meals for us. We were actually overfed during the time because we have lots of sponsors.

Romeo: For you Magnolia, based on your assessment safe ba ang school katung ang evacuate mo para sa mga bata, sa babayi, mga LGBT? *(For you Magnolia, based on your assessment was the school safe when you evacuated for children, women, and LGBT?)*.

Magnolia: Yes, yes. By that time, in charge kame. All Atilano Street<sup>47</sup> nandoon kame sa mini-Hotel. Yung in charge kung sino mag lilinis dito, sa lababo, sa CR. Meron talagang sinong mag lilinis sa morning, kaylangan talaga, nag tutulong-tulungan kame, kaylangan talaga. Walang problem sa water, walang problema. *(Yes, yes. By that time, we were in charge. All of us from Atilano Street were in the mini-hotel. We'd been in charged to clean here, at sink, the CR. People had been assigned to clean in the morning, it was really necessary, we all helped each other's out, we really needed to. We had no problem over water [supply], no problem)*.

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<sup>46</sup> Chicken rice porridge

<sup>47</sup> An assigned pseudonym

Romeo: What about you *Camellia*, would you consider your experience at the evacuation centre safe for women, transwomen, LGBT, children and the elderly?

Camellia: We felt safe for each other because we're just neighbours and we feel that essence of belongingness because we belong to the same barangay, and we were all accommodated there by the school principal strictly for Tetuanos. And the principal does not accept evacuees or victims who does not belong to the same barangay. That is why we were not sent to other evacuation centres. That is the advantage, but still not really safe. Actually, anywhere you will go during that time, it's not really safe.

On the surface, the life in this IDP camp site may look more tolerable than in Grandstand, but their experience of hospitality was only temporary and conditional. As guests, they were “obliged to comply with the rules and accepted forms of behaviours” (Rozakou 2012, 565), even though they did not consent to any contractual agreement with the host. They were viewed as worthy guests deserving of help as long as they respected and kept the place clean and organize. In Saint Ignatius Institute, “hospitality [was] conceptualized as a contract that specific[d] the rules and duties of the guest” (Rozakou 2012, 566). It was more than a structure or physical space, it also functioned as “a technology of care and control...a technology of power entailing the management of space and movement—for peoples out of space” (Malkki 1992, 34).

### **Camps as Sites of Hope**

Forcibly displaced individuals ‘stuck’ in evacuation facilities or detention centres do not know “how long the camp will remain or for how long the individual refugee will stay in the camp” (Turner 2022, 58). Yet even though time and space have been taken away from them, they continue to actively and consciously forge new strategies to remain socially alive, by sharing ideas with others about life, showing support, feeling general affection, and engaging with recreational activities. In times of despair and

danger, some individuals engage in wayward practices of recuperation though *kabaklaan* (camp, drag, queer). These practices were evident in the stories of Camellia and Magnolia who resorted to humour as an alternative to mental health interventions.

Romeo: Would you say during the siege, during that uncertain time, you continued to envision hope, you continued to practice hope?

Camellia: Well, to be honest, during the time, I remained optimistic since I'm an optimistic person. I'm always a positive thinker person. Hope is always in me. I always used to hope, I always have hope. I never lose hope. In every day as I live, in my everyday life as I live, as I continue to journey in life, always have this hope. And I'm hoping one day [for] no corrupt government. All the people will be united, no wars, no discrimination. Everyone must learn how to respect, so they can also get respect from others.

Magnolia: Para sa akin, nandoon na talaga yung, hindi na mawawal yung pag hope. Nandoon nay un eh, yung pag re-respecto sa bawat isa at tsaka yung pag ka isa ng isang tao. *(For me, it's always been there, hope never disappeared. It's been there eh, the act of respecting one another and the unity of every person).*

Camellia: In addition to that, if you just come to think of it. As you exist, as you live, as you're given the chance to live [for] another day, that is hope. Like I said, I never lose hope, especially when I have the chance to live, God gave me another chance to live. That is already hope. At the end of the day, I always realize, I always think this way. I thank God because we still have food to eat. I thank God because there is no more war in our place. I thank God because some other people these days, people who used to discriminate us LGBT, are now slowly—little by little—they get to understand why we exist, what is the purpose of our existence as part of the LGBTI community. So, I always hope, I will also have hope, and of course, give hope as well for others.

Romeo: During the displacement, sumali ba kayo—hindi ko alam kung meron sa Saint Ignatius Institute nito—mga women's aktibidades, mga proyekto ng government. I think sa Grandstand meron silang Smile Program, may mga trained na social workers na tumulong talaga sa mga bata. So, along that time, meron ba kayong aktibidades about women's empowerment, for example? *(During the displacement, did you participate—I'm not sure if there was this at Saint Ignatius Institute—women's activities, projects by the government. I think at Grandstand they had a Smile Program, they had trained social workers who helped the children. So, during that time, did you have activities about women's empowerment, for example?).*

Camellia: Although we were evacuees during the time, we stood as facilitators for the evacuees as well, because we were recognized by the school

principal to actually help her in looking after everybody who were staying actually there. And also, we were coordinated to do some stress debriefing for our fellow evacuees, so I as a performer, I performed together with Dora de Zamboanga—a known social media influencer—and it was a great experience to at least give some fun or joy to the rest of the evacuees there.

During the time we just didn't get the chance to perform in our own evacuation centre. We were also invited, personally I was invited, to perform in evacuation centres. I still remember like 4 evacuation centres. We performed in 4 evacuation centres. The feeling during that time as you performed, giving stress debriefing for the victims were so beautiful feeling. Feeling that is unexplainable. I mean, you know, you're giving joy to others, you're making them laugh. You touch other people.

It was stand-up comedy for them not to think about [trauma], for them not to think about their houses being left burned...I was so grateful and thankful being given the chance to perform to other evacuation centres giving them stress debriefing, at least, somehow, they would not think about their problems, they would not like about all their worries. And of course, the trauma.

Magnolia: Para sa akin that time, walang ibang activities or ibang program. Tama si Camellia, sila lang talaga ang nag pe-perform sa stage that time. Yun lang po. Para mga tao same lang, magiging masaya kahit nandoon na sa peligro. Yun lang po, walang ibang program, walang ibang activities. *(For me that time, there was no activities or other program. Camellia is right, it was really just them who performed on the stage that time. That's it. For people it was the same, for them to be joyful even though they were in danger. That would be it, there was no other program, no other activities).*

*Kabaklaan* is traditionally associated with lower-class gay men, hairdressers, and transwomen to assert “distinctly queer sensibility about the travails of every life” (Diaz 2018, 404). Similar to how camp is defined as playful and anti-serious (Sontag 1999, 62), *kabaklaan* “poke[s] fun at what is solemn, divine, and sacrosanct” (Diaz 2018, 405). This was embodied by Camellia who performed drag and stand-up comedy to temporarily relieve some civilians affected by the armed conflict. It was a reminder to other IDPs not to lose their hope and faith in God, even if some of them had lost their homes to war. It was also future-oriented, as it allowed IDPs “to anticipate a future and

act accordingly in the present situation of uncertainty and unpredictability” (Turner 2022, 62).

### **Ivy’s Life as Home-Based IDP**

Individuals who involuntarily left their homes to seek temporary shelter from relatives or friends (OCHA 2016, 1) “remain unregistered and largely out of view of the state” (Bakewell 2014, 5). In Zamboanga City, those who had not registered with the CSWDO were designated as ‘untagged.’ This means that they received little or no humanitarian assistance and were excluded from the resettlement program (OCHA 2016, 1). Even though some research participants were registered home-based IDPs, they did not receive consistent levels of humanitarian assistance from the government and aid agencies. As explained by Ivy, it was logistically impossible for many home-based IDPs to acquire food rations and supplies, because of the restricted mobility during and in the aftermath of the siege. But since not everyone had access to transportation, they had to make travel arrangements even if they had no choice.

Romeo: I wanna go back yung kwento mo kanina na registered IDP kayo. Pag registered ka meron kayong nakukuhang relief items and assistance? (*I wanna go back to your story earlier that you were a registered IDP. If you’re registered, you would receive relief items and assistance?*).

Ivy: There is dapat. Pero since home-based ka...ang mahirap pag home-based kasi, you need to go somewhere para pwede mong makuha ang ayuda mo. Hindi kagaya sa evacuation area ka, sila na yung pupunta sayo, andun na lahat. Unlike home-based kasi, pupunta kapa sa DSWD, papakita mo pa yung card mo, instead na sila dapat mag hanap sayo, diba? Pati mahirap kasi wala kameng sasakyan...wala lahat...so nag a-adjust ka parin kahit na ikaw na yung displaced, kaya wala ka paring choice kasi kaylangan mo talaga ng help eh. (*There should have been. But since you’re home-based...it’s hard if you’re home-based because you need to go somewhere so you could get your relief assistance. It’s not like if you’re in an evacuation area, they would come to you, everything is there. Unlike home-based, you have to go to DSWD, you show them your card, instead of them searching for you, right? In*

*addition, it's hard because we had no transportation...everything was gone...so we had to adjust even if we had been displaced, you still had no choice because you really need the help eh).*

Romeo: Consistent po ba kayo sa pag received nun? *(You were consistent in receiving those?)*

Ivy: On my side, hindi ako kasi it's my sister who's supporting me sa Red Cross...And meron din mga donations from friends. Pag madami, I'm donating it to other people din nakalilala ko, within the area sa community ko nag sa-share din ako, hindi ako nag sasarili, sini-share ko din sa iba. *(On my side, I didn't because it's my sister who's supporting me from Red Cross...And there were some donations as well from friends. When [I received] plenty, I'm donating it to other people as well that I know, within the area in my community I also shared, I wasn't individualistic, I was sharing them to others).*

Romeo: Yung mga tulong na nakuha nyo from them, would you consider na helpful yung relief items? *(The help that you received from them, would you consider the relief items helpful?)*.

Ivy: Somehow, okay naman din yung mga delata. Sino ba naman mag inarte pa noh, tulong na yun so accepta yalang tu. So, if ever NFA<sup>48</sup> ang rice, maybe we're not gonna eat that but would give it to other people pa. Ganun nalang ginagawa namin. Hindi kame ta reklama, but we're thinking that, and then give it to the people na kilala nadin namin na who needs that rice talaga. *(Somehow, the canned goods were okay. Why would we be choosy? It was a form of help so you just accept it. So, if ever the rice was NFA, maybe we're not gonna eat that but would give it to other people. That's what we did. We weren't complaining even though we were thinking that, and then give it to the people that we know who needs that rice).*

Many home-based IDPs are sidelined by government and aid agencies (Collado 2019, 485). Therefore, to compensate for the lack of relief supplies and livelihoods, they sought support from the financial and social resources accessible to them. In Ivy's case, she relied on the remittances she received from her sister to meet her basic needs. Although she did not disclose the amount and frequency of the remittances that she had

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<sup>48</sup> NFA rice is a subsidiary program of the National Food Authority. They are mostly consumed by poor Filipinos. In 2019, undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon of the National Economic and Development Authority made an incentive remark by comparing those who eat NFA rice to dogs (Manila Standard 2019).

been getting, it was enough that she could refuse a government subsidized rice. In addition, Ivy received plenty of support from her friends, which she shared with others who needed them more.

Akin to other research participants in Grandstand, Ivy also engaged in community solidarity by sharing with them the resources she had managed to accumulate. The utilization of financial resources for community welfare is also found in other refugee settings. South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma, Kenya who receive transnational remittances “have a shared sense of responsibility to provide for their community members who are in need through the sharing of their financial and material resources” (Patterson 2020, 99). However, it would be naïve to assume that all members of this community or all forcibly displaced individuals willfully adopt this strategy, as there are some who only help “in the case of a medical emergency, such as when life threatening but reasonably affordable conditions” (Patterson 2020, 112).

### **Building Back a Better Zamboanga City**

A durable solution for IDPs is thought to be achieved when they “no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement” (Long 2014, 477), which typically involves repatriation, local integration, or resettlement (Long 2014, 477; Collado 2019, 113). Among these conventional solutions, the UNHCR believes that return to and rehabilitation in the traditional communities of IDPs are “critical to national reconstruction and reconciliation process” (Collado 2019, 113). In Zamboanga City, IDPs whose homes in ground zero were destroyed by the fighting between the MNLF, AFP, and PNP, were allowed to return and receive reconstruction housing assistance if they could provide the local government with land titles. Conversely, IDPs who lived in ground zero as informal settlers, were either permanently

resettled closer to the sea in barangay Talon-Talon, Taluksangay, and Maasin, or transferred to Masepla in barangay Mampang where they would await permanent resettlement.

The return and resettlement of IDPs in Zamboanga City were facilitated by the 'build back better' approach that "emphasizes the need to rebuild in ways that reduce disaster risk and foster sustainable development" (Su and Le Dé 2020, 2). But similar PDRRMA, the 'build back better' approach is centered on natural disasters and directed largely by donors who did not understand the local cultural context (Su and Le Dé 2020, 2).

In one of my long neighbourhood walks, I noticed that the reconstructed houses for Christian IDPs were built using concrete materials, while the slit houses for Muslim IDPs were built using hardiflex (fiber cement board) (see Image 5 and Image 6). The NHA, who was responsible for designing and procuring the materials for stilt housing units, acknowledged that their project was a failure (Cepeda 2018, par. 3). One of the footbridges they built in Buggoc Street collapsed because it was made from cheaper materials that could not withstand being submerged in water for a long period of time (Cepeda 2018, par. 6). In addition, just before my fieldwork I learned in February 2021 that some of the resettlement housing units for Muslim IDPs had collapsed, compelling them to return to temporary shelters; thus, further delaying their return and rehabilitation.



Image 5: Reconstructed houses in Lustre Street, barangay Santa Barbara  
Source: Taken by Romeo Joe Quintero on August 16, 2021



Image 6: Resettlement housing in Buggoc Street, barangay Talon-Talon  
Source: Taken by Romeo Joe Quintero on August 16, 2021

I learned from Ivy that not all IDPs who were eligible for the reconstruction housing project received the 30,000 pesos financial assistance to rebuild their homes in ground zero. Some of them were only given with housing materials the equivalent of 30,000 pesos. But as described by Ivy, the qualities of these materials were substandard. The plywood they received appeared to be transparent and the haploblocks were brittle.

Romeo: Next question is just regarding resettlement, yung pag balik nyo after the Siege, and yung kuwento nyo na dahil dun sa 'clearing out' na nasunog lahat nung property nyo. Ahh, I think nasabi mo na because your dad hindi nya pa na-withdraw yung retirement money nya, he used his personal money to rebuild the house or naging eligible po kayo sa resettlement housing? *(Next question is just regarding resettlement, when you returned after the siege, and as you mentioned the 'clearing out' burned all your properties. Ahh, I think you also said that since your dad could still not withdraw his retirement money, he used his personal money to rebuild the house, or were you eligible for resettlement housing?).*

Ivy: Hmm no. Kasi yung area namin it's our private lot, amin talaga yun. So nung bumalik kame...dalawa kasi yung house namin...isa yung lumang bahay, so we didn't stay sa lumang bahay kasi yun talaga ang nasunog. But itong bahay namin sa labas, damage talaga sya! Dun kame sa bagong bahay namin. Actually, under construction pa sya that time, so kahit may bubong naman sya, nung pumasok kame doon sira parin. As in. Ang bubong namin, parang ano day, parang syang mga stars sa sobrang dami ng mga butas. Tapos, warak ang mga ding-ding, as in titingnan mo maloloka ka. Nandun kami, we stayed there, nung November pumasok kame doon. So, imagine mo nuh from that kind of scene, so, wala kaming tulugan, so, I learned to sleep sa isang karton na lagyan mo lang ng banig...yung ganon. Tapos walang ilaw, lampara lang. Ganun talaga ang buhay when we restarted there. Alam na yung mahirap at kailangan. Yun, ang ayuda ng goberyo pumasok matagal pa...parang next year na. They won't give you resettlement housing. Instead, they will help you with financial...yung una financial daw, 30,000 php daw, accordingly... But then, it changes that they will give 30,000 php worth of materials to [re]build a house. Lahat naman ng ibinigay sub-standard naman! So, makita mo yung plywood parang transparent day, naloka kame. *(Hmm no. Because our area is our private lot, it's really ours. So when we returned, we have two houses, one is the older house, so we didn't stay in that older house because it really burned down. But our [newer] house was also damaged! We stayed in our newer house. Actually, it was under construction at the time [before the siege], so even though the roof was still intact, when we went inside it was ruined. As in. Our roof, was like ano day [word fillers], it was like stars because there*

*were so many holes. Then, our walls were totally wrecked, as in when you stare at them, you'd go crazy. We were there, we stayed there when we returned in November. So, imagine nuh [word filler] from that kind of scene, so, we had nowhere to sleep there, so, I learned to sleep on flattened carton box with banig on the top layer...it was like that. Then, we had no lights, we just had lamps. Our life was like that when we restarted there. You know that it's hard and necessary. The government assistance did not come in after a long time. It might have been a year after. They won't give you resettlement housing. Instead, they will help you with financial...that's what they said at first, 30,000 pesos, accordingly... But then, it change[d] into 30,000 pesos worth of materials to [re]build a house. All they gave us were sub-standard! So, you could see that the plywood appeared to be transparent, we went nuts).*

Romeo: Yung tipong you know na it's not 30,000... *(It's like you know these did not cost 30,000...)*

Ivy: Oo...the materials alone like yung ano, mga ano, haploblocks pag hawak mo parang basag na. Yung mga ganun. So sabi ng tatay ko, kung aasa kame sa mga help na 30,000 na yun it can't even build a comfort room...*laughter*. So ayun, nag loan si brother ko. Wala pa kaming nareceive from the retirement of my father. Si brother muna ang nag loan kasi kailangan eh. So nag loan sya, ayun, nag start lang kame slowly. Inayos namin yung bahay pakonti ng pakonti. Nung 2 years after, na received na namin yung retirement ni papa, so yun naayos na yung bahay. *(Yes...the materials alone were like, there were ano [word filler], when you touch the haploblocks they easily break. Things like that. My dad said, if we rely on the 30,000 help, it can't even build a comfort room...laughter. So, my brother took up loan. We still didn't receive my father's retirement [money]. It was my brother who took up loan because it was necessary eh. After receiving the loan, we start[ed] [rebuilding our homes] slowly. We fixed our houses gradually. Two years after, we received our father's retirement [package], that's when we completed fixing the house).*

While the aim of build back better approach is to provide “local communities with better infrastructure, stronger houses, more sustainable livelihoods, and better systems and services” (Su and Le Dé 2020, 2), it seems that this concept was disconnected from the realities of the lives of residents in Zamboanga City. In addition, the reliance on return as the viable durable solution implies that forced migration is a physical problem that can only be resolved through “a restoration of order in their nation-states” or communities (Long 2014, 478). But beyond the physical reconstruction of their

communities, the decisions of IDPs to voluntarily return are also facilitated by social capital and perception of safety in their places of origin (Collado 2019, 114). For Jasmine, who is a mother of five children from barangay Mampang, her intention to return was linked to her positive pre-conflict memories of ‘home,’ which included doing financially rewarding activities.

Romeo: Before ang Zamboanga siege, naka hinumdum pa ka kung unsa iyo plano sa buhay, sa mga bata? *(Before the Zamboanga siege, can you still remember what plans you had in life and for your children?)*

Jasmine: Gagmay pa man tu amoang mga anak. Ang kwan lang namu didtu nag sikap mi sa tindahan para makabuhi lang mi kay lima man akong anak. *(Our children were still little. Our goal was to stive hard for our store so that we could live, since we have five children).*

Romeo: Naka recover mu pag human sa Zamboanga City siege? *(Did you recover after the siege?)*.

Jasmine: Wala na, hinay-hinay na yung tindahan nawala na. *(Not anymore, we gradually ran out of capital to sustain our store).*

Romeo: Katung nibalik mo, ingun ka slowly nawala na ang tindahan. Nag trabaho nalang mu pag human? *(When you returned, you said that you slowly closed down the store. Did you find another work after?)*.

Jasmine: Wala pa ku nag trabaho. Katu murag nasirado na, na-open na pud sya kay nag hatag akong manghud. *(I still didn't work. When it closed down, we reopened it again because my younger sibling offered help).*

Romeo: Uhm...two more questions nalang. Pag human sa, kabila ng inyong pinag daanan—nag evacuate mo, slowly na bankrupt ang store pag human nibalik mo, ginaturing ra ba sympre nimo ang Zamboanga City home? *(Uhm..two more question. After what happened to you—you evacuated, your store slowly went into bankrupt after you returned—do you still consider Zamboanga City home?)*.

Jasmine: Oo, home lang. Dali lang diri. Dali nakahanap ng trabaho, mga pag-kain dali lang makita. Kung marunong kang mag-diskarte. Ako kahit anong diskarte, laba ba dyan, kahit ano. *(Yes, still home. It's easy here. It's easy to find work, not hard to find food. If you know to hustle. I do whatever, I wash other people's clothes, what every it is).*

Romeo: Last question nalang po. Anong gusto mong malaman ko na hindi ko natanong; anything about sa siege? *(Last question. What do you want me to know that I have not asked; anything about to the siege?)*.

- Jasmine: 4Ps. Nung kasama pa yung high school kong babae, tanggap ko is 4,400 pesos. Tapos nung nag 18 na sya nawala na sya. Tapos ngayon 3,400 pesos tapos nag dagdag ng 500 pesos naging 3,900 every two months. *(4Ps. When my daughter was in high school and was still eligible, I received 4,400 pesos. Then when she turned 18, she was no longer eligible. Now I receive 3,400 pesos, then they added 500 pesos, so it increased into 3,900 every two months.)*
- Romeo: 3,900 pesos every two months. Daku na iya tabang? *(3,900 pesos every two months. Is that a huge help?)*
- Jasmine: Daku na iya tabang. Makapalit na ku sa mga bata mga vitamins. *(It's a huge help. I can buy vitamins for the children)*
- Romeo: Pero unsa iyang conditions? *(But what are the conditions?)*
- Jasmine: Kaylangan mag update jud me sa skwelahan. Meeting kinahanglan mag attend, once a month. *(You need to update the school. You need to attend meetings once a month)*
- Romeo: Pero okay naman ang condition sa government? Realistic naman? Dili sila ga monitor? *(But are the government's conditions okay? Are they realistic? They don't monitor you?)*
- Jasmine: Nag monitor sa amoha sa mga house to house kanang sa DSWD. Hindi basta-basta. Siguro mga 1000 plus sa Mampang lang. Tungud ra sa gera. *(They monitor us. DSWD would go house to house. It's not simple. I think more than 1000 of us in Mampang alone [are recipients of 4Ps] because of the war)*

Based on Jasmine's story, returning home would also entail regaining her established routines that once blurred the conceptual boundaries between reproductive and productive labour. Since their small business was attached to their home, she could simultaneously fulfill her domestic obligations while earn a living. But recovery does not only mean a return to normalcy. Allan Lavell (2012) explains that "rapidly rebuilding houses, reconstructing infrastructure, and rehabilitating livelihoods often leads to recovering in ways that recreate or even increase existing vulnerabilities" (as quoted in Su and Le Dé 2020, 1).

These concerns were also expressed by Ivy and Jasmine, who struggled to restore their pre-displacement conditions. But since they had access financial and social resources, they were able to gradually rebuild their livelihood systems. Ivy explained that it took them two years to complete the restoration of their homes without relying on government reconstruction assistance. It was through the help of her brother and father that they were able to adjust and developed routines in their environment. Similarly, even though Jasmine's store closed down, she was able to reopen with financial assistance from their younger sibling. In addition, she became eligible to receive 4Ps (*Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program/Bridging Program for the Filipino Family*), a form of conditional cash transfer, every two months for being displaced by the warfare in the city. For others, however, who did not have access to these resources, durable solutions seemed to remain out of reach.

### **Whose Lives are Grievable? The (Un)Deserving IDPs**

Michel Agier (2010) describes that “camps of internally displaced persons are essentially unprotected human reservations” (37). Even though Aster, Poppy, Rose, Camellia, and Magnolia did not cross an international border to seek protection, the Philippine government nonetheless put them in spatially segregated camp sites where they were deprived of freedom of movement and employment opportunities. The requirement to register with the CSWDO to receive food rations and resettlement housing units kept them confined to evacuation facilities. This had negative implications on the conditions in Grandstand for Aster, Poppy, and Rose. They lived in imminent danger of dying from food insecurity, malnutrition, and communicable diseases. Their life in this IDP camp site increased their vulnerability since losing their homes entailed

losing their livelihood systems. But rather than asking for better and more humanitarian assistance, they resorted to projected vulnerability for fear of risking their image as ungrateful and underserving of help. This did not mean that they were nameless victims with unknowable agency. By internationally performing victimhood, Aster, Poppy, and Rose demonstrated awareness, revealing the irony embedded in the industry made to help them.

Through *bahala na*, Aster, Poppy, and Rose utilized, in their own ways, a range of alternative solutions to ease their humanitarian emergency situations, reshaping the architecture of camp sites as merely spaces of confinement. Many of them prioritized the nutrition of their older and younger family members by making sure that they had eaten their meals on time, even if it meant that Aster, Poppy, and Rose had to skip their meals. They rationed the food supplies provided to them by humanitarian workers and shared the little food they had with others. Through this, Aster, Poppy, and Rose were able to form deep solidarity and forge new friendships with other displaced individuals in Grandstand. This also shows the stubborn and unwavering nature of *bahala na*. Rather than escaping their precarious situations, Aster, Poppy, and Rose confronted the uncertainties of their future through forms of collective solidarity.

On the contrary, Camellia and Magnolia had more tolerable living arrangements, since they did not have major concerns over food security, nutrition, and the spread of communicable diseases. The environment in Saint Ignatius Institute facilitated a way for them to develop daily routines, by keeping the facility clean and organized. Camellia also engaged in humour to recuperate from their traumatic experience of armed violence. Hope was expressed by many, including the Muslim IDP women in

Grandstand, but this was drawn along their class and ethno-religious-linguistic privileges. Muslim IDP women practiced hope by waiting patiently for resettlement housing, while Catholic IDP women and gender diverse individuals turned to humour while living in relatively safe alternative housing arrangements.

While both Muslim and Catholic IDPs employed a variation of agency to negotiate their temporal and geographical interment in camp sites; home-based IDPs with better socioeconomic status had an oversimplistic understanding of agency. They expressed that while they appreciated the donations they received from coworkers and friends who remained unaffected by the armed conflict in Zamboanga City, they were also skeptical of receiving them in case it may undermine their autonomy. They associated the receiving of donations with vulnerability and suffering and exercising agency for them was establishing livelihoods free from humanitarian assistance. But there were also some, such as Ivy, who took the food supplies and redistributed them to other IDPs who needed them more.

Internally displaced women and gender diverse individuals in southern Philippines often with fewer economic, social, and familial/community resources used *bahala na* to navigate complicated situations by developing informal support system within their constrained environments. By clinging onto their family and spirituality, the idea of return or resettlement, and positive memories of the past, both Muslim and Catholic Filipino IDPs were able to imagine multiple future possibilities in different ways, informed by their ethnic, religious, and classed identities.

## Chapter Six: Another Future is Possible

There is a particular connection between destruction and love. In this case, if we love ourselves and the people around us, we must also be committed to destroying the world in which we and they are actively harmed.

— Da'Shaun L. Harrison, *Belly of the Beast*

There isn't only now and here. There is elsewhere and somewhere too. Speak against the coloniality of the world, against the route of despair it causes, in an always-loudening chant. Please keep loving.

— Billy-Ray Belcourt, *A History of My Brief Body*

The stories of Filipino IDP women and gender diverse individuals presented here reveal that there are more ways to live in this world. Embracing a decolonial theory of agency does not overly glorify their capacity to weather the storm, nor does it minimize their experience of violence. *Bahala na* shows that vulnerability and resistance can simultaneously exist in a continuum, allowing IDPs to resist, however limited, their representation as voiceless victims with unknowable agency.

Throughout their trajectories of displacement, Filipino IDP women and gender diverse individuals carefully considered the consequences of their actions in conjunction with the resources they had at their disposal, showing how their capacity to exercise agency is shaped by class and ethnoreligious identities. Muslim IDP women with limited material, financial, and social resources engaged in unwanted mobility and prolonged situations of displacement, but they are far from immobile. In addition, by centering the empirical discussion on the ways in which Filipino IDPs maneuvered their lives in camp sites, it nuances the common assumptions about IDPs as uncomplaining and always grateful for the humanitarian response they receive. It simultaneously shows how these

assumptions are biased against poor Muslim IDP women, who are viewed as underserving of help. But through *bahala na* these women demonstrated awareness and agency by intentionally performing labels inevitably ascribed to them by humanitarian agencies. They also revealed how perceptions of counternarratives in forced migration studies are sometimes steeped in Western theorizations of social justice, resistance, and social change. With the use of *bahala na*, it recognizes how stubbornness in itself, or the ability to endure hardship and the inclination to surrender to unknown futures are forms of agency that are grounded in local cultural context.

What made it possible for me to learn and share the stories of Filipino IDPs in southern Philippines is situating my research methods in everyday Filipino practices of *kuwentuhan*, *pakikiramdam*, *pakapa-kapa*, and *tawanan*. These decolonial approaches specific to the Filipino context made it possible to discover how Filipino IDPs exercised agency, which contributes to the expansion of Critical Filipino Studies, decolonization of Forced Migration Studies, and a critical and decolonial interrogation of Humanitarian Approaches. Accordingly, in a workshop organized by Ethel Tungohan in April 2022 about “Creating Knowledge, Making Change,” I learned that not all stories are meant to be shared. While I present the data of my research participants in a unique narrative style to allow each story to shine through, I also intentionally left some of them out. I was reminded of what Conely deLeon (2022) said that stories are sacred, “let us keep some stories for ourselves, so they do not take it all away.” Perhaps if I could rewrite my thesis, I would create a novella, comics, zines, or playwright to liberate myself from a style of writing that is expected of academic people.

In line with whose lives we honour in storytelling, I did not include the stories of Filipino IDP men, elderly, and children in this study, because of my primary interest on the standpoint of IDP women and gender diverse individuals. Therefore, I recommend a future study that would explore home, displacement, and belonging from their perspectives. Finally, and most importantly, in doing my research, I observed that even though my research participants are no longer at risk of physical violence, poor Muslim IDP women experience slow and hidden violence. Consequently, I suggest a research project that would examine slow violence using slow research method or *dahan-dahan* to allow researchers and research participants to rest and to breathe, or what Chaya Ocampo Go (2021) has framed as *pa-hinga*, as another contribution to decolonial Filipino epistemologies.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

**Study Title:** Decolonial Futures: An Ethnography of Women's Practices of Hope in Displaced Communities of Southern Philippines

Ethics Protocol Clearance ID: Project #115636

Date of ethics clearance: May 11, 2021

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31, 2022

Dear

I am writing to respond to your email expressing interest in participating in a semi-structured interview for a research project, concerning internally displaced persons (IDPs) during the Zamboanga Siege in September 2013. I will ask you questions about your experience of displacement and its aftermath. Our conversation will take an hour, it will be audio-recorded, and it will take place at a mutually convenient, safe location. We can speak in any of the following languages/dialects: English, Filipino, Chavacano, and/or Cebuano. The audio-recording will be stored in a password-protected computer kept in a locked and safe location.

To protect your privacy, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Your assigned pseudonym will be used to identify your audio-recording, the written transcript, and quotes used in the thesis and any publicly available written and spoken presentations. Only two individuals will have access to the interview recordings and/or transcripts: myself as sole researcher, and my supervisor, Dr. Amrita Hari.

Before the interview, I will explain and ask you to complete an informed consent form, outlining your rights and responsibilities. You can also choose to give oral consent, which will be recorded before the interview begins. You will have the right to skip questions that you do not want to answer, ask questions of me, and end your participation in the study at any time during the interview process. You also have the right to withdraw your participation one month after the interview has been completed. In recognition of your time for participation, you will be offered a sack of rice (25 kg.).

This research has been cleared by Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A Clearance #115636. Should you have any **ethical concerns** with the study, please contact the REB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A by email: [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca).

For all other questions about the study, please contact the researcher by email: [romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

Sincerely,

Romeo Joe Quintero

## Appendiks A: Letter of Invitation

**Pamagat:** De-kolonyal na Hinaharap: Isang etnograpiya ukol sa kwento ng pag-asa ng mga kababaihan na sapilitang lumikas sa mga komunidad ng Timog Pilipinas.

Ethics Protocol Clearance ID: Project #115636

Date of ethics clearance: May 11, 2021

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31, 2022

G./Gng./Bb.

Sumulat ako upang tugunan ang iyong email na nagpapahayag na kayo ay interesadong maging kalahok sa isang proyektong ukol sa displaced persons (IDPs) o mga indibidwal na sapilitang lumikas mula sa naganap na Zamboanga Siege noong Setyembre, taong 2013. May mga katanungang inihanda tungkol sa mga pangyayaring naganap na paghihirap at paraan ng paglikas noon. Ang panayam na ito ay maaaring maganap sa gusto mong oras at sa ligtas na lugar. Ang panayam ay aabot hanggang isang oras, at ito ay mairerekord (password-protected). Ang nirekord na panayam ay ilalagay sa ligtas na lugar. Tayo ay maaaring magusap sa komportableng wika ng English, Filipino, Chavacano, o Cebuano.

Upang maprotektahan ang iyong pribadong buhay, bibigyan ka ng alyas upang magamit bilang pagkilala sa iyong *audio-recording*, mga katagang ginamit sa tesis, at maging sa mga posibleng pagkalathala at presentasyon ukol sa topiko. Ako lamang at ang aking superbisor na si Dr. Amrita Hari ang makakagamit sa *recording* at iba pang datos mula sa panayam na ito.

Bago ang panayam, ipapaliwanag ko sa iyo ang iyong mga karapatan at responsibilidad sa pag-aaral na ito, at hihilingin ko ang kusang pagkumpleto at pasagot sa kasunduan. Maaari ka ring magbigay ng pasalitang pahintulot ng pagsang-ayon at ito ay irerekord bago magsimula ang panayam. May karapatan kang hindi sagutin ang mga katanungan na ayaw mong sagutin, magbigay sa akin ng katanungan, at maaari kang umatras sa panayam sa anumang oras. Maaari ka ring umayaw sa paglahok isang buwan matapos ang panayam. Bilang pasasalamat sa iyong paglahok sa pag-aaral, makakatanggap ka ng isang kalahating sako ng bigas (25 kg.).

Ang pananaliksik na ito ay binigyan ng pahintulot ng Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A Clearance #115636. Kung may katanungan ukol sa etikal na aspeto (**ethical concerns**) ng pag-aaral, maaaring ma-email ang REB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A sa [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca).

Para sa iba pang katanungan, maaari po sumangguni sa aking email:

[romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

Lubos na gumagalang,

Romeo Joe Quintero

## Appendix B: Written Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** Decolonial Futures: An Ethnography of Women's Practices of Hope in Displaced Communities of Southern Philippines

**Researcher:** Romeo Joe Quintero  
MA Student, Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies  
Carleton University, Ottawa Canada  
[romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Purpose of the Research:** The research is concerned with women's experiences of displacement and strategies of recuperation during the conflict in Zamboanga City in September 2013.

**What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:** If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to complete a 1-hour semi-structured interview. The interview will be audio-recorded, and the recording will be saved on a password-protected USB key that will be locked in a safe location. Only prospective participants who consent to be audio-recorded will be chosen to participate in the interview.

**Risks and Discomforts:** There are no economic and social risks anticipated in this study. However, there may be a risk of unpleasant memories evoked during the interview. Should this occur, you will not be obliged to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. There is a possible risk of Covid-19 transmission during the in-person interview. We will follow all safety protocols advised by local authorities and health officials in Zamboanga City. The researcher will get tested for Covid-19 before departure and upon arrival and remain in quarantine for 2 weeks upon arriving in Zamboanga City. In addition, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided by the researcher, and pre-screening questions will be conducted before the interview can begin.

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:** Your experiences are an important part of the community knowledge that could inform beneficial policy changes. As a token of appreciation, you will be offered a sack of rice (25 kg).

**No Waiver of Your Rights:** By signing this form, you are not waiving any rights or releasing the researchers from any liability.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the completion of the research project, and it will not affect the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researcher, Carleton University, or any other group associated with this project.

**Withdrawal from the Study:** You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, Carleton University, or any

other group associated with this project. You also have one month to withdraw your participation after the interview has been completed. In the event that you withdraw from the study in this time frame, all associated data will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** We will treat your personal information as confidential, although absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent. Research records may be accessed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board in order to ensure continuing ethics compliance.

All data will be kept confidential, unless release is required by the law (e.g., child abuse, harm to self or others). The results of this study may be published or presented at an academic conference or meeting, but the data will be presented so that it will not be possible to identify any participants unless you give your express consent.

You will be assigned a pseudonym so that your identity will not be directly associated with the data you have provided. All data, including coded information, will be kept in a password-protected USB key specifically for this project.

**Questions About the Research?** If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my MA thesis supervisor, Dr. Amrita Hari by email at [amrita.hari@carleton.ca](mailto:amrita.hari@carleton.ca).

**New information during the study:** In the event that any changes could affect your decision to continue participating in this study, you will be promptly informed.

**Ethics review:** This project was reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A Clearance #115636. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Carleton University Research Ethics Board by email at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca).

**Statement of consent – print and sign name**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
I agree to be audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
I agree to be contacted for follow up research.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

---

Signature of participant

---

Date

**Research team member who interacted with the participant**

I have explained the study to the participant and answered any and all of their questions. The participant appeared to understand and agree. I provided a copy of the consent form to the participant for their reference.

---

Signature of researcher

---

Date

## Appendiks B: Kasunduan/Pahintulot

**Pamagat:** De-kolonyal na Hinaharap: Isang etnograpiya ukol sa kwento ng pag-asa ng mga kababaihan na sapilitang lumikas sa mga komunidad ng Timog Pilipinas.

**Mananaliksik:** Romeo Joe Quintero

MA Student, Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies

Carleton University, Ottawa Canada

[romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Layunin ng Pananaliksik:** Itong pananaliksik ay tungkol sa mga karanasan ng kababaihan na sapilitang lumikas at naka-ahon dulot ng hidwaan sa lunsod ng Zamboanga noong Setyembre taong 2013.

**Mga Dapat mong Gawin sa Pananaliksik na ito:** Kung sang-ayon kayo na maging bahagi ng pag-aaral, kayo ay tatanungin na mga katanungan sa loob ng isang oras (semi-structured interview). Ang panayam na ito ay irekord, at ito ay ilalagay sa USB at itatago sa isang ligtas ng lugar. Ang mga kalahok lamang na nagbigay ng kanilang pahintulot na i-rekord ang pwedeng makapanayam.

**Mga maaaring Balakid o Pagkabalisa:** Wala pong magiging negatibong epekto na pang-ekonomiya at panlipunan sa pag-aaral na ito, ngunit maaring pong maangkat ang mga hindi kanais-nais na mga pangyayari sa pakikipanayam. Kung saka-sakaling mangyari ito, hindi kayo obligadong sagutin ang mga katanungan. Para sa ating kaligtasan na hindi mahawaan ng Covid-19, susunod tayo sa patakarang pangkalusugan na pahihintulutan ng lokal na pamahalaan ng lungsod ng Zamboanga. Sisiguraduhin na ang mananaliksik ay dadaan sa tamang proseso ng pangkalusugan bago makarating sa lungsod. Ang mananaliksik ay kukuha ng Covid-19 test bago at pagdating sa Zamboanga City, kung saan sya ay mananatiling naka-quarantine ng 2 linggo. Ang mananaliksik ay magbibigay ng Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) bago magkaroon ng harap-harapang panayam.

**Pakinabang ng Panayam at ng Taga-panayam:** Ang inyong mga karanasan ay isang malaking bahagi sa kaalaman ng buong komunidad, at ito ay pwedeng gamitin para makabago ng patakaran. Bilang pasasalamat ng taga-panayam, pagkakalooban ng isang kalahating sako ng bigas (25 kg.) ang kalahok.

**Pagsang-ayon ng Karapatan:** Sa paglakip ng inyong lagda, ang kalahok ay mananatiling protektado at ang mananaliksik ay may pananagutan sa etikal na aspeto sa ginawang pag-aaral na ito.

**Kusang Loob sa Paglahok:** Ang iyong paglahok sa pag-aaral na ito ay kusang loob. Maari kang umayaw kung nais mong ihinto ang pagbabahagi sa ano mang oras. Ang pasya mong paghinto ay hindi makakasagabal sa pag-aaral na ito at sa iyong relasyon sa mananaliksik, Carleton University o ng alin mang asosasyon na kasama sa proyektong ito.

**Pag-atras sa Pag-aaral:** Maari kang umayaw ano mang oras na iyong naisin. Ang iyong disisyon na ihinto ang panayam at pagsagot sa mga katanungan ay hindi magiging rason ng hindi pagkakaunawaan sa mananaliksik, Carleton University o alin mang asosasyon kasama

sa pag-aaral na ito. May isang buwan upang umatras sa iyong paglahok pagkatapos ng pagpanayam, at sa buong kaganapan na ito, lahat ng datos na nakalap ay buburahin.

**Kumpidensyal:** Ang inyong personal na impormasyon ay mananatiling kumpidensyal, ngunit may mga limitadong indibidwal ang makakakita nito. Walang impormasyon ng iyong pagkatao ang maiiswalat kung walang pahintulot ninyo. Ang mga naitala sa pag-aaral ay susuriin ng Carleton University Research Ethics Board upang matiyak na walang paglabag ng anumang aspeto.

Lahat ng datos ay kumpidensyal, maliban na lamang kung ito ay may nilalabag na batas (halimbawa: pang-aabuso sa mga bata, panlalamang sa sarili at sa iba). Ang resulta ng pag-aaral ay maaaring ilathala pagkatapos ng masusing pag-aaral, ngunit mananatiling nakatago ang pagkakilanlan ng partisipante ng walang pahintulot.

Ikaw ay bibigyan ng alyas nang sa gayun ay mananatili ang iyong pagkakilanlan mula sa ibinigay na datos. Sa pag-aaral na ito, ang lahat ng datos, naitalang impormasyon ay nakasisigurong protektado ng *password-protected USB*.

**Mga Katanungan Tungkol sa Pag-aaral?** Kung mayroon katanungan tungkol sa inyong partisipasyon o sa pangkalahatang pag-aaral na ito, maaari ninyo akong tawagan o ang aking MA superbisor na si, Dr. Amrita Hari sa email [amrita.hari@carleton.ca](mailto:amrita.hari@carleton.ca).

**Bagong Impormasyon sa panahon ng Pag-aaral:** Kung may pagbabago sa panahon ng pag-aaral, kayo at tatawagan upang maagapay kayo sa inyong desisyon kung ipagpapatuloy pa ang iyong partisipasyon sa pag-aaral na ito.

**Etikal na Pagsusuri:** Ang proyekto na ito ay nasa ilalim ng pagsusuri ng Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A Clearance #115636. Kung may katanungan tungkol sa etikal na aspeto sa pag-aaral na ito, maaaring ma-email ang Carleton University Research Ethics Board sa [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca).

#### **Pagpapahayag ng Pahintulot – Isulat at Lagdaan**

Sang-ayon akong maging kalahok sa pag-aaral na ito.  Oo  Hinde

Sang-ayon ako na ma-irekord ang aking panayam.  Oo  Hinde

Sang-ayon akong tawagan kung may kasunod pa tungkol sa pag-aaral.  Oo  Hinde

---

Lagda ng Kalahok

---

Petsa

**Miyembro ng Pag-aaral na nakapanayam ang mga kalahok**

Pinaliwanag ko nang maayos ang pag-aaral na ito sa mga kalahok at sinagot ang kanilang mga katanungan. Naintindihan at sinang-ayunan ng mga kalahok na ang kanilang partisipasyon ay kusang loob. Binigyan din ng sariling kopya ang bawat isa ng kasulatan ng pahintulot.

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Lagda ng Mananaliksik

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Petsa

## Appendix C: Oral Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** Decolonial Futures: An Ethnography of Women's Practices of Hope in Displaced Communities of Southern Philippines

**Researcher:** Romeo Joe Quintero  
MA Student, Carleton University, Ottawa Canada  
[romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

All participants have the option of giving their oral consent in lieu of signing the written consent form. Please be advised that if you choose this option, you must agree to have the following statement recorded at the beginning of your interview:

I have read the consent form. I understand that my interview will be recorded and transcribed. I also understand that the researcher will use the data provided for academic purposes only.

## Appendiks C: Oral Informed Consent Form

**Pamagat:** De-kolonyal na Hinaharap: Isang etnograpiya ukol sa kwento ng pag-asa ng mga kababaihan na sapilitang lumikas sa mga komunidad ng Timog Pilipinas.

**Mananaliksik:** Romeo Joe Quintero  
MA Student, Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies  
Carleton University, Ottawa Canada  
[romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:romeojoequintero@cmail.carleton.ca)

Lahat ng kalahok ay pwedeng mag bigay ng oral na pahintulot bilang kapalit ng nakasulat na pahintulot. Kung pipiliin ninyo itong opsyon, dapat kayong sumang-ayon na ma-rekord ang sumusunod na pahayag sa umpisa ng panayam:

Nabasa ko ang kasulatan ng pahintulot. Naiintindihan ko na itong panayam ay irerekord at isasalin. Naiintindihan ko rin na ang tagapagsiyasat ay gagamitin ang datos para sa akademikong layunin.

## Appendix D: Interview Questions

### Background Questions

- Date of Birth/Age
- Marital Status
- Occupation
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Education

### Zamboanga City

- How long have you been in Zamboanga City? If not born in Zamboanga City, when did you move here and why?
- What do you like and dislike about living in Zamboanga City?
- What would you like to change or improve in Zamboanga City?
- Are you aware of the history of Zamboanga City or the province of Mindanao? Do you know why the MNLF attempted to siege Zamboanga City?

### Contextualization of displacement

- What can you remember from September 9, 2013? Where were you and what were you doing?
- When you learned of the siege, where did you first go and with whom? What things did you bring with you? How much cash did you carry?
- Did you leave your house/neighbourhood by foot, vehicle, vinta, or did the local authorities send someone to help you evacuate?
- Did you have an option which transitory site to stay? Did any of your family members or friends who were unaffected by the conflict offer assistance?
- Was this your first experience of forced displacement?
- Do you identify as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP)? What does this mean to you?
- Do others identify you as an IDP? If yes, who and in what context? How do you feel about being identified by others as an IDP?
- Is there another word that you feel is more appropriate to describe your experience and/or identity?

### TS-IDPs

- Which transitory site did you stay at? Did you know of anyone from your community in this evacuation centre?
- How long did you stay in this transitory site?
- Did you receive any assistance from the national/local government, UNHRC, and NGOs? Would you consider these supports adequate? Can you describe to me what was included in your relief package?
- Were you able to practice your faith while you were in this evacuation centre?
- Would you consider this evacuation centre safe for women and children?
- What other concerns or comments did you have while in the evacuation centre?

### **Home-Based IDPs**

- What is your relationship like with the host-family where you sought refuge? (before, during, and after the Zamboanga Siege).
- How long did you stay in this house? How many of you were in this house?
- Aside from providing you with a place to stay, how else did the host-family help you throughout the conflict (emotional, spiritual, financial support, etc.)?
- Did you get relief package or any form of help from the national/local government, UNHCR, and NGOs? In what ways did humanitarian assistance help you while being displaced? Would you consider this assistance helpful? How could this relief and assistance be improved?

### **Futurity**

- Before the conflict erupted on September 9, 2013, what plans did you have for yourself, your family members and/or community?
- How did the conflict and being displaced change that?
- What were some of the things you did (or did not do) to achieve your plans?
- Did your original plans change after the conflict?
- Would you say that the conflict has shaped or strengthened you in any way?
- When you think of the future, what comes in your mind and why?

### **Social Reproduction**

- Who lives with you in the household? How many family members do you have and what is their relation to you?
- How did you negotiate your role as a daughter, mother, sister, wife with other members of your family (before, during, and after the conflict)?
- Before the conflict, what was your day-like and how did that change while you were displaced? Did you regain some of that routine now that you are resettled? What are some things that have stayed the same and/or things that are very different?

### **Resettlement**

- Where were you resettled after the conflict?
- How is this house/place different from your original home?
- What were required of you in order to receive or become eligible for resettlement housing?
- How would you describe your current situation?
- Is this house provided by the government and is it registered under your name? Do you see yourself staying here in the long run?

### **Gender, Culture, Religion and Politics**

- My research examines women's practices of hope. In other words, I'm investigating how women continued to envision a livable life and future for themselves, their family and community. Do you agree with this? Would you say that you continued to envision a livable life and future while you were displaced? Is this associated with your faith/religious beliefs?
- During your displacement, did you participate in any activities/projects designed for women's empowerment? Were these projects offered by the government, NGOs, educational and religious institutions?
- How do you understand women's rights? Do you think women have these rights in Zamboanga City?

- Despite of what you have been through, do you still call Zamboanga City home?
- Finally, is there anything else you want me to know or learn about your experience of displacement?

## Appendiks D: Mga Katanungan

### Personal na Impormasyong

- Edad
- Estadong marital
- Okupasyo
- Etnisidad
- Relihiyon
- Edukasyon

### Lungsod ng Zamboanga

- Ilang taon na kayong naninirahan sa lungsod ng Zamboanga? Kung hindi po kayo dito isinilang, saan po kayo nagmula at bakit nyo napiling lumipat sa lungsod ng Zamboanga?
- Ano ang nagustuhan nyo sa pamumuhay dito, at anu ang mga bagay o kasanayan na hindi nyo nagustuhan?
- Ano ang nais nyo'ng mabago o maayos sa lungsod ng Zamboanga?
- Ano ang alam nyo tungkol sa kasaysayan ng Zamboanga o ng probinsya ng Mindanao? Ano sa inyong palagay ang dahilan kung bakit sinakop ng MNLF ang Zamboanga City?

### Kontekstwalisasyon ng Paglikas

- Ano ang natatandaan nyo nung Setyembre 9, 2013? Nasan kayo at ano ang inyong ginagawa nung araw ng iyon?
- Nung nabalitaan nyo ang siege, saan kayo unang lumikas at sinong kasama nyo? Anung mga bagay ang isinama nyo at meron din ba kayong dinalang pera?
- Paano po kayo lumisan? Tumulong ba ang lokal na awtoridad sa paglikas nyo?
- Binigyan ba kayo ng opsyon kung saang evacuation centre mananatili? Tinulungan ba kayo ng mga kapamilya at kaibigan nyong hindi apektado ng Zamboanga siege?
- Ito ba ang unang beses na sapilitan kayong lumikas sa inyong tinitirhan?
- Kinikilala mo ba ang inyong sarili bilang isang Internally Displaced Person (IDP)? Anung ibig sabihin nito para sa inyo?
- Itinuturing ba kayo nang iba bilang IDP? Kung oo, sino at sa paanong konteksto? Ano ang inyong naramdaman?
- Bukod sa IDP, anu sa palagay mo ang mas angkop na itawag sa inyong karanasan?

### TS-IDPs

- Saang evacuation centre kayo nanatili? May mga kakilala/kapitbahay ba kayong nanatili din dito?
- Nagtagal ba kayo sa evacuation centre na ito?
- Nakakuha ba kayo ng tulong galing na nasyonal/lokal na gobreyno, UNHCR, at NGOs? Maituturing nyo ba na sapat ang mga tulong na ito? Pwede mo bang ilarawan ang mga natanggap mong tulong galing sa relief package?
- Na-ituloy nyo ba ang inyong pananampalataya/relihiyon sa tiniluyan nyo'ng evacuation centre?
- Maituturing nyo bang ligas itong evacuation centre para sa mga kababaihan at kabataan?

- Anong mga bagay-bagay na inyong nasaksihan at ano ang inyong masasabi sa inyong pananatili sa evaluation centre?

### **Home-Based IDPs**

- Maaari mo bang ilarawan ang relasyon ninyo sa mga kumupkop sa inyo? (bago, habang, at pagkatapos ng Zamboanga Siege)
- Nagtagal ba kayong nanatili sa bahay nila at ilan kayong naninirahan doon?
- Bukod sa tirahan, paano pa kayo natulungan ng host-family nung panahon ng Zamboanga Siege (emosyonal, ispiritwal, pampinansyal na tulong?)
- May natanggap ba kayong tulong galing sa nasyonal/lokal na gobyerno, UNHCR, at NGOs? Maituturing nyo ba na sapat ang mga tulong na ito? Pwede mo bang ilarawan ang mga natanggap mong tulong galing sa relief package?
- Malaki ba ang naitulong sa inyo ng humanitarian assistance? Sa palagay nyo, paano ito mapapabuti?

### **Plano sa Hinaharap**

- Bago naganap ang Zamboanga Siege noong Setyembre 9, 2013, anung mga plano nyo sa sarili, para sa pamilya at komunidad?
- Paano nabago ng hidwaan ang mga plano nyo sa buhay at kinabukasan?
- Ano ang mga bagay na inyong ginawa upang makamit ang sarili nyong pangarap sa buhay at pamilya kahit kayo ay lumikas na ng tirahan?
- Nabago ba ng Zamboanga Siege ang inyong dating/orihinal ng pangarap sa buhay?
- Masasabi nyo bang nabago ng Zamboanga Siege ang inyong mga pananaw sa buhay? Pinagtibay ba kayo nito?
- Pag iniisip mo ang kinabukasan, ano ang pumapasok sa isip mo?

### **Reproduksyong Panlipunan**

- Sino ang kasama mong naninirahan dito? Ilan ang mga pamilya mo at ano ang relasyon nila sa iyo?
- Paano mo ginampanan ang inyong tungkulin bilang isang ina, kapatid, at asawa sa inyong tahanan bago ang Zamboanga Siege, at paano ito nagbago?
- Bago nangyari ang Zamboanga Siege, ano ang regular na araw mo at paano ito nagbago habang kayo ay lumikas? Naibalik ba iyong dating gawain o nakasanayan ngayo'ng na-*resettle* ka na? Ano ang mga bagay na nagbago at/o nanatiling pareho?

### **Muling Paninirahan**

- Saan kayo nanirahan pagkatapos ng hidwaan?
- Paano itong tirahan/bahay naiiba sa inyong nakasanayan na tahanan?
- Ano ang mga kinailangan sayo (o mga bagay na dapat ninyong gawin) para makatanggap ng bagong bahay na lilipatan?
- Paano ninyo ilalarawan ang kasalukuyan ninyong sitwasyon?
- Ito bang tirahan ay ibinigay/proyekto ng gobyerno at nasa pangalan nyo ba ang titulo ng bahay? Nakikita nyo ba ang inyong sarili na mahihirahan dito ng matagal?

### **Kasarian, Kultura, Relihiyon at Pulitika**

- Ang aking pananaliksik ay tungkol sa kwento ng pag-asa ng mga kababaihan. Sa ibang salita, ako ay nagtatanong kung paano nagawa ng mga kababaihang tumanaw ng magandang buhay at hinaharap para sa kanila, sa pamilya, at komunidad. Naniniwala ba kayo na ang mga kababaihan ay may ibang klaseng pag-asa? Habang kayo ay sapilitang napalikas, masasabi nyo bang malakas ang inyong pag-asa na babalik sa dati ang inyong buhay o maaayos ito kahit kayo ay naapektohan ng gulo? Ito ba ay nauugnay sa inyong pananalig/relihiyon?
- Habang nasa lugar ng tinutuluyan ninyo, lumahok ba kayo sa mga aktibidad/proyekto para sa *women's empowerment*? Ito bang mga proyekto ay galing sa gobyerno, NGOs, paaralan, o simbahan?
- Para sa inyo, ano ang ibig sabihin ng women's right o karapatan ng kababaihan? Maituturing nyo ba na merong karapatan ang mga kababaihan dito sa Zamboanga City?
- Sa kabila ng inyong pinagdaan dulot ng siege, itinuturing nyo parin bang tahanan ang Zamboanga City?
- Meron ba akong mga bagay na hindi ko natanong na gusto ninyong malaman o matutunan ko?

### Appendix E: List of Community Resources

Name of Organization	Address	Telephone Number	Website	Services Offered
Zamboanga City Medical Center	Dr. Evangelista St., Santa Catalina, ZC 7000	(062)991-0573 (062)991-2934 Globe: 09155365583	<a href="https://zcmc.doh.gov.ph/services/medical/psychiatry">https://zcmc.doh.gov.ph/services/medical/psychiatry</a>	Counselling services Stress debriefing
SRA Counseling Center	Parish Church Ground, Mercedes, ZC 7000	(062)926-3494 Sun: (063)922-3510153 Globe: (063)906-3211638	<a href="https://www.sracounselingcenter.org/services/">https://www.sracounselingcenter.org/services/</a>	Psychotherapy and counselling session Stress Management
Paber Clinic	Room 141 Medico Specialist Wing, Zamboanga Doctors Hospital, Veterans Avenue	(062) 991 1704 0917 724 6134	<a href="https://paber-clinic.business.site/">https://paber-clinic.business.site/</a>	Mental Health Services

## Appendix F: Recruitment Poster



**ADULT PARTICIPANTS  
FOR STUDY ABOUT  
WOMEN'S  
EXPERIENCES OF THE  
ZAMBOANGA SIEGE**

We want to hear from you!  
Email: romeojoequintero@email.carleton.ca

**You are eligible to participate if you meet all the  
following criteria:**

- At least 18 years old during the Zamboanga Siege
- Identify as woman
- Have been internally displaced by the conflict
- Still reside in Zamboanga City after the conflict

Ethics and Protocol Clearance ID Project: #115636  
Clearance Date:  
To raise ethical concerns, contact chair, Carleton  
University Research Ethics Board at  
ethics@carleton.ca

## Appendiks F: Recruitment Poster in Filipino



# PANANALIKSIK TUNGKOL SA KARANASAN NG MGA KABABAIHAN NA NASA HUSTONG GULANG NOONG ZAMBOANGA SIEGE

Nais naming pakinggan ang kwento mo!  
Email: [romeojoequintero@gmail.com](mailto:romeojoequintero@gmail.com)

**Ikaw ay pwedeng lumahok kung matutugunan mo ang lahat ng mga sumusunod:**

- Nasa hustong gulang (18 taong gulang at pataas) nung naganap ang Zamboanga Siege
- Kinikilala ang sarili bilang babae
- Naging internally displaced person (IDP) dahil sa kaguluhan
- Naninirahan parin sa Zamboanga City pagkatapos ng kaguluhan

Ethics and Protocol Clearance ID Project: #115636  
Clearance Date:

Kung may katanungan tungkol sa etikal na aspeto sa pag-aaral na ito, maaaring ma-email ang Carleton University Research Ethics Board sa [ethic@carleton.ca](mailto:ethic@carleton.ca)

## Appendix G: Codes and Subcategories

### Perception of Life in Zamboanga City

- Beautiful
  - Not chaotic
  - Well-maintained
  - Trendy
  - Clean
- Peaceful
- Affordable
- Progressive
  - Accepting of LGBTIQ
  - Diversity in religion
  - Westernized idea of equality
- Unique
- Dirty
- Aggressive
  - Presence of drugs
  - Shooting
- Difficult
  - Lack employment
  - COVID-19
- Corruption
  - Poor leadership

### Zamboanga City as Home

- Comfortability
- Feeling of ease
- Sense of belonging
- Place of birth
- Families
- Accustomed
- Something you miss when it has been taken away
- Did not lose anything
- “Wherever you are, you can never predict what can happen in the future” (Daisy)
- Grew up here
- Happy staying here
- Children are here
- This is our place

- “We cannot do anything. No choice but to stay here.” (Hyacinth)
  - Wants to return to initial home in Lustre
- “Nothing [can] compare to Zamboanga” (Ivy)
- “I fight for Zamboanga”
- Life is easy in Zamboanga if you are strategic

### Zamboanga City Siege

- Monday
- Dawn
- Asleep
- At home
- Hospital
- Flea Market
- Protest
- Rally
- Stress
- Confusion
- *Butu-butu* or *pusil-pusil* (shooting)
  - Panic
  - *Takot*
    - Could one’s own heart beat
  - *Nanginginig*
  - Normalized
- Unaware
  - Surprised
  - Unprepared
- Fire
- Goosebumps
- Hostages
  - Knock on doors
  - Anxiety
  - Separation
  - Human shields
- Barricaded
  - No in, no out
  - Trapped

- Cut electricity
- Lost contact and no reception
- Presence of soldiers
  - Trap bullet
- *Lapuk* (muddy)
- Tanks
- *Gera* (war)
  - Bombing
  - Blasting
  - Splinters
- Running
- *Rebelde*
- Brave
- Lucky
- Hide or flight

### Trajectories of Displacement

- Left home by foot
  - Others' foot and knees were covered in mud
- Left home without anything
  - No food
  - No cash
  - No clothes
  - Those with private transportation (and time) were able to bring clothes, blanket, thermos, mosquito net
- Home based IDPs
  - Some stayed with relatives
  - Difficult to acquire food because they were scattered throughout the city
  - Occupied empty houses
- Food
  - *Lugaw* (porridge)
  - Biscuit
  - *Bulad* (dried fish)
  - Chips
  - Difficult to secure food for home based IDPs
  - Rationed

- Initially, there was plenty of food
- Lockdown
  - Could not escape
  - Refused to leave home
- Thinking of returning
- Transitory site IDPs
  - Grandstand – Sports Complex (TS)
    - Voluntarily went to Grandstand (by foot)
    - Brought by truck to Grandstand without providing them with information
    - Searched for family members or friends
    - Refused to stay with relatives because difficult to secure food
  - ICAS High School (TS)
    - Exclusive to residents of Tetuan
    - No other programs were provided, except food from NGOs, CSWDO and religious institutions
    - No stress debriefing programs, aside from drag performance

### Motherhood

- Concerns about the safety of children and other family members ('family' is perceived and defined differently in the Philippine context)
  - Especially young women
- Children's education
- Children's nutrition and diet

- Cholera outbreak among the children (in Grandstand)
- Job prospect for children
- Social reproduction
  - Unmarried women were the primary caretaker of their parents
- Lactating and pregnant women were provided with milk, vitamins
  - Eligible for the lactating programs in Grandstand

### **Ayuda for TS IDPs**

- Grandstand – Sports Complex
  - At first, food was enough but eventually stopped according to informants who stayed here for 3 to 4 years
- Others had more than enough food and were able to share with fellow IDPs (priority given to kin)
- Had to line up for food and other materials (i.e., blanket, cauldron)
- Others were offered with MCCP (a form of conditional cash transfer, now renamed to 4Ps)
  - All residents of Lustre were ‘automatically’ eligible for 4Ps
  - Some only received 4Ps recently because of the pandemic
- Lactating program included vitamins, hygiene kits, and rice
- Plenty of canned goods—mostly corned beef
- Cooked own food using cauldron
- Packed lunch was provided (last for one month)
- Home based IDPs had to go to a particular location to obtain food ration
- Food provided by NGOs and religious institutions
- Stress debriefing programs

- Smile Program
- Drag and stand-up comedy as ways of recuperation
- Sometimes, help was limited
- Financial assistance
  - Only twice in 4 years of being displaced
  - Some were not provided at all
  - Some were provided through the 4Ps program but after 2 years of being TS IDPs

### **Ayuda for Home Based IDPs**

- Relief items provided by NGOs, local city
  - Social Action
  - UNICEF
- Difficult to acquire as you need to travel somewhere to get relief
  - No transportation
- Donations from friends and other people
- Help was inadequate but somehow helpful
  - Inadequate because people were unemployed during the siege
  - Provided relief once a week
- noodles
- Canned goods (sardines and corned beef)
- NFA rice
- Rationed per household
- Ayuda was based on what they could provide you
  - Essentials – mostly food
  - Hygiene kits
- “there’s no such thing like that for us”
  - Referring to LGBTIQ specific needs during displacement

- No access to hormones for individuals with gender affirming hormone therapy
- Spread of STI
- No provision of contraception
- No financial assistance
- No stress debriefing

### **Life in Evacuation Sites**

- No employment
- DSWD provided food and activities
  - But food was rationed
  - Social workers were described as 'nice'
- Crowded
  - From various barangays
  - Strangers
- Neighbours
- Unsafe
  - Especially for young women
  - Dirty
  - Area smelt bad
- Long-term
  - Experienced typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in November 2013
  - Experienced of flood
  - Prolonged unemployment
  - Children dropped out of school
- Tent
  - Difficulty of sleeping
  - Shared with extended family members or strangers
  - No lights inside tents, but there were lights in the evacuation sites
  - Muslim women prayed within the tent
  - Tent had no blanket so they slept on the soil
  - Showered beside the tent

- Outbreak
  - Diarrhea
  - Cholera
- Monitoring
  - Couldn't leave because resettlement housing projects were based on them staying in the TS
  - Weekly survey at sporadic times
- Safety
  - Availability of light
  - Cleanliness
  - Presence of authority
  - Stranger
  - Crowded
  - Open
  - Lack of privacy
  - Segregated bathrooms
  - Smelt bad
  - Dirty
  - Air is polluted
- ICAS
  - Overfed
  - Organized
  - Assigned tasks
  - Smaller
  - Essence of belongingness

### **Poverty**

- "...kahit lugaw lang basta may makain kayo, makapunta kayo sa school" (Iris)
- "Sabi ko na ganito tayo kasi galing tayo sa mga gera...May [awa] ang Dyos, nakakaraos din tayo" (Iris)

### **Aftermath**

- Terrified
- Denial
- Prayerful
  - Thankful for God
  - Paying of respect to Fort Pilar
- Hopeful

- No corrupt government
- Defined as the 'chance to exist, to live'
- For the children
- Life is beautiful
- Alert
- PTSD
- Unemployed
- Homeless
  - Demolished houses
  - Burnt houses in the 'ground zero'
  - Military standard procedure
- 'Building back a better Zamboanga'

### Registration

- Access card
  - Required for packed lunch and development aid
- Separate registration for resettlement housing
- Identify as IDP
- Certified displaced
- *Palaboy*
- Displaced by fire
- Displaced by war in Jolo

### Relocation and Resettlement

- Voluntarily left the evacuation centre
- Relocated to Masepla
  - Some have been in Masepla since 2016
  - House in Masepla is not theirs because it is considered a transitory site
  - Masepla has three transitory sites
  - Residents of Masepla buy their own water
  - Untagged IDPs were asked to leave Masepla; they are now renting a land in Estrada Street

(Brgy. Mampang) for 300 pesos a month

- Could not go back to Sta. Maria because they lived as sharer
- Resettlement housing described by participants as "award"
- Former neighbours have been relocated separately
- The local government unit made a promise to resettle everyone in 2019
- Uncertainty about the place of relocation

### Before the Siege

- Blessed
- There was employment security
- Routinized
  - School, home, and recreation
- Owned clothing materials
- Life was quiet
  - Peace of mind
  - No disturbances
- Unafraid
- Unemployed
- "I made good income; everything was okay. Ang ganda ng buhay" (Ivy)
- Enjoyed life
- Worked hard to survive

### Return

- Reconstruction housing project in Sta. Barbara and Lustre
  - Worth 30k of materials
  - Condition: you must own the land
  - Materials were substandard
  - Others sold their materials
- Refused to return because of unpleasant memories
  - Land remained unoccupied

- Home was renovated/expanded before the siege
- Some local government officials, NGOs, and media visited the ground zero after the siege
- Cried after seeing the state of their homes
- Felt angry
- Goosebumps
- One participant was unaware that it was a standard military procedure to burn down the neighbourhood to eliminate any rebels still in hiding
- Residents of Mampang returned home without any issues and learned that some of their neighbours did not evacuate
- Residents of Tetuan returned home and described the state of their homes as 'okay' – no stolen property
- Felt unexplainable
- 'Build back a better Zamboanga' project
- Others transferred to another city
- A sense of alertness
- The local governments failed the city
  - They messed up Zamboanga City
- Feeling of eagerness to go back to save some belongings
- Government reconstruction assistance arrived the following year
- "Kulang ang tulong talaga!" (Ivy)

### **Women's Empowerment**

- Weekly training and activities for women in transitory sites
  - Family planning program
  - Lactating program
  - Program for unmarried women