



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Leticia Madriaga

Interviewer: Rushda Majeed

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MAJEED: This is Rushda Majeed on the 21st of February 2013, I am with Ms. Leticia Madriaga in Bangued, Abra, in the Philippines. Thank you so much, Ms. Madriaga, for speaking with us. May I ask you to start this conversation by talking about your current position and some of the past work experiences that brought you here?

MADRIAGA: *I am resource director of the school. I am new in the position because I have just been assigned this post this school year and actually started last June. Before becoming resource director, I was academic dean of the college. I also was graduate school dean for a while, and I was also involved in the community extension or outreach department of the school. Even before that—you see I'm homegrown.*

MAJEED: You've been in Abra.

MADRIAGA: *I've been here so long. I also worked as dean student affairs at the school. I was also involved in the campus ministry and the religious education department. You see, I graduated from here.*

MAJEED: Oh, from Divine Word College?

MADRIAGA: *Yes, I took my BS course here and I graduated in—what year was that? It was so long ago. Then the school sent me for further studies. So I had my ME at USP and then I went to La Salle Institute of Governance for my doctorate. Because I owed so much to the school, I am giving back to them.*

MAJEED: Yes.

MADRIAGA: *The school, the Divine Word College of Bangued, wasn't my first employment. I started working somewhere in one of the [Indecipherable] schools. I taught there for a year, at Our Lady of the Pillar Catholic School, which is 30 or so kilometers away from here. But then I started—when I went to school in Manila, I also taught there for a year. So while I was taking my master's studies, I worked, I taught for a while.*

MAJEED: Great, thank you so much for that. So, how long have you been at Divine Word College?

MADRIAGA: *Thirty or more years. I started here in 1980.*

MAJEED: OK.

MADRIAGA: *So, that means 33—as young as you are. I'm even older. My years of work would be much, much more than your age. You might be perhaps as old as my eldest daughter.*

MAJEED: Does she go to school here?

MADRIAGA: *No, she is working in Manila already. I have three kids. My eldest is 29 years old, about to be. She is a pharmacist.*

MAJEED: She is in Manila.

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- MADRIAGA:** *I have a son in between, who is taking up law in Manila, and my youngest is a business administration graduate. She has a business, a lot of businesses—I don't know.*
- MAJEED:** And she is also in Manila? So, all three are?
- MADRIAGA:** Yes.
- MAJEED:** How do they like it there?
- MADRIAGA:** *Well, they don't find a lot of opportunities here. You see, if I put them here, their chances would be restricted. So I want them also to grow.*
- MAJEED:** That's good. Manila has a lot going on. If I may ask you to remember back to the 1980s with the snap elections, when I think NAMFREL [National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections] was organized around that time as well. Could you tell me a little bit about how you heard of NAMFREL? Had it been in existence already? And if you eventually joined in their work?
- MADRIAGA:** *Yes, I think NAMFREL is church based. It is an organization started by the church, I think in Manila. They spread to all the dioceses and parishes of the country. So, our school—and even our province—lay under a diocese. We also helped in the national movement for free elections, something like that. The main objective of the movement was to see that the elections are free and peaceful and so on, knowing the history of Abra, its politics and all. There are a lot of killings here, a lot of violence here, and so on. So, we decided to align ourselves also with what is happening in Manila. It was just the time of [Ferdinand] Marcos and also the time when Ninoy, Benigno Aquino [Jr.] was killed.*
- MAJEED:** Yes.
- MADRIAGA:** *So the snap election happened because of that. You know, if you see back that Cory [Corazon] Aquino was thrust into that position, where she accepted to be the candidate for the snap election for the presidency. So, in the province, we also wanted change, so we thought this would be a start for us to come together. So NAMFREL started as an arm of the church for a free election.*
- But you know why we did the monitoring, while we did the volunteering for the candidates' forums and things like that, after the elections—*
- MAJEED:** This was all in 1986?
- MADRIAGA:** Yes.
- MAJEED:** And NAMFREL had started before?
- MADRIAGA:** *No, it only started from there. NAMFREL started from there—at least here in Abra. We mobilized a lot of people. We mobilized the youth, our students, and we also mobilized volunteers from other parishes because we were church based. For instance, we have the Parish Pastoral Council, which acts like—for instance, you have the town, you have the municipality. That is for governance of the town. The church also has its own organization. We call it the Parish Pastoral Council. It looks into the affairs of the church, something like that. So these are volunteers also from the communities.*

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*We worked from there. We also organized parish-based NAMFRELS. So, while we worked in the parish here, we also had NAMFRELS in parishes. You're familiar with parishes?*

MAJEED: Yes, I went to a Catholic school myself, in India. There are a lot of good schools, and they're run by the church.

MADRIAGA: *That's how we started. So, it was all for volunteers because we did not have anything to— Let's say in terms of, say, sustaining the movement, it was all voluntary, from our own money. If we needed some money for transportation, we had to get it from our own pockets, including meals. Really, it was something we liked to do. No one gets paid for anything. When we want to go to a place and we need a ride, perhaps we ask someone for a ride for us, and they will bring us there without anything coming, getting money from some people, it was all from us.*

MAJEED: Yes.

MADRIAGA: *Of course we experienced a lot of questions like, "What are these people doing?" Something like that. "What are you doing? Are you not afraid?" Of course we were afraid. But the thought that we are doing this for change, we are doing this for things that are greater than us. We really want things to happen, we want things to move on in Abra. You must have seen the countryside coming here. Did you arrive at night?*

MAJEED: No, during the day. I took the bus in the morning from Manila.

MADRIAGA: *So, you saw the roads' you saw the mountains.*

MAJEED: Yes, and the roads seem to be doing well.

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: So, it seems like it was the spirit of the time.

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: There was a spirit of volunteerism among people who wanted to see change.

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: So, after the elections what happened?

MADRIAGA: *I think after the elections, we saw that we did something positive, and we did something that has never been done before. So we thought, "What are we now? What are we going to do?" So we came together again. We realized we should do something more than that. After the elections, what now? That was the big question we wanted to have an answer to.*

*So we decided to look into other things where we can sustain this volunteer work. That started, I think, the monitoring, the monitoring of government activities, government work, government projects. We saw that soliciting the help of ordinary people who would like to make a change in their own communities would be a good start. We want change. It should be coming from us. The government has been there for so long, and it has been there like that also for so long. We also wanted to prove that from us, because of our conviction and*

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*because of our work, we can do something more and we can do something better, not only for us but for Abra.*

*I think that started the monitoring. That started the community organizing. It was only a little—I mean much, much later that the CCAGG [Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government] that you see now—and I think that was the time when they formed the CCAGG. It had no name yet at that time. Only much later we thought it should have a name and that we should register this as an organization so that it has a form. It must be something that can represent us. I think, from this work, a lot is history now until—. I think the CCAGG would be more in a position to give you this, but I would like just to tell you—.*

MAJEED: Please.

MADRIAGA: *It has gained national recognition because of this. It has gained national recognition. When we thought we would be working as a group and working for a cause and working for something that is beyond us, I think that was the motivation that propelled us to do something more. I think we were bolstered by the support of the church. I think without the church behind us, we wouldn't have been able to do this. We have the school; we have the Divine Word College. Most of the members then came from our school, from the hardworking members, from our students, and from the church, with support from the bishop and from priests who were also very much willing to join us. They cannot, in a way, "attack" the government through the pulpit, if I may say that.*

MAJEED: Right.

MADRIAGA: *So we found a common ground in the CCAGG. It was a kind of alternative—if you can call it an alternative—way of making change. If you cannot make change in the institution that has been there for so long, we have to find a way. We thought that a people's organization could do it.*

*The monitoring job that we did by pooling the resources of professionals, because when you do monitoring jobs, particularly on infrastructure like roads, bridges, and so on, you need the expertise of professionals like engineers. So we had engineers with us, we had accountants with us, we had teachers with us, and so, professionals.*

MAJEED: One of the questions I had was that NAMFREL is there, and there is a whole volunteer base that you want to capitalize on, and you're seeing how you can sustain this volunteerism because you wanted to do something for Abra....

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: ...What were the conditions of Abra at the time? What was it that you wanted to fix? What was not working?

MADRIAGA: *We were one of the poorest provinces, if not the poorest, in the Philippines. I don't know the class; I think we are one of the poorest provinces. We have been poor for so long. Isn't that the work of government to improve the lives of people? So, we thought that the government isn't working. It has been there for so long. So, there must be something wrong. This something wrong must be something that has to be put right. If you know the history of politics in Abra, it has just been—you're familiar with dynasties, political dynasties. It is the same with Abra.*

MAJEED: Can you tell me a little bit more about it, the political dynasties relevant to Abra?

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**MADRIAGA:** *Abra has been under the political reign of families. Perhaps you can start with the [Sharif] family, with the [Volara], the [Baderos]. Then after the—we had for instance, all the [Parendasis], before long, long before. So the [Parendis], then came the [Volaras]. We used to have a congressman who was a [Volara] who got married to one of the prominent families here. Then the husband became a congressman, then became a governor, and then later, the wife became a governor and the mayor of the capital town. So then, when a stronger family would come in, they would establish their own—it is the same now. The [Volaras] are gone; then came the [Sharifs], the [Lunas]. So we have a [Luna] who is a mayor. We have a [Luna] who was the congressman, congresswoman. It is the same.*

**MAJEED:** Is there a—because usually, political dynasties and rivalries are associated with violence as well.

**MADRIAGA:** *Oh, sure.*

**MAJEED:** Can you comment a little bit on that and how much it is prevalent in Abra?

**MADRIAGA:** *The last elections, well, no—there was never an election here where there was no killing, never. They would start before, not even on the day of the election, but even before, just the filing of candidacy for a certain position. I mean violence will start from there. Not only violence but vote bribing and so on. You see, even our poor are vulnerable.*

**MAJEED:** Yes, definitely.

**MADRIAGA:** *It is very easy to buy votes because of this condition. The politicians would not go to a place to buy votes if they know that more or less you are financially stable. They will not do that. If you have a certain level of education, they will not come to you.*

**MAJEED:** Right.

**MADRIAGA:** *But you see, since Abra is so poor and a majority of the people are poor, they can easily do that. The CCAGG could tell you about what they did regarding monitoring. We were able to send follow-up cases of corruption in government even to the international level, to the national government. We followed it up with the congressman, in the Department of Justice just so we could put justice, especially on infrastructure.*

*I think Manapura will tell you about that. When we were able to send people from the Department of Public Works and Highways, where they were suspended because they did not do their projects well.*

**MAJEED:** Great. One thing I wanted to ask before we talk about the monitoring angle is, why did you—you told me about the problems in Abra in terms of poverty and so on—but why road monitoring? Why did you as a group decide to focus on monitoring of public works?

**MADRIAGA:** *Public works because you see, you cannot set a good business, even our children cannot come to school on time if you have bad roads. You have seen the roads.*

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*You cannot arrive to your destination if the roads are not good. You know that the government is spending so much on this, and yet, why do we lack good roads? You see, in Abra you have to travel on foot a lot, especially when you—do you have a map here of Abra? No? Most of the towns and municipalities of Abra are from the mountains. You can imagine the suffering of teachers and small children walking on dirt roads, walking on muddy, slippery roads, just to go to school. Can you bring your product from the mountains here in the capital town if you don't have good roads? No, you can't.*

*So I think that roads are basic to us, transportation. But if you have seen how we transport our goods. Perhaps Marvin can show you the jitneys with people on top. Sometimes in further municipalities, there is only one trip from here to Bangued, to Bangued to their place, one trip a day. Sometimes one trip a week, especially during the rainy season. A small kid will have to travel two or three kilometers just to go to school—on rough roads, on slippery, muddy roads. They have to cross creeks, they have to cross rivers to go to school.*

*So, without good roads, people's lives would be just as you see it now, worse then. You see, these people can just report that we have finished this road and then the rains and typhoons come. It would be eroded again. They would ask for funding again. There are even reports that they would report that this road is already finished, even if it has not yet started. There were reports like that. That is how caught up people are.*

*I think that is the reason that monitoring infrastructure is started from there. It was very close to the hearts of people: the road. In mountain areas, they have to go on horseback for travel. Can you imagine if there are sick people from there and the only hospital is here? People will die along the road without even seeing a hospital because the roads are in bad shape.*

MAJEED: Right.

MADRIAGA: *If you see the budget of the government on infrastructure, it is so much. I think if you look at the national budget, it is one of the biggest budgets perhaps, next to education.*

MAJEED: Because that is the biggest department?

MADRIAGA: *I think that through this monitoring, the department of public works and highways are now a little more cautious.*

MAJEED: One of the things I wanted to understand a little bit more is that with construction and with public works, it is usually one of the most corrupt industries all over the world.

MADRIAGA: *It is also one reason—.*

MAJEED: And a lot of people benefit from it. Then you explained to me a little bit about the political dynasties and how they work. So I imagine they control some of the construction—.

MADRIAGA: *Of course. The politicians, they own the businesses; of course they do. They are the ones. They make use of dummy contractors. They are the ones who are the contractors themselves. Of course they do that. So their brother, their sister, their mother would be the owner of this business. They own the hardware; they own a contractor's firm; and everybody knows that. So when you subcontract, for*



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*instance, and you buy your supplies, you go to the hardware stores of this politician—managed by the daughter, managed by the wife. It is common knowledge. You might pass by along the road, and when you come here, you see a beautiful house. It has hardware; it has a gasoline station. That is the house of the congresswoman.*

MAJEED: Where's that?

MADRIAGA: *You showed her the house of the congresswoman with the hardware and the gasoline station? The bulldozers and the—they have a contractor firm. It's right here.*

MAJEED: What is the name of the congresswoman?

MADRIAGA: *Ebernos, Joy Ebernos.*

MAJEED: Interesting. I will definitely take a look.

MADRIAGA: *Of course they may say that that is not her house, that's not her store. It is under the name of other people. Of course, they will not show you.*

MAJEED: It's the same everywhere—in India too.

MADRIAGA: *You can just go around. You would ask, "Whose house is this? Whose house is there on top?" People will tell you that's the house of—and you see the contrast. You go to the countryside, and these are the people who have control. Look at the houses, you cannot reconcile. You will not be able to reconcile.*

MAJEED: One of the things with this kind of control of businesses and the local economy as well is the CCAGG's decision to monitor road construction. It is also dangerous because you're making a lot of powerful enemies.

MADRIAGA: *Sure.*

MAJEED: Did you think about that? How did you deal with it?

MADRIAGA: *You know, they have death threats in the morning; death threats for breakfast, especially Mananpura. You know Mananpura used to work here in Divine Word. We have a dormitory of the school right across the street over there. She used to be the matron also. She has—you know, Mananpura is the manager of everybody. You mention Mananpura in Abra, they will know her everywhere. People know her.*

*So Mananpura started here in the school. She was one of my teachers, so long ago. Together with some young people, they started the dormitories here. So, we have three dormitories where our students stayed. It was long ago, also during the '80s. Because she stays in the dorm being the matron and at the same time she teaches here and everybody knows she stays there and because she heads the CCAGG, she would have death threats by phone. They would even throw stones there. You ask her about that. There would be death threats for breakfast.*

MAJEED: That's a great line. When you say "they," who are the "they"—in your opinion; "they" would throw stones and "they" would call in death threats?

MADRIAGA: *These politicians who would send their goons.*



MAJEED: Again, just to press you a little bit on that point. You're a young organization, you formed with a group of volunteers, and you are taking something on that is very dangerous—monitoring road construction—and you're going up against some of the most powerful political families who are in a position to harm all of you physically as well.

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: Why do you think that didn't happen?

MADRIAGA: *It didn't happen, I think, because we have the church. This was a very powerful tool. They would also know that if you harm the church, they would be dead also, in a way. They would lose, perhaps, their political future. Especially so because our bishop then was very strong on this and especially so because of the involvement of the [Indecipherable] now, the owners of our school, the Society of the Divine Word.*

*If you look at the vision mission of the Society of the Divine Word, they look into the marginalized in society, the poor, the frontiers, those who cannot speak for themselves, those who cannot stand up for their rights. I think this is over something that should be picked up, especially in the schools like ours given the environment that we have.*

*It is not all as we discussed \*\* schools that are like this,] because there are [Indecipherable] schools, whose environment is not like this.*

MAJEED: So you had the backing of the church—

MADRIAGA: *The church and of course the school.*

MAJEED: Can you tell me a little bit about the school as well? A little bit about the history and how prevalent it is in the area?

MADRIAGA: *At the time, because Manapura was teaching here, she was the moving force for all of this, being a teacher here for so long and mobilizing us. Most of us then were members of the CCAGG. But you see, years also went by. You have to move on. When she retired—*

MAJEED: When did she retire?

MADRIAGA: *I'm not sure, 10 years ago? Also, we had to be weaned from her in a way, to see if our convictions would stay even without her. So when she moved to the CCAGG, she was assigned to work in the Social Development Action Center. Have you been there?*

MAJEED: Not yet.

MADRIAGA: *So we continued our membership. We continued also our work and volunteerism. Two of us, [indecipherable], the one you will be interviewing later, are members of the board of the CCAGG now. Even before that, the CCAGG as an organization would lead us in terms of things that we could contribute. For instance, if there are seminars, they need to send us to some places where we can help monitor and so on. They know that we can give our expertise also in such matters. They take us as resource persons and things like that. So we go.*

MAJEED: In terms of Divine World College, the college started in 1920, I believe?

- MADRIAGA:* Yes.
- MAJEED:* So it has been around for a while.
- MADRIAGA:* For a while, yes.
- MAJEED:* The co-opt morgue that we are staying at is also run by the society?
- MADRIAGA:* No, the diocese. It is the diocese. Ours is the religious congregation of the SVD [Society of the Divine Word], that is the diocese.
- MAJEED:* Got it.
- MADRIAGA:* Although, again, even TEMCO [Teachers and Employees Multipurpose Cooperative] started as a cooperative of the teachers whose members, again, mostly from the Divine Word [Indecipherable], the original, the core membership of TEMCO. That is the Abra Diocesan Teachers and Employees Multipurpose Cooperative; that is what they called it: TEMCO.
- MAJEED:* Say that again?
- MADRIAGA:* Abra Diocesan Teachers and Employees Multipurpose Cooperative. They have a building [talking to someone else]. I thought you were from the CCAGG.
- MAJEED:* No, Marvin is here. He is helping me with translation support and logistical help because I don't speak the language.
- MADRIAGA:* I thought you were from the CCAGG. But you know Mr. [Indecipherable].
- ????:* We met in university once when I used to teach here.
- MADRIAGA:* So we put that up, the TEMCO, and from that came other services. It used to be just a—Irene will tell you more on that. It used to be just a cooperative for us teachers where we can get credit loans for very low interest. Then it moved on to have other services. One of these would be the [Indecipherable]. But again it started from here, from us, members of the CCAGG.
- MAJEED:* Great. One of the things I also wanted to ask just to clarify is, when the CCAGG was formed, you were talking about “we” as a group. You were saying “we.” I was wondering who the “we” was. How many people were there? Who was the core group that was originally pushing for CCAGG to be formed?
- MADRIAGA:* Probably there would be 10 or more. We started like that.
- MAJEED:* And all of them had been NAMFREL volunteers?
- MADRIAGA:* Yes. It all started from the snap elections.
- MAJEED:* Could you give me either names or rough backgrounds of the 10 or more people?
- MADRIAGA:* Elizabeth Molera would be one.
- MAJEED:* I should ask her.

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**MADRIAGA:** *Irene Ringus. Who else? Irene Velasco, if you met her, would be one. Olive [Indecipherable], you will meet her also later. Father [Indecipherable]. Other priests, Monseigneur [Indecipherable], he was our bishop then. He was bishop also of [Indecipherable]. He died two years ago. We just had a new bishop.*

**MAJEED:** So, the backgrounds of all these people were mostly teachers?

**MADRIAGA:** *Yes, teachers and priests.*

**MAJEED:** And Irene was an engineer by profession?

**MADRIAGA:** *Yes.*

**MAJEED:** Thank you.

**MADRIAGA:** *Teachers, engineers. I would like to mention [Indecipherable] because he first started the young CCAGG.*

**MAJEED:** Is he around?

**MADRIAGA:** *No, he is now teaching in St. Louis College in La Union.*

**MAJEED:** Interesting. When you were starting the CCAGG, it is a very local initiative. Were you looking at some other places? I know that with NAFREL, you had kind of mentioned that you wanted to align yourself with Manila. Was there any other influence at times in terms of organizing CCAGG that was not local?

**MADRIAGA:** *None.*

**MAJEED:** Great.

**MADRIAGA:** *I think it was the CCAGG that started with people's organizations. I think local bodies, local special bodies, something like that. People's initiatives, people's organizations. They always look at CCAGG as that organization. I think we are now being replicated in other places in the Philippines. Most of those who are working now are in the office. Before, we did not have any office. We would meet in school or in the registration building. We did not have a specific office there. Only much, much later did we realize we needed something that would give us a name and identity as an organization, an institution. So now, when they started to have the office, they started to get paid. So now they really have an office.*

**MAJEED:** Would you be able to tell me approximately when the office came about—when the physical space came about? Was it in the 1980s? or later, in the 1990s?

**MADRIAGA:** *I think it would be much later, perhaps in the '90s or a little earlier than the '90s, not right after the snap elections, no.*

**MAJEED:** One thing I wanted to ask—actually, there are two questions. Because it is such a skeleton organization at this point, it is run mostly by volunteers: Did you have any funding? Were there any other resources? I know you were relying on the church and SWC. But what was, for example, the budget, or were you just operating based on volunteers?

**MADRIAGA:** *Yes, in fact when we recall when there were difficulties in the office, we'd always recall those days when there were no salaries. We thought we were better off then with somebody like that. You see, these people now who are there, I think*

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*there are only two or three who are the general ones, Mananpura, Irene, [Merla], Mention [Merla Ruiz] also. They will give the other names—I've forgotten them—and some other people from other towns.*

MAJEED: So really, having no budget and you were operating just with a team of volunteers, we find in similar cases in other parts of the world, volunteerism is really hard to sustain, and people have to go back to their regular jobs or they have to earn. But it seems—at least in the initial years, at least before salaries were paid—volunteerism was sustained for a while—at least in the core group. The other volunteers are church based but even in the core group. I was wondering where this motivation came from. How did you and others keep driving forward with really no money?

MADRIAGA: *I think you better ask Mananpura about that, by the grace of God she will tell you. I don't know how that works really. But they would always find means. I don't know where Mananpura has been getting the funding. You see, Mananpura is not from here, is not from Abra.*

MAJEED: I didn't know that.

MADRIAGA: *She is from [Indecipherable 00:48:56], but because she has an organization also by herself, she came to Abra and she stayed here. I think she fell in love with Abra, and she never went back to [Indecipherable]. You see, our background then was, I, as a student, I was also a student leader. I belonged to the Student Catholic Action Movement, if you heard about that. It was back in the '70s. So I think Mananpura picked me up from there because I was one of her students. We were students who would be leaders in our own schools. We would always come together.*

*Mananpura and I first started as teacher/student. I used to be under her in the field, in the theology department of the school. It so happened that time that the theology department was also in charge of the school publication. I was editor in chief of our school publication, and she was the adviser. So that is how long we had history together.*

*From there we carried on, so we know each other so well. So, she came here, fell in love with the place, and chose to stay here. Then every time Mananpura would go home to her province and to her brothers and sisters in Manila—and then the nephews and the brothers and sisters would say, "Here comes Pura again. You have no more money?" They would give her envelopes, the nephews and the nieces and the brothers, really. She has a very generous family. Her brother used to be a district engineer in the [Indecipherable] area, the [Indecipherable] area, a district engineer.*

*It was always like that when we went. When we'd have a seminar—there was this one time we received an award from [Indecipherable], and Cory gave us the award, and we were there, and the brothers and the sisters came to [Indecipherable] and they gave Manapura money.*

MAJEED: That's nice.

MADRIAGA: *Mananpura has a nephew in [Indecipherable], Emil. The father of Emil is the brother of Mananpura. He works for the national TV station.*

MAJEED: GMA.

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MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: One other question I had: I have read in some of the material that is available online that in the early years, NEDA [the National Economic and Development Authority] had either offered trainings or some kind of support in terms of community monitoring—sorry, in terms of project monitoring. I was curious if you could remember—I think it was part of Cory Aquino’s community development programs. I was curious as to what happened first. Did the decision to start CCAGG happen while the community development programs through the central government were also coming into being so you were monitoring projects at the same time? Or were you approached by NEDA or some of these agencies?

MADRIAGA: *I think it was something like that. It happened when they had projects and they were looking for agencies. They were looking for local bodies, organizations. I think—I don’t know if it was a deliberate act on our part or it just happened that we were there. So we—it was just like our services are needed by this. It was not really that deliberate. It just came because some people now would approach us and say, “Can you do this? Can you do that?” But really, it was the time of Cory that this all started. Especially on Cory’s peace initiatives, because it so happened that Abra—of course you know Abra has been NPA [New People’s Army] in the first term. There are a lot of NPAs here. Plus, it is a hotbed of insurgency.*

*I think that was also the reason that, during the time of [Indecipherable]—you’re familiar with [Indecipherable] used to be an SVD priest himself; he belonged to us. One of the reasons he went underground was the mining, logging activities in the province then. At that time, Cory and [Indecipherable] were talking together regarding the CPLA. You remember? The Cordillera People’s Liberation Army was once headed by [Indecipherable] during this time. Knowing [Indecipherable] coming from Abra was also one of the connections in the Cordillera.*

*Because Cory anyway made—that decade for peace or something which was of course initiated by the United Nations and Cory picked it up. The centerpiece of her administration then was the peace process and so on.*

MAJEED: So, if I understand what you said, it is not a deliberate act. You had already established yourself as CCAGG, and then you were approached by NEDA.

MADRIAGA: *Something like that.*

MAJEED: Would you agree?

MADRIAGA: *That is my impression. I am not too sure; you’d have to verify, validate that with Mananpura. They were—they were inside. Anyway, from here in school, as I said, we’d just come in to see if they needed our help someplace.*

MAJEED: Got it.

MADRIAGA: *Local governance is also one of those things we were involved in some years ago. In our school, we also offer public administration in the graduate school. That’s why we were also involved in training in a way; there were [Indecipherable] when Mananpura was still here. So, we use the facilities of the school.*

MAJEED: Great.

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**MADRIAGA:** *In fact, one of the areas for accreditation of colleges and universities, one of our strengths in the school is our community extension program because of the CCAGG. It is one of our strengths in the college.*

**MAJEED:** Can you tell me a little bit more about the community extension program?

**MADRIAGA:** *If a school decides to go through accreditation, voluntary accreditation, one of the areas that would be evaluated would be its community extension program. So, our strength in the community extension program is our involvement in the CCAGG because of the things we do: monitoring, public organizing, elections. It is always one of our strengths.*

*In the last accreditation that we had, the highest-scoring area was the community extension because of this.*

**MAJEED:** Thank you. You mentioned the peace process, and I wanted to ask you a little bit about that. I believe that CCAGG was also involved in terms of forming a bridge between the administration and the rebel groups. Can you tell me about CCAGG's involvement? Was it anticipated Did you want to get involved? How were you thrown into the process?

**MADRIAGA:** *I am not too sure if I can speak on that. Mananpura will be in a better position to answer that.*

**MAJEED:** OK.

**MADRIAGA:** *She would be the expert on that, although I have been sent to seminars regarding the peace process. In fact, when I made my dissertation, I took the topic on the contributions of women in Abra in peace development. That was my dissertation.*

**MAJEED:** That's very interesting.

**MADRIAGA:** *Women and peace. Through the CCAGG and the peace process, I even presented this work at City College of New York.*

**MAJEED:** You did? You were at City University of New York?

**MADRIAGA:** *Yes, I was there. I think that was 1999 or something.*

**MAJEED:** They have some good people there in terms of doing this kind of research.

**MADRIAGA:** *I think so.*

**MAJEED:** I had a few more questions. I don't know how we're doing on time. One of the things, we talked a lot about the early history. I wanted to focus a little more on the 1990s. So, there is the peace process that is ongoing, but it seems that CCAGG then branched into some other activities. Could you tell me why or how that happened, and why did you—why do you think CCAGG moved to focus away from road monitoring, or maybe it didn't—whatever your impressions are.

**MADRIAGA:** *I think in terms of—I don't know. You are familiar with the local government code of the Philippines?*

**MAJEED:** Yes.



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**MADRIAGA:** *I think it is one of the provisions of the code that for every project of the government, there has to be a local monitoring body involved. It has to be accredited—organized and accredited. It must have a track record. I think, at that time, CCAGG was the convenient organization to do that.*

**MAJEED:** When did that government code come about? Would you know the year?

**????:** *I will check.*

**MADRIAGA:** *It is embodied there; it is the law. You see even these people in government, especially the politicians, would always find a way to go around the law.*

**MAJEED:** So you were saying that CCAGG was the convenient option in terms of—

**MADRIAGA:** *Perhaps not only a convenient option, but the only option because we don't have any. There is no organized body; we can have other organized bodies like, for instance, the war veterans, the senior citizens, but these groups do not have this capability that we have. I think this is the reason, as I have been saying, CCAGG has been replicated in many places. A lot of people ask now, "Come give us a seminar on this." I think even the bishop asked us to go to [Indecipherable] to give seminars on this.*

**MAJEED:** When you said it has been replicated in many places, can you give me examples of where or who has replicated it?

**MADRIAGA:** *[Place indecipherable] you also ask Mananpura that. [PLACE Indecipherable], I think, even in the [PLACE Indecipherable]. Ask about specific places, but I know there have been a lot of invitations that we get from other provinces, from other dioceses.*

**MAJEED:** What is it about the CCAGG model or the way of working that you think is useful to others?

**MADRIAGA:** *I think, first, it would be on the volunteering side. I think that would be our strength because we started as volunteers. A lot of people's organizations should start from there. You don't enter into an institution or an agency like that having in mind that you get paid. I think that is the main strength of the CCAGG as an organization. It started from there. As I have said, we'd always review and go back to the person and say, "When we didn't have money, I think we were stronger then. When we did not have food to eat, I think our motivation was stronger then." Those are the memories we share.*

**MAJEED:** So, one you said would be the volunteering side. What else would you be training in or sharing with others?

**MADRIAGA:** *I think also that people can work for change even if they are not in the government. You see, there is that culture in the Filipino that we call debt of gratitude or indebtedness. For instance, say you're a politician who would give me work. Because you gave me work, I am indebted to you, so everything I do I would ask permission from you' I would tell you, I would ask you if what I am doing is right. So I think that is a negative factor.*

*Still, then again, as I said, it goes back to the cycle of poverty. It goes back to the vulnerability of the poor. You cannot make your own decisions. You will not have the confidence to speak up. You will not have the right to criticize.*



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MAJEED: So, we talked about some of the things CCAGG shares with others. What are some of the things you think, looking back, you could have done better? If you could go back or redo things over again, what would be some of the changes you might want to make?

MADRIAGA: *What would be the changes I would want to make?*

MAJEED: That is one of the questions we always ask of people we interview who have been involved in reform.

MADRIAGA: *I think that—I don't know. That we would have been with more people with convictions like ours. That we would have more people with expertise who would share our vision for change in Abra, making change. If we could have more people of influence not only from the church but perhaps also from the business sector or other professions who are not in any way connected with government. In Abra, because it is such a small place, everyone is connected, so they cannot. It is like their hands are tied because they owe their position to these persons.*

MAJEED: It is a kind of patronage culture as well, is that right?

MADRIAGA: *That's right. For instance, I don't think you can find a teacher outside Divine Word who can speak like I'm speaking now. I don't think you can look up any government employee who can speak like I'm speaking now. They would be afraid. Somehow they owe their position to that politician or to that government employee. Something like that.*

MAJEED: Right.

MADRIAGA: *When you get recommended to a certain position in government, you need the signature, the go signal of the congressman; you get the go-ahead of the governor or the mayor. They have a say for positions. I cannot; for instance, you go through a ranking system when you apply for a position. Let's say you are number one in the rank, but chances are if you do not belong to their party, you don't get the employment, because somebody, even the number two or three, would be the one to get the position.*

MAJEED: Not the first one.

MADRIAGA: *Because they would lobby—because it always happens.*

MAJEED: This has been wonderful. One of the things earlier that I should have asked, in the early years, when you were monitoring, did you receive any kind of training, or did you offer any kind of training?

MADRIAGA: *I think because these are our engineers, our professionals, initially I think they worked on their own. They went through the ropes of monitoring on their own until, I think, much, much later, when they already found that things were getting more complicated. Then they went for training.*

MAJEED: Who went?

MADRIAGA: *The people on the technical team like the engineers and so on. They had a lot of linkages. CCAGG is linked to a lot of organizations. Mananpura, again, will tell you more on that. On governance they are linked to LSG, Lasalle School of Governance, Ateneo School of Government. They are also linked to Transparency International.*

MAJEED: Right.

MADRIAGA: *I think with their linkages they also get expertise from these people.*

MAJEED: But that is more recent, right? That didn't happen in the beginning.

MADRIAGA: *No, no. They started on their own, with what they know. Irene is an engineer. So they got other engineers to work with her. They had [indecipherable], they had [Indecipherable], were all engineers.*

MAJEED: Those were most of my questions. Is there anything I've missed that is important that you would like to add, anything that would offer learning for others in different countries who would want to learn from the CCAGG experience?

MADRIAGA: *I would like to perhaps know how these other organizations would have resisted government. I don't know how to term it: government intervention or government harassment, politicians' pressure.*

MAJEED: So, you would like to know more about it.

MADRIAGA: *Yes, I would like to know how they did it.*

MAJEED: I will send you some case studies that we've done, and maybe that would be useful.

MADRIAGA: *Yes, how they did it.*

MAJEED: Is there anything you think did not work for CCAGG? Was there something you or others didn't do as well? There's always room for improvement, so we always ask.

MADRIAGA: *I would like to see perhaps a stronger base where we could involve, as I was saying, more people who could have more influence.*

MAJEED: Yes, you said that earlier.

MADRIAGA: *I think what we are doing now is not enough considering what we are up against. Especially because the government, with their people manning the government, like these politicians, they are becoming more aggressive in terms of their own objectives, their own motives. We should have, if we are a church-based organization, more support from the church, perhaps even more than it used to give in the early times. You see, the original people who worked with CCAGG are not here anymore. They have been assigned somewhere else.*

MAJEED: From the church?

MADRIAGA: *Yes, even some people who were with us have died. We need some people who really continue and have the right convictions. One of our worries is this: that Mananpura will be—perhaps will retire. Soon she will be retiring. Our main problem is, who will take her place. Will CCAGG be the same without her? That is one of the biggest problems. I don't know if Mananpura is aware of that. That is one of our big questions now. Will it still be the same without her? Who will take her place?*

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*You see, look at her. She has no family; she does not worry about her family. She does not worry about anything or anybody. Even from here. But we are from here; we have our families. We have to look at our children, our families. That is one of our big questions: who will take her place, and who from among the staff there, inside the CCAGG now, would be ready to take her place.*

MAJEED: Big shoes to fill.

MADRIAGA: *I don't know if somebody already asked her that question.*

MAJEED: I might.

MADRIAGA: *Would CCAGG be the same without her? Whether we like it or not, CCAGG is synonymous to [Indecipherable]. Not even one of our priests, not even one of them could take her place. I don't think so. Perhaps that will be a question you will ask her: "Have you trained someone to take your place? How would you envision CCAGG without you in the next 10 years?" Something like that.*

*I was even toying with this idea that if there was someone who would write the life of Mananpura, I would write it. I was just toying with that idea. Am I dying? I would not want her to ask me that.*

MAJEED: Is she thinking of retiring from CCAGG or we don't know. I can ask her.

MADRIAGA: *You ask her; that's a good question. Is there someone whom she has prepared to take her post, or will she just let it go to waste without her, I don't know. Who would be her likely heir? You can ask her.*

MAJEED: Now that there is a board in place and you are one of the board members, there would be a body that—Usually, how nonprofits work, there is a governance structure, and the board will also be able to weigh in in terms of who the next executive director or CEO will be in different organizations. I imagine, or would you agree, that the board will assume more responsibilities?

MADRIAGA: *That is what we are envisioning it to be because, you see, we just started it last year that we should come up with an organization like a board. It was just put up last year to come up with a board, last year or two years ago.*

MAJEED: I heard last year.

MADRIAGA: *Yes, last year. I have not seen yet a copy of the constitution in my house. I have not yet.*

MAJEED: Sure. That sustainability in terms of an organization is a big question for a lot of nonprofits; that is a valid concern and one that is very common. Great, I will find out more from her. Thank you for that. One last question if I still may. One of the things you mentioned early on was in terms of politics. You said the CCAGG people were willing to join you—or, sorry, the volunteers were willing to join CCAGG because they wanted to do something against the government and against the politician. I think some CCAGG members have joined politics or have run for office.

MADRIAGA: Yes.

MAJEED: All of you have worked for a while and kind of known the context. Has there ever been an inclination to put more people in government through politics to bring about a different kind of change?

MADRIAGA: *I haven't thought of that, but there are attempts also from political parties to get some of us to join them. I was offered twice in our place to run as vice mayor, but I turned it down because it would compromise first my work in CCAGG and my work here. I would not want to do that also. But there are some who do, I cannot speak for other people. [Indecipherable], I don't know if she is on the list. Do you have her on the list?*

MAJEED: Not yet, but we can add her.

MADRIAGA: *As a member of the CCAGG, she went into politics. She was elected vice mayor of Bangued, the capital town. We need more people like [Indecipherable] because her family is influential. She used to be the vice mayor of Bangued, one of the board members now of CCAGG but also one of the founding members of CCAGG. She used to be deputy supervisor, as a teacher. Her family is influential. She comes from a family of teachers. One of her brothers is a judge now in Manila. Just one example of someone from CCAGG who went into politics.*

*Of course you went to Irene already? So one original member of CCAGG who went into government.*

MAJEED: She is in the Office of the Mayor, right?

MADRIAGA: *Yes, but very few of us took that direction.*

MAJEED: You said the reason is that it would conflict with your work at CCAGG and here. Does it go against the core tenets of the organization itself? Was that deliberate?

MADRIAGA: *Yes, but that's personal to me. I don't know if it is the same reason, if they were offered something.*

MAJEED: Finally, last question. When you look back to 1986 and you see that this is what as volunteers you set out to do and you look back now, 27 years later, do you feel you have largely stuck to the goals or the visions of the organization as you envisioned it at the time?

MADRIAGA: *I think so, yes. Although the need then was so intense, so intense. You see, at that time, we were responding to a very concrete situation. That is why a lot of us responded. But you see, times and cultures change. There will not be a lot of people now who would have that—probably because people get used to things, and they just become complacent, and a feeling of helplessness will set in. The Filipino culture of [Indecipherable]: nothing will change anyway, whether I do this or do that. Nothing will matter. Things are the same anyway. So it is a feeling of helplessness. If I do this or do that it will still be the same anyway. People will just do the things they want to do. That is also one of the fears I have when we get into the situation where we feel we cannot do anything anyway, that we are not moving on, anyway.*

*As you said, sustainability will be a big issue, a valid concern for all of us.*

MAJEED: Yes. Thank you so much. This has been wonderful, one of our more reflective and detailed interviews.