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PAGKAKALOOP

THE FILIPINO CONCEPT & PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY

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THE WINDS OF CHANGE CAN NEVER BE STOPPED; THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE ONGOING ACTIONS, WHETHER BOLD AND RADICAL OR JUST QUIET PAINSTAKING EFFORTS DEPENDING ON VARIED CONTEXTS AND SCENARIOS. CHANGEMAKERS AND CHANGE AGENTS WILL NOT GROW TIRED AND WEARY; FELLOW KINDRED SPIRITS WILL SUPPORT THEM. THE PASSION FOR TRANSFORMATION WILL REMAIN KINDLED IN THEIR HEARTS AND DRIVE THE MOVEMENT FORWARD.

WORDS

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Joined together, the examples of failed development efforts, the closing civil society space, and the promise of locally-led development contribute to renewed attention toward community philanthropy (Doan, 2019).

In 2016 and much earlier than twenty years ago, a quiet revolution occurred in communities worldwide outside the machinery and beyond the radar of big development (Hodgson, 2016). A new set of organizations – community foundations, women’s funds, environmental funds, and other grassroots grantmakers – has emerged in countries as diverse as Romania, Zimbabwe, Vietnam, and Mexico. They have been shaped by local context and culture and by individuals often frustrated by the failures of traditional development aid, anxious about the sense of alienation and disenchantment in their communities, and inspired by the belief that without local resources, local leadership and local buy-in development projects will continue to land like fireworks – to flash spectacularly and then die (Hodgson, 2016).

The Tewa Experience in Nepal built up a network of over 9,500 Nepali donors, of whom the majority were ordinary women themselves who have benefitted from Tewa’s grants in the past and want to give back. Despite many international donors who wished to support Tewa with their staff costs and building their offices, particularly their grantmaking, they use the principle of raising resources locally for said purpose. With two decades of working with local women’s groups throughout the country, they can respond immediately to hazards turning into a disaster in their country, such as the 2015 earthquake. They leveraged their networks to identify and reach those worst affected with money. They needed emergency supplies while serving

as touch points for the outpouring of help from local and international sources.

Such unprecedented growth in the community philanthropy field was marked by the first Global Summit on Community Philanthropy in Johannesburg, South Africa. #ShiftThePower became the rallying cry of the stakeholders that participated in the summit.

Community philanthropy (CP) became a form of, and a force for, locally driven development that strengthens community capacity and voice, builds trust, and, most importantly, taps into and builds on local resources pooled together to build and sustain a strong community (GFCF). From the pioneer of community philanthropy, Jenny Hodgson, CP, as practiced by organizations today, has its roots in civil society and social justice movements which can disrupt and democratize the system and create an alternative to development as we know it. Following the maxim of John Ruskin, ‘When we build, let us think we build forever which, in essence, is the concept of durable development’.

The CP concept is familiar in the country as Filipinos have the unique and innate quality of giving. Many Filipino families have grown to a practice of families from among the baby boomers of treating Sundays either on a weekly or monthly basis whenever families have the opportunity to share what they have – they would prepare and cook special food on a Sunday for their families and share some with neighbors that are close to the family neighborhoods. During giving, it is a great opportunity to chat with neighbors about how they have been for the last week or a few days.

The Filipino word ‘pagkakaloob’ is the concept of giving in the Filipino culture with rich meaning and practice. By sharing what you have, there is an intrinsic element of giving

oneself too. Pagkakaloob is giving one's time, talent, and treasure to people in need or for a good cause. Sometimes, it can go as far as giving oneself for others as self-sacrifice akin to Christians or activists. This is a powerful value and culture that when rekindled among Filipinos into action can make much difference in social and political life today.

PAGKAKALOOB: THE FILIPINO CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY

Consciously and unconsciously, the pagkakaloob and pagbabahagi are innate positive attitudes and attributes of many Filipinos nationwide. The word captures the essence and embodiment of the community philanthropy concept in the context of Filipino culture and as a people. Going back to the essence and root of pagkakaloob, it is defined as giving or granting what the person has in terms of finances, non-financial aspects such as time, knowledge, skills, connection, and networks for the good of neighbors, groups, advocacies, and agenda for the common good.

Further enriching this cultural fabric, the promotion of mutual aid or 'damayan', collective action 'bayanihan', and resource sharing 'ambagan' by various organizations plays a crucial role in building self-reliant communities. These concepts are not just traditional practices but are pivotal in creating a sustainable environment where initiatives can thrive independently.

The 'loob', the root word of pagkakaloob together with *kapwa* are the two pillars of Filipino virtue ethics. 'Pagkakaloob' is not only the outward action of giving but has an embedded internal element of the self and the positive attributes of an individual.

Filipino scholars such as Dionisio Miranda were aware of the lack of rationality in *loob*, and Miranda has tried to insert reason by analyzing *loob* into its constituent parts and then positing Filipino concepts that could account for rationality. He divided the loob into the following three parts:

- Cognitive/Intellectual element
- Volitive/Will element
- Emotional/Pathic element

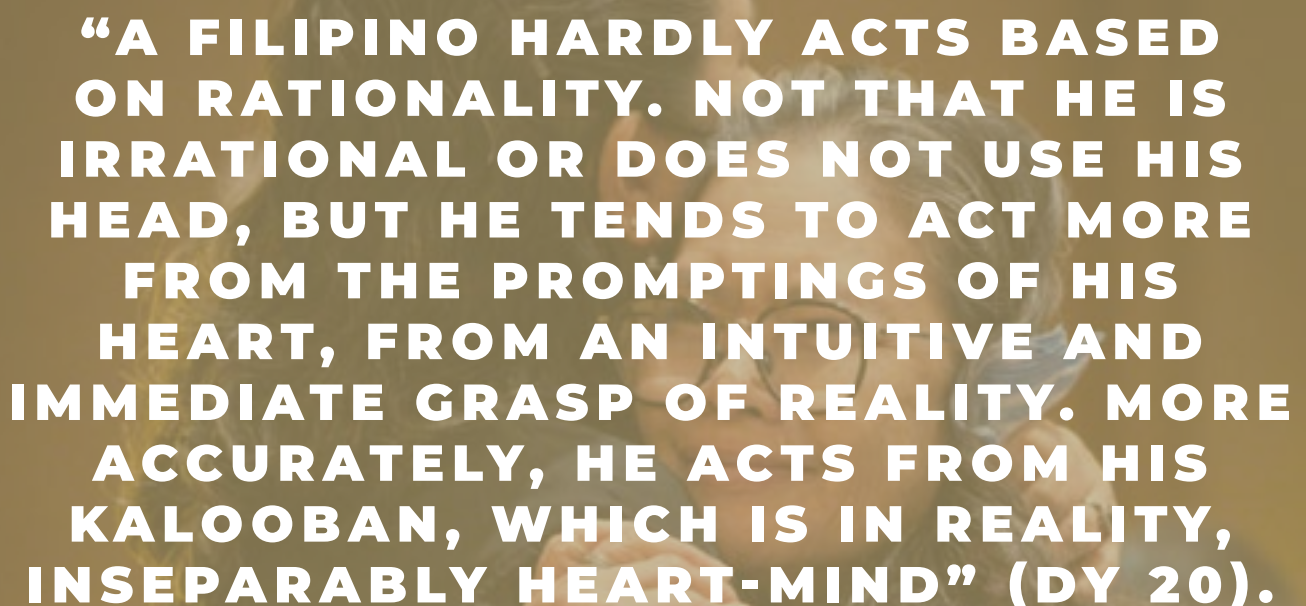
"A Filipino hardly acts based on rationality. Not that he is irrational or does not use his head, but he tends to act more from the promptings of his heart, from an intuitive and immediate grasp of reality. More accurately, he acts from his kalooban, which is in reality, inseparably heart-mind (Dy 1994)."

'Loob' encloses an inner world...built up of the operations of malay at isip or consciousness and thought, dama at bait or feeling and common sense, ugali at kalooban or personality and will (Miranda 68). In this sense, loob can be called a 'holistic will'.

Reyes asserts that the Filipino language has an overwhelming number of words and terms that cover many shades of relating with others, most of them difficult to translate into English like 'pagmamalasakit', 'pakikiramay', 'pakikisalamuha', among others. This makes sense because the will, according to Aquinas is that power which concerns kapwa. If loob is a 'holistic will' then that means it contains all the other human faculties for the main purpose of establishing and preserving relationships with kapwa.

'Pagkakaloob', with its emphasis on the act of giving and sharing as a relational practice, speaks to the heart of community philanthropy. It's a term that recognizes the interconnectedness of individuals within a community and highlights the act of generosity. This inner essence, or 'loob' in Filipino culture, is seen as a source of guidance and strength (Renta, 2023). Kaloob, which means gift, grant, or talent, is a reminder that everyone in the community has something to offer and share.

'Kagandahang loob' is another term that is commonly used in Filipino culture. It refers to having a good and generous heart or a disposition inclined towards doing good. It is often associated with acts of kindness, compassion, and selflessness. Someone who has 'kagandahang loob' is



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seen as motivated by a desire to help others, rather than personal gain, which is evident in most communities where ACSF awardees operate. This trait is highly valued in Filipino culture and is often seen as a reflection of one's inner nature or 'loob'. Using the term pagkakaloob to describe community philanthropy is not only culturally appropriate but also aligns with the values and principles that underpin this practice in the Philippines.

In understanding the Filipino indigenous culture, one must recognize that its strength lies in the richness of its communal values, where social harmony, mutual respect, and collective purpose are prioritized. This culture of spirit is reflected in De Leon's Creative Living Presence, where he emphasizes the importance of communal values and the interconnectedness of individuals in shaping the Filipino identity (2017):

"In Philippine culture, there is an underlying belief in the psychic unity of humanity. Individual existence is only apparent and relative. For we all exist within a cosmic matrix of being at the deepest center of which is a creative living principle or energetic process. All human beings—and in a different way even animals, plants and minerals—share this innermost sacred core. A paradox arises. In every person is a divine essence that seeks fulfillment in imaginative, creative endeavors. At the same time, the interdependence implied by a shared matrix of being seeks affirmation in a celebration of togetherness."

The quote serves as a powerful reminder of our inherent potential as human beings to lead a life filled with purpose and meaning. The creative living presence is a force within us, waiting to be unleashed. Despite the distractions and challenges of modern life, it remains a constant and essential part of who we are. The 'kapwa' in us on the personal level considers the welfare and well-being of those whose lives we touch and will be more considerate of the effects of our actions on them.

On a community level, the 'kapwa' in us will be concerned about what is happening in the immediate environment and will respond in whatever way is within reach to help the community become better and safer. On a wider and social level, the 'kapwa' in us will not tolerate disrespect of human rights; and will value each human life. It will not disrespect women or dispossess minorities. Neither will it endanger human life, nature, and our planet by abusing and misusing

our resources in the search for greater profit, ensuring that life in our world will be sustainable for generations to come. It will reject all forms of injustice and discrimination (De Guia, 2005).

This is the universal value of a shared identity expressed in Filipino and other cultures because it is rooted in common humanity. Within us, a powerful force is enshrined that can help build a culture of change and peace.

The 'pagkakaloob' that embeds kapwa has rich meaning, purpose, and value.

The time is ripe to rekindle and reawaken this stifled longing from centuries of colonial influence, the drive to pursue change in the here and now, filled with a deep sense of community, cooperation, and solidarity.

The embodiment and meaning of this word pagkakaloob speak of the following concepts:

- Tapping the human heart and human spirit to connect as fellow human beings for humanity and change
- Innate longing to be one, connected, and in solidarity
- Innate aspiration for change for humanity's sake and future generations
- Innate desire to give and share whatever they have for kindness and support; for love

There is a shared identity in 'pagkakaloob' as it embeds kapwa, including the nurturing relationship integral in it, the care, compassion, loving attitude, and kind support for the growth and development of one another.

According to Virgilo Enriquez, 'kapwa' is defined as shared identity: *The other person is also yourself* (de Leon, 2017). Thus, relationships are generally given more importance than economic power by Filipinos. The concept of a shared identity, where *"the other person is also yourself,"* is said to be the core of Filipino psychology. It is humaneness at the highest level. It implies a unique moral obligation to treat one another as equal fellow human beings. Treat the other person as you treat yourself because the other person is also yourself. This Filipino core idea could be the basis of

the Golden Rule in the world's great religions. Kapwa is an awareness of the rootedness of each of us in the *one divine essence within*.

The locally and community-led development advocates in the Philippines can use pagkakaloob to capture the spirit, the essence of the community driving force that strengthens community capacity and voice, builds trust, and most essential taps into and build on the local resources pooled together to sustain a solid, strong community.

This whole process of development of individuals is translated into organizations; the individual transformation radiates into the organizations where they belong, and when these organizations are purposive, it is impacted in the communities that are in the process of movement building for the desired change in society.

CP EVIDENCE FROM AMONG CDP'S PARTNERS

As CDP journey with the Abot-Kamay Community Solidarity Fund Awardees, their community-led actions exemplify the Filipino core values embedded in them as part of the culture and as a people. Based on sharing during monitoring visits and as captured in their reports, the impetus of community philanthropy is very much present and evident in many if not most partner stakeholders.

Partners' articulation of more collective indicators is unique and of paramount significance, which also denotes Filipino core values. Indicators that exemplify community-led development and empowerment are the following:

Community solidarity: this indicator theme, also embeds the influencing power of the community; and community participation including commitment. As shared by partner organizations, community participation, and commitment are expressed in the co-ownership of the problem and solutions to community problems. The ownership leads to involvement and self-sustainability which results in mobilization of people and resources for the betterment of the community. The solidarity established in communities gave birth to social cohesion that allows for continued progress and stability of societies. The Filipino core values emulated in this indicator are pakikipagkapwa (companionship); mapanglahok (involved); inclusivity; pagkakaisa (unity) and pakikiisa (solidarity).

Shift the power: This indicator theme demonstrates how communities take charge in reporting, coordinating, monitoring, etc. This also covers community empowerment and negotiation with donors which could be in the form of saying no when the thing is not feasible (this depends on the community's readiness) and when to say yes which exhibits the power of the purse and power relations. This is the whole range of donor engagement. The influencing power of the community may be measured by how their voices are heard and given weight in policy formulation, the community's involvement in policymaking, and institutional engagement with partners for policy changes and formulation. The Filipino core values demonstrated in this are being involved and inclusivity.

Sustainable development: This thematic indicator exhibits how a community sustains itself by balancing its ecological footprint, economic growth, and the community's self-reliance and resourcefulness in meeting basic needs. The Filipino core value here is valuing life.

Commitment: Commitment as a thematic indicator could be captured at two levels – at the individual level, particularly among the organizers of the organizations, and the other level at the organizational level. At the community organizing level in which the organizers are undertaking the assignment, this entails the whole process of trust building, network formation, and influencing towards community building and ensuring a fully functioning communications system and feedbacking. At the organizational level, it is the solid conviction of the organization's leadership alongside its membership to see through the development process and progress of the organization toward its goal and aspiration.

With this, 'pagkakaloob' in the Philippines is bound to spark a prairie fire, and every day, each organization sparks in a community, freeing and spreading the flames of change. The flames of change ignite the pagkakaloob movement in the whole country and radiate it to the region and the world.

CONTRIBUTING TO EMERGING ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS

This article drew inspiration from Michael Edwards' narrative sharing the experience of Paul Higgins on paying forward, about funding for social change. Through the pay-it-forward fundraising and 'creative upcycling to re-use resources, Higgins' experience in his café made it the center for the community to enable building connections through money instead of division which is a radical reversal of the inequalities lying at the heart of philanthropy, foreign aid, and government contracting.

Interestingly, if and when expanded and adapted in many ways, the approach as practiced could help shift the power away from wealthy donors and bureaucrats in funding bodies and will make the whole system healthier and more democratic. A democratic funding system is one where everyone has been bequeathed the power of equal giving. But self-funding may require a great mass of society to have sufficient resources to contribute to the common good.

Creativity is essential to transform the diminishing ecosystems present today. Creativity addresses the challenges in transforming social relations, politics, and economics and prioritizes non-dominant approaches toward building a pathway for an emergent or alternative system. This is different from the dominant pathway of concentrated funding via intermediaries. The pay-it-forward model could trigger a momentum of change just like the experience of Higgins in his café and the experience of Tewa in Nepal. It is worth trying and investing in terms of time, treasure, and effort in the Philippines. Owning the funding system and support for social change will deliver the change we want to see. It is paying forward coming to life in multitudes.

The 'pagkakaloob' efforts and initiatives will contribute to the emerging alternative system, through community-led actions and advocacy agenda at varying levels of engagement and platforms which are harnessing their inherent strengths and capacities and influencing fellow organizations and communities to claim and reclaim power for their goals and aspirations. They will test the pay-it-forward approach and model to broaden the number of actors practicing pagkakaloob by shifting the power.



LINKING PAGKAKALOOB WITH SHIFTING THE POWER

At the core of 'pagkakaloob' is the heart and essence of shifting the power, ready to unleash the assets, strengths, and capacities for rights claiming and power shifting. The transformative character of giving through 'pagkakaloob' creates the dynamic development of sharing oneself and what s/he has for the greater good and setting an example and model for fellow citizens to follow suit. This when unleashed becomes the impetus of pay-it-forward for a momentum of a movement of change in the society and in the whole ecosystem where it operates.

It is taking power into your hands to make change for the better of one's community and society. It is choosing to access and fundraise resources within the means and capacity of stakeholders and making that as leverage for exploring broader and more significant resources for the betterment of the community and society. Cooperation and collaboration have become the norm versus competing for resources that are getting increasingly scarce. Transparency and accountability are naturally practiced for responsibility and culpability for the initiatives and changes explored and implemented for emergent power to grow and thrive.

The new power, being a new thing for stakeholders would take work; it will constantly be challenged with the default of reverting to old ways of working and doing things. But communities and affected people need to be steadfast and resistant to the difficulties and challenges in the process. Emergent power and practice would incessantly be shaken, questioned, and even declared inappropriate and unsuitable. But the changemakers need to remain persistent amidst such situations and challenges. In due course, the truth and the power of the people come to fruition. The old saying provides relevance to this write-up: 'Let a hundred flowers bloom and a thousand schools of thought contend.'

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