

# **Religious Diversity as Peacebuilding**

## **The Space for Peace**

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At daybreak the aircraft lands heavily at Mindanao's Davao Airport. Mindanao is the most southern of the major islands of the Philippines. We enter the newly built airport hall, which was blasted to pieces by bombs last year. The first time I landed here, a few years ago, it was in the midst of the pitch black tropical night and a wealth of sweating porters offered to carry suitcases into the humid darkness outside. Even now, at dawn, there are many porters who want to carry baggage. I say no thanks to a timid young man standing alone, the only one with nothing to do. It saddens me all of a sudden that I ruined his business this morning just to save a few coins. Outside the building, we are received by a quiet woman who represents the Human Rights organization Balay. Davao is stretched out over almost endless acres of land and we drive for a long time through endless streets teeming with life and cars, bicycles, and motorcycles laden with people, livestock and fruit. I see a child's hand holding on to the hood of a tricycle that whizzes past and a crazy man who wanders stark naked along the side of the road, shouting. This place swarms with life on its way from birth to growth to decay.

The first time I was here I stayed in a huge hotel beautifully situated on the beach with the salty warm night wind whispering in the palm trees under which armed guards found shade from the sun during the day. Now the hotel is almost abandoned, as no tourists come here, a city where it feels as if war could break out any moment. A strange feeling of desolation grabs you as you walk back to your room at night through long corridors with hundreds of empty rooms and a stillness that should have been broken by the shouts and laughter of boisterous tourists.

This time we head out of town on a four-hour drive to visit Father Bert, a central figure in the peace movement that has led to the establishment of Spaces for Peace in the middle of the conflict. He is known for saying that the only enemy is the war. We drive through landscapes full of vigour; everywhere people are carrying fruits, working in fields or in the rain forest. At one point we stop and more people join us. They are local Balay employees—a middle-aged and very polite man with a concerned look on his face and a young girl with a white scarf she holds up to cover her mouth every time she laughs, which is very often, except when we talk about the war. She tells the story of a war that starts again at short intervals every second or third year. It has been like that for almost five decades now. The conflict is said to be between different population groups: the Moros (Muslims), the Settlers (Christians), and tribal people (called Lumads). Government troops have been sent to the island to stop conflicts, which has resulted in a decade-long war against rebel groups organized by the Moros. The Moros are fighting for more influence and even independence from the Philippines. The real victims, however, are civilians who have suffered killings, oppression, and violence. From time to time people have to leave their land and villages and seek refuge in evacuation camps.

This has resulted in a sort of social trauma that includes passivity and surrendering hope of a better future. People are in grief for relatives lost to hard conditions in evacuation centres and for the loss of crops on their land. Alcohol abuse and violent behaviour are common reactions, as are divided families and torn social relationships, a deteriorated local economy, and distrust in place of a shared value of mutual respect. In 2000 over one million people were affected by the war. Civilians were caught between fighting factions and left their fields for refuge in evacuation centres. In 2003 a new military campaign started, and during a period of four months, 400,000 people left their land for shelter in evacuation camps.

We come to Father Bert's place at ten o'clock in the morning. The place mostly resembles a

large farm with chickens and goats moving around the patio and eight or ten people sitting in the shade of a tree. The beautiful sound of a choir singing a psalm comes from a big wooden building. It is the church. Father Bert welcomes us warmly, laughing. He explains that he has been so busy he has forgotten we were coming. He is a young man in shorts and a t-shirt and he invites us into his modest house, which also serves as his meeting room. He laughs when he tells us that people thought he was crazy when he began his work for peace because he always had—and has—both Muslim and Christian staff with him when he negotiated with various groups. He has been active in organizing marches for peace and has visited the fighting parties, often in the midst of shootings, in order to save soldiers on both sides from being killed. He tells us that it is important to see soldiers as human beings who do not want the war. He was one of several national religious leaders—Christian, Muslim, and Lumad—who had meetings aimed at finding ways to support the affected population in its struggle for peacebuilding. The cooperative efforts of the population and religious leaders made it possible to create and develop the Space for Peace in one of the most war-torn areas of Mindanao.

Later that day we meet seven members of the Space for Peace council representing each of the seven *barrangays* (hamlets)<sup>[1]</sup> that united in Space for Peace in 2003. Then we drive for one hour into the rain forest and down a bumpy mountain road which takes us to a community with about 2500 inhabitants who live on farms in the forest and in the more open valley. It is the “tri-people” village where the idea for the Space for Peace originated. It is called tri-people because Lumads, Muslims, and Christians live there together. A small group of people await us near the community house, a large wooden structure with a plank floor and a roof, but no walls. The welcome is informal as people walk around, chatting with each other and greeting us.

Then we sit down on benches arranged along the sides of the community house and the meeting begins when an old woman plays a tune for us on a small instrument. A good dozen people attend the meeting—several elderly Lumads with large hats and eyes that smile at us, three middle-aged Muslim men who tell jokes and laugh contagiously, and a Christian woman who is married to a Lumad man. She sits with another young Christian mother whose child was born at the evacuation center and named after it.

The old woman asks about the purpose of our meeting. We explain that we want to learn about Space for Peace. They want to know why we are interested in the program, so we

explain that we are curious about how they are able to change the discourse of antagonism and violence into a discourse producing social inclusion and nonviolent conflict resolution. They ask in what way we contribute to peacebuilding and if we could exchange information on that. We say that our contribution seems very limited in comparison to the impressive results they have achieved over the last several years and that it is important to learn from the ones who are successful in creating peace by integrating all—old and young, people of different religions, and people with identities in different ethnic groups.

So an elderly gentleman begins to tell about the idea of Space for Peace:

The civil war started more than forty years ago and already, more than a generation ago, we were forced to flee and live for years in an evacuation center. We could not cultivate the land and became even poorer by living there. When the ceasefire came in the mid 1970s, we moved back and worked on our fields again, but some years later the fighting broke out again and we had to again leave our land. This moving back and forth continued for decades and in 1997 and 2001 there was again very heavy fighting here. In 2003 it happened again and we had for the third time in less than six years to flee to the evacuation center. In 2003 we agreed that this could not continue and we decided to move back, even though there was still fighting in the area. We were Lumads, Muslims, and Christians together. There was still a war, but we decided to go back to our homes and our farms. We had meetings and we talked about how strange and alien ideas were starting to influence us, ideas of war and conflict, ideas that tried to convince us to believe we had conflicts with Lumads, Christians and Muslims. But the more we talked about it, the more it became clear to us that we did not have these kinds of problems. We talked about having lived together for a long time in a peaceful and respectful way. Why would somebody now want us to believe that we have conflict between us and that these conflicts could cause war, murder and mayhem? We talked about the fact that somebody wanted us to believe there were conflicts between religions, but we made it clear that it was not our way of seeing it, as we respected each other's religion and lived peacefully together with our three religions. We respect the fact that people have different beliefs and faiths. And we spoke among ourselves about our ethnicity and culture, which we do not see as a source of hatred and war. That was someone else's idea, not ours. We

talked openly about the fact that we were being invited into ideas that conflict, war, crime, and killings were related to religion and ethnicity. But together we said no thank you to these ideas. Together we said no thanks to racism—we do not need to divide people into groups. We are more concerned with peace for all. And we said no thanks to the idea of a “religious war”—we had lived well together before without that idea.

So we decided to create a space for peace instead of a space of conflict, war and atrocities. Instead of aggression, hatred and fighting, we support values of peaceful conflict resolution, tolerance, and rights for all people.

## **Religion as a Resource for Peacebuilding**

In the remainder of this article, we focus on ways in which Space for Peace employs religions as a resource for peacebuilding, strengthening the resilience of the seven barangays that form Space for Peace.

On November 29, 2004, a declaration was signed by more than five thousand inhabitants of the seven barangays comprising Space for Peace. The declaration was named using the first two letters in the name of each barangay: GiNaPaLaDTaka Space for Peace and Children as Zones of Peace. It is a strong statement of the ways in which religious faiths profoundly strengthen communities in the face of adversities.<sup>[2]</sup>

We are Muslim, Lumad and Christian inhabitants of barangays Ginatilan, Nalapaan, Panicupan, Lagunde, Dalengaoen, Takepan and Kalakacan, collectively known as the GiNaPaLaDTaka in the municipality of Pikit, Cotabato, in Mindanao.

We delight in recalling that in early times, we had known a vibrant and peaceful way of life together despite the differences in our being Muslim, Christian and Lumad. Before the war in the 70s, we lived in peace and thrived jointly amidst simplicity. We worked in the fields even at night and we owned and raised many animals. We had bountiful harvests and our children were able to go to school. Even though the prices of farm products were low, the prices of local commodities were also cheap.

Despite our poverty, we helped each other. We shared our food together, especially during the “kanduli” of the Muslims, the Christian feasts, and the “samayann” of the Lumads. We lived in harmony during times of prosperity as well as in lean times. We did not have disputes over land. We trusted one another. Muslims slept in the homes of their Christian friends and the Christians in the homes of their Muslim friends. This can be gleaned from the number of Muslim-Christian inter-marriages, which have generated many families up to this day. In short, our relationship was strong and beautiful.

But this harmonious relationship was broken along with the destruction of our properties. This happened following the breakout of one war after another in Mindanao in the '70s, paving the way for the rise of the Ilaga, Blackshirt, Barracuda, MIM movements and the declaration of martial law, along with rising cases of redo, ambushes, and armed conflicts, the most recent of which took place in 1997, 2000, 2001 and 2003.

The upsurge in ambushes, redo, hold-ups, and the dumping of dead human bodies along the National Highway, and the daily broadcast of bad news over local radio stations sowed fear among us and gave a bad reputation to our place. This fuelled negative feelings and increasingly affected the mutual trust formerly enjoyed by everyone. Soon, we lost the lively and joyful atmosphere of our place.

We lost our possessions including our farm animals; they were stolen during the war. The remaining ones were eventually sold at cheap prices. Most of our houses were razed to the ground while bullets and bombs flattened other houses. To escape the war, we were separated from one another as we fled and evacuated to different places. We abandoned our farms and lost our sources of sustenance.

Many of us were also wounded and killed by bullets. Many more fell ill, and children, who were the most vulnerable, died in evacuation centers. Most of our children were unable to go to school anymore. At night, most of us could not sleep well because of fear and suspicion. Guns proliferated. Even the first barangays, which were earlier declared as spaces for peace, were tainted with

doubts. The war succeeded in erecting an invisible wall which alienated communities and tribes.

Every family suffered after the war. There was no income because there were no jobs and capital. Skyrocketing prices of consumer goods and commodities aggravated the plight of the people, not to mention the onset of natural calamities like droughts and flash floods. Life was very hard as we struggled to rebuild our lives from scratch. Cases of savagery and extra-judicial killings continued. There was no security and certainty to our lives and livelihoods.

As our response to the aforementioned situation and to strengthen the peace process and to restore the prosperity and peace we once enjoyed as a tri-people in our communities, we hereby DECLARE our barangays as GiNaPaLaDTaKa SPACE FOR PEACE and Children as Zones of Peace.

We dream of a life where there will be no more oppressors and oppressed. We aspire to restore our trust towards one another. We seek to rebuild our community life where love reigns, and where there is forgiveness and recognition of mistakes. We strive to build our community on good moral principles where one is faithful to one's religion and culture.

... Beginning today and in the years to come, we hope that the Space for Peace and Children as Zones of Peace will expand to other barangays of Pikit and Mindanao. We yearn for the eventual eradication of war, ambushes, massacres, redo, kidnappings, hold-ups, rapes, stealing and other violent and oppressive acts trampling upon the human rights of people. We pray for the genuine peace to rule our land.

With the blessings of Allah/Magbabaya/God, we hope that this endeavor will bear fruit for the good of all, today, and in the next generation of tri-people in Mindanao.

The declaration states that Space for Peace is a community response to the violence, displacement, armed confrontations, and crime that have ravaged the sitio. It describes a history and culture of peace in the region and the impact of the war, stressing that the community was peaceful and inclusive before the outbreak of war and that the memory of this peace guides the principles and values of Space for Peace. Major units in the document

are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Major Units in the Declaration of Space for Peace

	Culture of peace before war	Impact of the war	Culture of peace as a response to the war
<b>Religion and Spirituality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tolerance of different religions</li> <li>● Respect for and participation in each other's celebrations</li> </ul>	Created distrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seek the blessing of Allah/Magbabaya/God</li> <li>● Pray for genuine peace</li> <li>● Be faithful to one's religion</li> </ul>
<b>Discourse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emphasis on strong and beautiful relationships</li> <li>● Emphasis on a vibrant and peaceful life</li> <li>● Emphasis on thriving, even in lean times</li> <li>● Emphasis on sharing and harmony</li> </ul>	<p>Broadcast of bad news:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● sowed fear</li> <li>● ruined reputations</li> <li>● fuelled negative feelings</li> <li>● destroyed mutual trust</li> </ul> <p>Loss of lively and joyful atmosphere</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We declare the Space for Peace and Children as Zones of Peace</li> <li>● We dream of, seek, appeal, call on, hope, and yearn</li> <li>● Call on all concerned parties for respect and support</li> </ul>
<b>Social Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mutual help</li> <li>● Trust in each other</li> <li>● Overnight stays in each other's houses</li> <li>● Friends across religious faith</li> <li>● Inter-marriages</li> <li>● No disputes over land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical separation</li> <li>● Fear and suspicion</li> <li>● Militant groups form</li> <li>● Alienation between communities and tribes</li> <li>● Redos, ambushes, hold-ups, dumping of dead bodies, salvaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good moral principles</li> <li>● We aspire to restore trust</li> <li>● We seek to rebuild a community life with love and forgiveness</li> <li>● We desire good for all today and in the next generation</li> <li>● We yearn for no more violent and oppressive acts that trample on human rights</li> </ul>

<p><b>Living conditions and physical conditions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Worked hard in the fields</li> <li>● Provided schools for the children</li> <li>● Had a sustainable economic system</li> <li>● Shared food together</li> <li>● Had lots of farm animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Left the farms</li> <li>● Closed schools for most children</li> <li>● Lost jobs and capital</li> <li>● No income</li> <li>● High prices on consumer goods</li> <li>● Farm animals stolen or sold cheaply</li> <li>● Lost sources of sustenance</li> <li>● Houses and properties destroyed</li> <li>● Many wounded or killed</li> <li>● Children fell ill and died</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A process of restoration of prosperity</li> </ul>
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Religion is central to the declaration, though no particular religion is key. Rather, all religious faiths, tolerance of different religions, and faithfulness to one's own belief form a profound perspective in the declaration.

## Telling the story

In 2003, twelve people in a sitio in the Space for Peace were interviewed in three or four sessions each in order to collect individual life stories, and twelve other key informants were interviewed to provide background information. The data were collected during a three-months stay in the sitio and a culturally adjusted method for conducting the interviews was applied.<sup>[3]</sup>

An elderly woman in the sitio, where the population is Christian and Muslim, remembers that

The Christians and Muslims got along well and we did not face any serious

problems living next to one another's homes in the small community. We helped each other in the work on the farms; our children played and studied together and the young boys stayed over night in each others' houses whenever they wanted to.

Another elderly citizen recalls:

As good neighbors we usually shared the harvested crops as well as the food on the table. By and large, the families cared for each other's welfare. We joined in the celebration of all traditional events regardless of religious relevance. On a Muslim holiday or celebration, the Christians would be invited over to take part in the festivities. The Christians did the same for the Muslims when they celebrated religious and cultural events.

A third elderly Christian gentleman tells that

In my younger days I would accompany my Muslim peers in wooing local girls. We did not have to choose whom to court because either a Muslim or a Christian girl would do. I can say that the girl's religion did not really matter in those times. We believed that being born to a Christian or a Muslim family is something predetermined and it should not be an issue for those who wanted to marry someone from a different faith. The intermarriages between the Muslims and the Christians gave stronger social bonds and relationships between the Muslims and the Christians at that time.

The elderly also tell about differences between religious groups, such as that Christian settlers use alcohol while Muslims do not. Or that settlers come from a cultural background in which documentation of ownership of land is very important. The Lumad and Muslim tradition, on the other hand, has operated on the basis of "land use rights" secured by tradition and mutual acceptance. These differences caused severe problem in the 1960s when the government dictated major land reforms and redistributed land according to verifiable documents rather than by the traditional practice of land use rights. This meant that the lands of the Lumads and Muslims were reduced markedly, while Christians received a greater allocation because they had documents of ownership of farmland. The land reform fuelled a Muslim political struggle for an independent Mindanao and was one of the main factors that set the ground for an armed Muslim militia fight against the

government. In the past, conflicts and prejudices arose occasionally, but these were minor irritations in the relationships between the three groups and were counteracted by a greater friendliness among large numbers of people. An elderly lady in the sitio remembers growing up together with children of their Christian neighbors who migrated from Luzon at the turn of the twentieth century:

We were the best of friends. Some of my relatives were even married to the Ilocanos who settled in their village. We were knitted closely together. When the Ilaga vigilante group went on a murderous rampage against Muslim families in Cotabato, their Christian neighbors gave them refuge.

Telling shared stories in the Space for Peace reveals the historical experience of a tri-people village, as not all of the villages and sitios have a population of Muslims, Christians, and Lumads. Some have just two religious groups and a number have just one. Moreover, shared history that includes a critical view of the past, such as a tale of oppression and resistance, raises awareness of the need for social justice. A common concern for justice, then, provides a framework for cohesion and stability in communities. History told this way is a means not only of remembering, but of promoting knowledge, skills, and inspiration, all of which are useful in building the capacity for resilience in times of adversity. This approach to their history promoted the notion that “our past is our future.” The future was promising as long as the people and their leaders managed to keep telling stories free of hate in the Space for Peace. The process is not easy or without challenges.<sup>[4]</sup>

In Culture of Peace seminars, an important element is revisiting the past. These seminars were conducted among people from the three groups and united the participants in the shared story of the more peaceful past. At some point, all participants—perpetrators and victims—sit in a circle and listen to the painful story of each person. In the end participants realize they are all survivors and are united in their present circumstances. They agree to live peacefully together. Then they demonstrate their reconciliation either by shaking hands or embracing each other. They conclude by sealing the reconciliation through an interfaith prayer.

One important aspect of telling the history of cooperation rather than incidents of violence between religious groups is that cooperation, by itself, rejects the idea of war for religious reasons. The history told is not just one of being against war, but one of denouncing the idea that war is caused by religious differences. Furthermore, an emphasis on mutual support

sustains the idea of unity and peace without denying that there have been violent acts.

## Peacebuilding

After moving back to their land, people started to rebuild their villages and farms, school buildings, water facilities, and chapels and mosques. They also addressed the psycho-social impact of the war, which had advanced division, polarization, stereotypes and prejudices in communities and fragmented the social support system.<sup>[5]</sup> Space for Peace responded by offering Culture of Peace seminars, and an interreligious dialogue campaign was launched and sustained through interfaith councils. The goal of the interreligious dialogue was to promote understanding, respect, and acceptance of each other's religious beliefs. Interreligious councils were formed in the seven barangays in Space for Peace, recognizing the important role of religious leaders in promoting peace and dialogue in sitios. A religious leader noted that houses would be burned down if the war started again, but that could be prevented if they worked toward good relationships, which they could achieve through interreligious dialogue. Timuay Ramos, a sitio chieftain, said:

Working for peace is like cooking in a pot. You cannot cook with only one or even two stones lest the pot will fall down. You need three stones. Only then can you make the fire and start cooking. The three stones are represented by the Lumad, Muslims, and Christians. Peace cannot be achieved by only one group of people alone nor by any of the two groups. Since Mindanao is a tri-people, peace can only be achieved if the Lumads, Muslims and Christians work together for the common good of everybody, regardless of their cultural and religious differences. In fact, it is because we are different that we have so much to share. The tri-people concept also signifies our adherence to justice and fairness that leaves no individual or group isolated from the community.

In this sense, the tri-people concept is an important component of peacebuilding as it is an entire community's inclusive vision, despite religious or cultural differences, and provides a framework for unity. To reinforce inclusivity, a number of social events were organised, such as tri-people basketball games and joint religious celebrations.

For most people in the Space for Peace, religion plays a very important role. They clearly expressed this in interviews, documents, and meetings and they commonly observe joint

religious celebrations, such as the Duyog Ramadhan of the Muslims, Duyog Pasko of the Christians, and Duyog Samayaan of the Lumads. As a result of this interfaith interaction, they have been able to rebuild sacred buildings and places for prayer and worship that had been destroyed, buildings that unite the community further. The first thing that the people did, when they returned to their communities, was to rebuild the mosque, the chapel and the bintana, a covered structure where the Lumads hold their spiritual activities. Sacred places of worship are not mere symbols but serve as centers around which the life of the community revolves. The community response to the disaster of the war consisted primarily of acts of faith and submission to the divine will in a way that produced active participation in rebuilding the community. “Diyos na ang bahala sa atin” is a common expression in the local narratives of those who are suffering and those who struggle for a better life. It means there is a higher force that provides meaning to an uncertain and challenging condition, that brings rewards to those who remain on the path of goodness, and that will not abandon those who help themselves. It is closely related to the Biblical instruction to “love thy neighbor” because “whatever you do to the least of your brethren, you have done to [God]” (Matt. 25). A similar belief is embedded in Islamic doctrine as it teaches that thinking about the welfare of others will bring security and peace.<sup>[6]</sup> Spirituality, family togetherness, and doing good to others are valued. In local terms this is conceptualized as the practice of kindness, compassion, sharing, and forgiveness, which form the value systems known as damayan and bayanihan. Damayan and bayanihan envision a common humanity where people value kapatiran (fellowship), which is the value of living together in mutual acceptance, solidarity, and respect for each other’s spirituality. It also entails working together in the rebuilding of communities. For instance, in the sitio Baruyan of Nalapaan, a solar dryer was built in two months with Muslim, Christian, and Lumad men working in the bayanihan spirit while the women cooked the food.

In summary, the Space for Peace is built on the uniting force of respect for religious diversity and traditional values of mutual respect and trust. On this foundation it is possible to generate caring and reconciliation among people of diverse beliefs and cultures. Space for Peace was built on continuous cooperation between local people and religious leaders and later included political and military leaders. In addition to fostering peace and reclaiming a culture of peace from an earlier generation, it provided material well being through access to farm lands and schools.<sup>[7]</sup>

# Conclusion

The Space for Peace bears in its framework some similarities to the UN Declaration on a Culture of Peace and its template for measuring the level of a culture of peace, as shown in table 2.<sup>[8]</sup>

Table 2. Components of Peacebuilding

<b>Space for Peace</b>	<b>UN Declaration on the Culture of Peace</b>	<b>Template for measuring the culture of peace</b>
Uniting all people in a peaceful coexistence through religion, including diverse religious faiths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promoting peaceful settlement of conflicts, mutual respect and understanding and international cooperation</li> <li>● Advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all civilizations, peoples and cultures, including toward ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Security</li> <li>● Low climate of nationalism</li> </ul>
Continued cooperation between population and leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increasing transparency and accountability in governance</li> <li>● Strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring full participation in the development process</li> </ul>	Low level of fear of speaking
Responsibility of all parties and participants, i.e., all members of the community	Enabling people at all levels to develop skills of dialogue, negotiation, consensus--building, and peaceful resolution of differences	Cooperation
Mutual trust	Eliminating all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance	Low climate of fear
Good moral principles of caring and reconciliation	Education at all levels as one of the principal means to build a culture of peace. In this context, human rights education is of particular importance	Climate of confidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promoting democracy, development, and universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms</li> </ul>	

Mutual respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women through their empowerment and equal representation at all levels of decision-making.</li> <li>• Ensuring respect for and promotion and protection of the rights of children</li> </ul>	Nurturance
To secure farm lands, income, and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eradicating poverty and illiteracy and reducing inequalities within and among nations</li> <li>• Promoting sustainable economic and social development</li> </ul>	Low climate of insecurity and anger.

The space for peace is built on a respect for the diversities of religion as a means for promoting peace. Through this process peace is set as the highest value and goal and supported by and through religious faith. But the key point is that it is possible only through a respect for diversity. Diverse religions in these sites in the Philippines have not led to separation as in other places, but to a policy of unity in the peacebuilding. In fact, religious diversity was used to strengthen the common and shared idea of peace. The three religions were not merged into one; instead, their diversity was used to build peace. In the Declaration of the Space for Peace it is emphasised that one should stay faithful to her or his own religion. This means that the richness of having different prayers and rituals is used to give strength to the shared desire for peace. The shared value of peace was supported by and also strengthened the different religions and their unique expressions. In this way the diversity of religions becomes a strong resource for building social resilience.<sup>[9]</sup> As the tolerance of the past was broken by the war, it could only be recovered by a transformative process where the diversity of the religions provides a new level of support for tolerance.

William James has often been called the first peace psychologist when in 1906 he argued that war provides human beings with opportunities to express some of their spiritual inclinations; consequently, to end war, one must find the moral equivalent to war, something that can function as a substitute for the expressions of these inclinations.<sup>[10]</sup> James' text is about how to maintain the internal unity of a society without having or creating an external enemy. He argues that war is unnecessary in the moral development of communities and that war may be a transitory phenomenon in social evolution. The fear of the external enemy should be replaced by the fear of the degenerative capacities within us as

a species.<sup>[11]</sup> To initiate this new understanding—a step forward in the evolution of the mind and the social interaction of people—Space for Peace encourages a shared spirituality that is expressed in different religious contents. This step is summarized in the very idea that the war is the only enemy.

Peacebuilding is a process of heterogeneity and tolerance for all. It means that a member of a community in the Space for Peace for instance can be a supporter of an armed resistance and at the same time an active contributor to building a space for peace. Space for Peace does not contradict nor replace earlier social organizations with their own purpose for community life. A number of risk factors may influence the sustainability of Space for Peace. These risk factors include poverty, weak governance in the area, the spreading of firearms to the civil population, violations of human rights, a weak legal system, and low self-esteem and impulsive behaviours as a result of the organised violence. But still the approach of building peace from religious diversity proves itself able to substantiate and sustain peacebuilding.

1. 1. A sitio is cluster of households often defined by kinship and is the smallest political-administrative unit in The Philippines. Several sitios form a barangay. A barangay normally consists of no less than 300 families and is led by an elected council headed by a Punong Barangay with representatives from the sitios. A number of barangays forms municipalities. The term barangay and its structure in the modern context were conceived during the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos, replacing the old term “barrios.” The word barangay is derived from an ancient Malay word for a boat called a balangay since it is commonly believed that in pre-colonial Philippines, each original coastal barangay was established as a result of settlers arriving by boat from other places in Southeast Asia.
2. 2. The full text of the declaration can be found in Ernesto Anasarias and Peter Berliner, “Human Rights and Peacebuilding,” in *Handbook of Peacebuilding*, edited by J. De Rivera (New York: Springer Press, 2009).
3. 3. Peter Berliner, G. B. Radics, N. B. Pulmano, F. Kjaerulf, and Ernesto Anasarias, “Community Narratives of Social Trauma: A Case Study of a Sitio in Mindanao,” *Psyke & Logos* 30, no. 1 (2009): 153-177.
4. 4. Berliner et al., “Community Narratives of Social Trauma.”

5. 5. Anasarias and Berliner, “Human Rights and Peacebuilding.”
6. 6. During the Ramadan in a Muslim sitio, the sitio chieftain invited us to go with him to the mosque and meditate together with people there—without asking us about our religious faith.
7. 7. Ernesto Anasarias et al. The Balay Rehabilitation Center was invited into the Space for Peace to contribute to the rehabilitation and the peacebuilding process).
8. 8. J. de Rivera, “A Template for Assessing Cultures of Peace,” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2004): 125-46.
9. 9. W. N. Adger, “Social and Ecological Resilience: Are They Related? *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (2000): 347-64.
10. 10. D. J. Christie, R. V. Wagner, and D. A. Winter, eds., *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2007).
11. 11. William James, *Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The American Library, 1988).