

# **The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers**

**Philippines**

**Yvonne E. Keairns, PhD**



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by Yvonne Keairns, PhD

Quaker United Nations Office  
777 UN Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
tel: 212.682.2745  
fax: 212-983-0034  
qunony@afsc.org  
www.quno.org

Quaker United Nations Office  
13 avenue du Mervelet  
CH 1209 Geneva  
tel: +41 22 748 4800  
fax: +41 22 748 4819  
www.quno.org

Cover photograph note: the girls in the picture are not in any armed group.

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*“If only the enemy would listen, it would have been wonderful, and the firing would stop and we would listen to each other, we would just talk and try not to use guns. I wish we could end all this violence and we could develop our country.”*

Child Soldier, Philippines

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## 1. SUMMARY

“... for far too long, the use of child soldiers has been seen as merely regrettable. We are here to ensure it is recognized as intolerable.” This document provides an opportunity to hear the voices of girl soldiers in the Philippines and to more fully understand why this vision by the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in May 2002, commands our attention.

This report on the voices of girl child soldiers in the Philippines is part of a larger study that carried out in-depth interviews with 23 girl soldiers from four different conflict areas around the world. The voices of these girls provide important insights into becoming a child soldier, the experience of a child soldier and their view of the future. Among the key conclusions were the messages that

- Becoming a child soldier is very dependent on a combination of the local environment and the personal circumstances surrounding the girl’s life.
- Living in poverty was important in girls joining a movement or being abducted.
- The girls are not searching for ways to retaliate and bring harm to those who had used and misused them. They were looking for ways to make a contribution, to do something meaningful and productive with their lives and to make up for the harm they have delivered upon others.

In order to participate in the study the girl soldier must have served as a soldier before reaching the age of 18 years and be out of the conflict for less than two years. Given the in-depth interview methodology, the objective was to obtain interviews

from four to six girls from each conflict area. The girls were selected by the country team based on their accessibility, willingness to be interviewed and the team’s ability to assure confidentiality and provide for their safety. Twenty-two girls met the criteria for this study. There were five girls from Angola, six girls from Colombia, five girls from the Philippines and six girls from Sri Lanka. A seventh girl was included from Sri Lanka. The girl soldiers were from the same armed movement within each country. This is not to say that there were not other armed movements or government armies that used child soldiers.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. The transcribed interviews use fictitious names for the girls in order to maintain confidentiality and safety for the girls. Other identifying information was changed to protect the girls interviewed. Common themes from each of the 23 interviews were identified, articulated and synthesized. The common themes served as the basis for developing conclusions and recommendations. Nine themes were selected and the report is structured around these themes. The themes are grouped into three areas:

- Common characteristics of who they are and their experiences:
  - family relationships
  - festivals and religion
  - education
  - play
- Their evolution and journey as a child soldier:
  - reason for joining
  - training and life as a child soldier
  - reconsideration of the decision

- A view of who they are and how they view the future:
  - sense of self
  - time and the future

Key risk factors in the choice to become a child soldier were identified from the voices of the girls. Two of the important risks beyond the central risk of inhabiting a combat zone are being poor and disadvantaged and being separated from their family. These risks were present for the girls studied and played an important role in their becoming a child soldier.

While there are common themes, it is important to know that child soldiers cannot be treated as all having the same characteristics – even in the same conflict area. The voices of these girls show their horrific memories and angry feelings but they also show their desire to care for others and to do something with their life. Key recommendations on demobilization from the girl’s messages include:

- Listen to the girl and her experience and needs – provide basic needs and safe forums for discussion when she needs help.
- Work to locate some member of her family or significant adult to bring about some level of reconciliation.
- Provide new experiences that will change her identity from soldier – to reclaim who she is and to regain faith in her decision-making ability.
- Provide opportunities for education and training – the girls recognized the value of education and job skills.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Violence against children is unacceptable. Addressing this problem requires the work of governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and individual men and women. It also requires that we listen to the voices of child soldiers to understand their story. This is an important aspect of our work on prevention, demobilization and reintegration. This study is an effort in listening to the voices of girl

soldiers from four countries – Sri Lanka, Angola, Colombia and the Philippines. This report represents the voices of girl soldiers in the Philippines.

February 12, 2002 represents a major event in the efforts to end the use of child soldiers. On this day the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force. The enforcement of this international treaty will be important in preventing children from becoming child soldiers and living through the horrific experiences described by the girls in this study. Under the Optional Protocol governments are charged with ensuring the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers as well as protecting and not punishing them. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated on February 12, 2002: “We are urging all governments and armed groups to end the military recruitment of children under 18 and to release those children already in service. There can be no excuse for arming children to fight adult wars.”

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in his address before the UN Special Session on Children, May 2002, stated that “the deployment of child soldiers is a despicable and damaging practice that must end.” He went on to say, “those who practice this form of child abuse must be held accountable.” In addition, he stated that “for far too long, the use of child soldiers has been seen as merely regrettable. We are here to ensure it is recognized as intolerable.”

## 3. WHY LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF THE GIRL SOLDIER?

There are many documents that have been and are being developed to address the concern of violence against children. These are necessary actions to gain understanding and agreement among international parties to prevent the use of children as soldiers and for rehabilitation. The characteristics of many of these actions are to call for “providing resources” or “establishing mechanisms to facilitate activities for children” or “ensuring provisions for

demobilization and reintegration are spelled out.” To accomplish these objectives, we must understand what resources to provide, what activities will meet the child’s need, or what provisions need to be spelled out. We can rely on theories, typically Western concepts of treatment, and we can also listen to the child and try to gain an understanding of what may be most effective in meeting their needs.

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*Child soldiers cannot be treated as all having the same characteristics – even in the same conflict area.*

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It has often been the case that child soldiers have been thought of as a common category of children who would possess the same characteristics and needs. The unique individual features and characteristics of the children were often overlooked or ignored. There was a time when the prevailing opinion was that all child soldiers were boys. We now know that child soldiers include girls as well as boys and that demobilization and reintegration programs must take into account the unique needs of girls.

The fundamental needs of girls who have been child soldiers have not been very well documented, understood and addressed. It has only been recently recognized that girls are used in many different ways by the armed groups. Their demobilization and reintegration needs are directly related to the specific ways that they were used.

For example, it has been assumed that most if not all girl soldiers were raped and sexually abused by the armed groups of which they were a part. This study reveals that not all armed groups raped the girls. The stated position of some of the armed groups forbid sexually intimate relationships between men and women without the consent of the woman and the approval of a commander to enter into a relationship. In some armed groups contraception shots were required and abortions performed even when the girl opposed this action. In all the armed groups there were power differentials

between the men and the young girls and many of the girls agreed to a sexually intimate relationship when they recognized it brought with it benefits such as more food, better living conditions, opportunities to ride rather than walk long distances and other privileges. None of the girls talked about receiving information to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to gain culturally salient information from which to construct demobilization and reintegration programs and develop prevention strategies for girl child soldiers. It has been designed and is dedicated to capturing the voice of the girl child soldier and allows her voice to be heard.

There is limited data on the actual experience, of being a child soldier, as it is lived by the girl child. A qualitative format for information gathering has been utilized based on in-depth descriptions by girl child soldiers who have lived through the experience.

It was concluded that a self- or interviewer-administered quantitative survey with response categories would not get at the information stipulated by the core question posed by this study: What was the lived experience of the girl soldier? The objective is to hear their voice and gain the ideas and thoughts that emerge from the girls being interviewed. This is accomplished in this research through an open-ended interview process. Guba and Lincoln (94) suggest that the dialogue process allows for the emergence and growth of ideas from the interaction between people and is critical to the understanding and information-gathering process.

As was described above, and given the specific gender/cultural nature of the information desired, new material is likely to emerge during interviews. The need for flexibility is critically important to capture emergent information and ideas (Patton 90), although the core question will remain the “spine” of the study (Janesick 94). Theoretical framework for the project lies within phenomenological and ethnographic constructs (Patton 90).

The in-depth interview methodology used in this study is based on the work of Irving Seidman in his book, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (98). This interviewing method will allow new thoughts and information to emerge during interviews. There is an opportunity for important information to be presented that may not have been in direct response to a question. The broad in-depth questions will move from general to specific and from less intrusive to more intrusive. The sample is small and therefore the desire for in-depth information is considerable

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE GIRL SOLDIERS

In order to participate in this study the girl soldier must have served as a soldier before reaching the age of 18 years and been out of the conflict for two years or less.

## AFFIRMATION OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR GIRL SOLDIERS

An affirmation of Informed Consent for Interviewee's form (Appendix I) was designed that was signed by each girl prior to the first interview. The form was presented and carefully reviewed by the interviewer with each girl so that the interviewer was convinced the girl knew what she was being asked to do. When the girl's reading ability did not reach the threshold of the document the form was read and carefully explained to her. The girl was given the choice of not participating or of not having the interviews tape recorded but written.

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

This methodology involved conducting three in-depth interviews with each girl soldier.

The interviews were scheduled to last for not more than two hours. The interviews were to be held from three to seven days apart to allow for a period of reflection between each interview. In some circumstances the length of the interview or the interval between the interviews had to be altered depending on the availability of the girl and issues of safety. If at any time the interviewer observed that the girl was experiencing too much discomfort recalling or reflecting on painful experiences the

interview was stopped. The girl, as indicated in her informed consent, could stop the interview at any time for any reason.

In the first interview the girl was asked to talk about her life prior to becoming a soldier. The interviewer asked her to describe her early childhood. The child's description might include memories of her village, parents, brothers and sisters, extended family, festivals, religion, school and activities enjoyed as a child. This enabled the researcher to have a broader sense of the context of the girl's life and history prior to becoming a soldier.

The second interview focused on the girl's life as a child soldier. This is the area where there is limited information. The girl's response might include a description of what led up to her entrance into the armed movement, was she abducted, gang -pressed or did she "volunteer"? If she joined "voluntarily," how much pressure was she under from friends and significant others in her life to join? She also described her days in the movement in detail, from early morning until late at night or beyond, what she was asked to do, what she was forced to do and the consequences of not being compliant.

The third interview focused on how she saw herself moving into the future. Her response may include seeing herself as being without a future or without meaningful options, guilt feelings about what she had been forced to do in order to survive, conflicted feelings about wanting to return to the movement, wanting to enroll in school or returning home to live with family. It might also include her perceptions of what she believed she needed to move forward and reconstruct her life. She may also have reflected on the meaning of her experience as a child soldier.

## SELECTING THE INTERVIEW TEAM

A project team was developed in each country. The team leader had been identified through advisory board contacts or contacts from non-governmental organization with experience in the countries where the research was going to be conducted.

Each team consisted of a team leader who coordinated the project. At least two women were selected by the team leader to conduct the interviews. All the

girls interviewed were selected and contacted by the country team. The interviews were conducted in the girl's native language. Translators were utilized when necessary when transcribing the data. An anthropologist type person was available after the interviews were transcribed to provide clarity and alert the researcher to particular cultural nuances present in the data. Counselors were identified by the team leader in the event the girl found the material she was recalling or describing too emotionally disturbing and a referral could be made.

## PREPARING THE INTERVIEW TEAM

A training/dialogue session was instituted in each country with each team prior to the collection of data. The training/dialogue always involved a review of essential documents that included Ethical Guidelines for interviewers (Appendix II), Interviewer Actions and Responsibilities (Appendix III) and sections of the American Psychological Association code of Ethics (Appendix IV), The Affirmation of Informed Consent for Interviewee's (Appendix I) and Team Leader Action and Responsibilities (Appendix V). The team was versed in the interview method as outlined in the book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. The country team entered into dialogue with the trainer and the research method was adapted in ways that would work most effectively in each country. Length of time between interviews had to be altered in some countries because of difficulties posed by transportation in reaching the girls and issues of safety and confidentiality.

The training/dialogue (Appendix VI), included a description of the research, the value of qualitative studies, how to conduct interviews, working as a team, interviewing process, eliciting information, debriefing for the interviewee and the interviewer, listening skills and training in the use of the tape recorder and the laptop computer.

The training/dialogue also included role plays (Appendix VII). Dialogue and instruction also focused on when and how to make referrals, securing the room where the interviews would take place and providing a quiet, comfortable, safe, private space in which to conduct the interviews. Ways of establishing trust and establishing rapport was also

a significant part of the training/dialogue.

Lori Heninger, Co-Director of the Quaker United Nations Office in New York, trained in the research method, traveled to each country to conduct the training/dialogue. The training/dialogue took from three to five days and was held in a location, within the country, designated by the team leader. A training agenda was designed by the head researcher and the trainer that met the needs of each country while maintaining the integrity of the research method.

The research method was adapted in each country in dialogue with the country team. This dialogue covered all aspects of the research and allowed for each country team's perspective to be taken into account and integrated into the dialogue/training.

The country team instituted the interviewing in a timely manner. The head researcher remained available by e-mail with the team leader in each country. Once the interviews were completed and translated they were sent to the head researcher for analysis.

## EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

After the interviews were completed each girl received a gift as a way for us to say thank you. She was not told of this gift at the beginning of the interview so it could not be experienced as a bribe or some form of manipulation. The girl was asked after the last interview by the interviewer or the team leader what she would like to receive. In some instances the country team established educational funds for the girls rather than an individual gift.

## 5. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

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In order to comprehend the significance of the interview material, as it was given by each subject, the following steps were taken in a sequential fashion to analyze the data of all the girl soldiers from the four countries. This report documents the data from the Philippines.

The process began with reading and rereading the interview material in order to appreciate, hear and accept what each girl described and revealed about

her experiences as a child soldier. Her experience as child soldier was then viewed within the broader context of her life. That is to say, it was viewed from where she had been, who she saw herself to be in the present and how she envisioned herself moving toward the future. The third reading of the data included continued intense listening, observing patterns and designating and marking units of meaning that were present within the descriptive material.

The units of meaning emerged from the answers to a series of broad questions posed by the interviewer. For example, the interviewer may have asked the question, “Could you tell me about your family or could you tell me about your life as a young child before you became a soldier?” The girl’s responses to these questions may have included references to siblings, a school event, games enjoyed as children, etc. The units of meaning were marked in each of the interviews. The units of meaning from all of the interviews were then identified as significant themes. The significant themes were not independent or isolated from one another. They emerged and presented as interrelated significant themes.

Once the themes were established the information each girl soldier gave in her interview on that particular theme were brought together to establish a composite of information on each significant theme. A summary statement was written to capture the essence of each significant theme in each of the four countries.

In some instances the themes overlapped. Information on one theme may have been so inter-related with another theme that they could not be separated. When this situation presented itself the information was included under both themes.

Conclusions were drawn based upon the composite of information, as given by the girl soldiers, on each of the significant themes for each country. Recommendations based on the conclusions were developed for the significant themes for each country in an effort to address, clarify and/or respond to what the girl soldier told us she needed, i.e., revealed in her interview.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. A person knowledgeable about the local culture reviewed the interviews to provide

perspective on aspects of the culture that would not be clear from the message as transcribed. The transcribed interviews use fictitious names for the girls in order to maintain confidentiality and safety for the girls. Other identifying information was changed to protect the girls interviewed.

## 6. WHAT WERE THE IMPORTANT THEMES?

The common themes from each set of interviews were identified, articulated, synthesized and elaborated upon in order to understand the experience of the girl soldier. The articulated themes then served as the criteria for recommendations made for reintegration and demobilization programs. The program recommendations are based on the specific and unique information from this specific population of girl soldiers.

Nine themes were selected based on analyzing the data from all four countries. These themes can be grouped into three areas:

- Common characteristics of who they are and their experiences:
  - family relationships
  - festivals and religion
  - education
  - play
- Their evolution and journey as a child soldier:
  - reason for joining
  - training and life as a child soldier
  - reconsideration of the decision
- A view of who they are and how they view the future:
  - sense of self
  - time and the future

## **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GIRL CHILD SOLDIER IN THE PHILIPPINES**

A representative day in the life of a girl child soldier in the Philippines is constructed based on the interviews with the girls in the Philippines. The construction of a day in the life is a composite taken from the descriptions of the training, duties and daily activities taken from all the interviews from the Philippines.

The training offered each girl soldier varied. Some said this training lasted just one week. Others felt the military training lasted approximately three months. The training involved military training and political. The military training involved physical conditioning in the early morning, usually before breakfast. Some of the girls were taught how to use a transistor type radio for communicating with their comrades. It also involved learning how to use a gun and how to avoid being shot at by the enemy. This was practiced. Their own comrades shot at the girls as they practiced trying to escape from the enemy should there be an attack.

The political training appears to be more systematic. All the girls had to study i.e., be educated in the philosophy of the movement before they were given tasks and sent out to work directly with the masses. Once trained in the philosophy of the movement they were placed in leadership roles, depending on their ability, in regards to organizing and teaching the masses. From their descriptions it appears as though they were used for carrying out all of the propaganda and indoctrination sessions as well as assisting the masses with many tasks, such as household chores and farming. The masses in turn took care of them by giving them food, taking care of them when they were sick and hiding them from government troops.

Regularly scheduled criticism groups were held that included the girls and their leaders. In these groups criticism was freely offered against one another and dialogues held about ways people behaved. These groups also involved and invited self-criticism. One measured their life against how they lived out the philosophy and teachings of the movement. The girls for the most part saw these criticism group times as times for self-reflection. They were not afraid of others' criticism of them and defended or admitted mistakes and often were able to maintain an objective stance in relation to their own self. Problems and issues were worked out in group sessions. Everyone had the right to speak.

4:00 to 5:00 a.m.            Morning wake-up. When not in training the standard operating procedure, in the morning, was to be ready to leave on very short notice. They had to be ready to go if the enemy was reported to be near.

5:00 a.m.                    Exercise and physical conditioning

6:00 a.m.                    Breakfast

7:00 a.m.                    Gather and plan for meeting with the masses

In the late morning they were sent into the villages or countryside, in small groups of three to five people and met with the masses.

Their assignment was to discuss with them how to solve their problems. Many of their animals had been killed and their plants had been cut and destroyed by other warring groups. The girls' task was to help them find ways to recover from these losses.

(continued on next page)

## **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GIRL CHILD SOLDIER IN THE PHILIPPINES** (continued)

They also joined the masses in helping with farming and household work. They organized the masses for discussions and education sessions. Organizing the youth was very important. They were forced to politicize the masses. “We were there to educate them in the ways of the movement and to convert them.” Public speeches were made by the girls to rally support among the masses. Criticism groups were held at different times of the day but usually later in the day or some time after the main activities.

5:00 p.m.      Leave the place. Always on the move. Often camps were relocated on a daily basis. Walk for miles and miles through dangerous mountain terrain, to the next campsite. The walks to the new campsite continued late into the night or early morning. Set up camp and secure their canvas topped hammocks. Women and men slept separately.

## **7. THE VOICES OF GIRL SOLDIERS FROM THE PHILIPPINES**

### **THE GIRL SOLDIERS INTERVIEWED**

Five of the girls interviewed met the criteria for being included in this study: serving as a child soldier prior to reaching the age of 18 years and having been out of the conflict for less than two years. All five girls in this study served as a child soldier prior to reaching the age of 18 years. The ages at which they became a child soldier were 15 (two), 16, 17 (two) years. All five had been out of the conflict for two years or less. All of the girls were “voluntary” participants. They all served in the same armed group. They were all captured or surrendered. One was betrayed by a spy within the movement. The length of time served as a child soldier was one and a half months, three months (two), six months and one year. When young children, all lived in two-parent families (while still children all of their parents had either separated, divorced, remarried or died). They all had siblings, two, four, six, seven and eight respectively. They all had attended school up through grades three, five, six, first year high school and third year high school. All grew up in villages where their fathers were farmers, worked in rice fields, tended fruit trees, grew sugar cane or raised animals.

Once the girls were in the military they were given:

- covered hammock and blanket, backpack, soap and shampoo
- clothes by female companions in the movement
- gun and other weapons after special training
- food and care if sick (usually provided by the masses)
- tasks to do to help the masses
- education in the ways of the movement
- important responsibilities to carry out, teaching, organizing and rallying the masses
- permission to send letters to their families

They were taught:

- how to run with an M-16
- how to pretend to be an employee of the department of the interior of the local government to gain inside information
- movement policies and philosophy
- how to attack an enemy detachment
- how to read and write if they did not know
- organizational skills
- radio communication skills training
- instruction in using technical equipment
- instructions in how to gather intelligence about

- the masses and the enemy
- how to speak in public
- how to take weapons and supplies from a wounded or dead enemy
- that they were all equal men, women, teachers and commanders.
- to rely on the masses to feed, hide, take care of them when sick or wounded and keep them overnight
- not to fear reprisal in the self-criticism groups
- to shed bourgeois ways
- to be calm in the face of even brutal attacks and ambushes
- how to be vigilant against a lurking enemy
- obey the command of the person above you
- to act immediately upon what you were instructed to do
- men and women cannot talk to each other alone
- not to use lipstick or perfume (it could alert the enemy to your presence)
- to follow all group policies
- they would be beaten by the enemy if they surrendered
- to be advanced in your character
- not to fire a gun without a purpose ( not to use a gun unless you have to kill)
- to go out in small groups to teach the masses
- to study
- to endure even the most horrific killings and war experiences

They discovered:

- that the movement served as the family they longed for or never had
- they could give and receive criticism, even learn from it
- that the team members helped one another

- they could speak very well in public
- they could lead groups
- could carry out large and important tasks
- how to respect others
- how to solve problems in a group
- they were given respect (within their group)
- they were not tortured when captured
- learned about themselves in the self-criticism groups
- that the people in the movement became very important to them
- that they missed their families especially their mothers
- they wanted to be able to take care of their mother or at least provide for her in some fashion
- that they were sick of the fighting and the brutality
- that what kept them from returning to the movement was their unwillingness to participate in or be a part of the military attacks

## MESSAGES FROM THE PHILIPPINES GIRL SOLDIERS

The voices of the girl soldiers as they related to each of the nine themes previously identified are presented in Appendix VIII. The conclusions relating to each of the themes are presented in this section. Based on these conclusions, options and choices were identified for potential use in demobilization and reintegration programs.

## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

When the girls look back over their life they felt that their family valued them and that they were important to their family. Being valued by their family changed drastically if one of their parents remarried because of divorce or death of one parent. Once a step-parent took their place in the family the children were devalued and treated harshly. If the parent started having another woman or man the same treatment applied but it was their parent that

delivered the harsh treatment. In all circumstances the economic realities of their families life placed excessive burdens on the children as they became older. For the most part families were large and there was very little money and the family had to send their children to work at very young ages in order for the family to survive. The girls did not want to be sent away to work as domestic servants to relatives or to anyone who would employ them. They wanted to be close to their family especially their mother and often ran away from the family that had employed them in order to help their mother. They felt their mothers had been good to them. A family's worst fear is that their children will join the movement and they will lose their children either to the movement or to death. After capture the girls want to go home because they long to be with their parents (especially their mother) yet they also recognized that life in the movement was better than life with an unhappy parent or serving relatives or employers as domestic slaves.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- Estranged, uncertain and broken relationships between the parents contributed to the harsh treatment of the children.
- Poverty and alcohol was a great threat to sustaining family relationships.
- Girls longed to belong to a family and have parents who saw them as important.
- Girls want to be valued and have meaningful relationships especially with their mother.
- Girls often did not understand what they had done to deserve the terrible treatment by their parents.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Assist in re-establishing some contact and relationship with their parents, especially the mother when possible.
- Assist in establishing contact with siblings and extended family so they know they still have ties to their larger family.

- Help parents hear how important it is for the girls to be in a meaningful relationship with them, even if it is not possible for the girl to return to her village.

## FESTIVALS AND RELIGION

All of the girls families belonged to a Christian church or some organized group that offered Bible study. There were often strict rules that were to be followed. The families (most often the mother) and the girls made an effort to follow the teachings of the church and follow the traditions of the religious holidays. Often they belonged to the church but could not join in church rites because they were too busy in the fields. The theological questions raised by the girls about God did not appear to be addressed by their family or their church. The girls expressed mixed feelings and lack of understanding about festivals and tribal traditions.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- The girl soldiers follow the practices of their family as implemented by their mother.
- There are behavioral practices that the girls try to follow.
- They have profound questions and thoughts about the nature of God and the part God plays in their life and how God intervenes in the world.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Girls should be given the opportunity to practice the behavioral code of their religion as it was practiced by their family.
- Girls should be given the time to ask and explore the deeper meaning of their faith and their understanding of God with a respected knowledgeable person from their religious tradition.

## EDUCATION

All of the girls attended school and wanted to continue to be enrolled in school. They often had to stop, drop out for a period of time and then begin again. The reasons for dropping out related to

money. The cost of transportation and the amount that had to be paid to the school was prohibitive. The girls felt guilty for using family money that was needed for food. They saw their mothers and fathers toiling for long hours in the fields or trying to find something to sell and could not bear to ask for more money. Frequently they had to drop out of school to work or to watch younger brothers or sisters while their parents worked. There were times when they had to leave their family and go and live with a relative so they would be near a school.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- Attending school was important and significant in their life.
- When they were able to attend consistently they excelled in their school work.
- They enjoyed going to school.
- They placed the survival needs of their family above their desire to attend to school.
- They felt guilty watching their parents toil to provide an education for them.
- They often dropped out of school to watch younger siblings or to work to help the family survive.
- Paying for school, a uniform, transportation, supplies and lunch was more than the family could sustain.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Girls should be given the opportunity to attend school and complete their education.
- Programs should be established that will assist in enabling the funds for transportation, lunch, supplies and uniforms (monthly fee is \$1.00 U.S and the enrollment fee is \$5.00 U.S).
- Girls should be given choice in their course of study.
- Protect children from being used as slave labor.
- Girls should be able to attend school without having to leave their family and home.

## PLAY

Each girl recalled the fun and joy experienced during play in childhood and or in organized play at school. Even though they often had many daily chores and worked in the fields with their family, they found short periods of time to play. They even had time to play when in the movement. Play was one of the ways they found relief from the grueling tasks of being in the movement.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- In early childhood the girls and their families were able to find some measure of relief from their toil by playing together.
- For a parent to share gad-about time with their child was treasured and remembered.
- In later years fun was experienced in games that were more formally organized.
- The movement allowed for times to play.
- Play provided a positive way of being together.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Build in time for organized games that are familiar and enjoyed by the girls.
- Allow for some measure of free time (gad-about time) where expectations are at a minimum.

## REASONS FOR JOINING

Although all of the girls from the Philippines joined the movement on a “voluntary” basis, voluntary must be understood within the context of exposure to intense propaganda and significantly meaningful people in their lives persuading them to join. In addition they were all living in poverty and engaged in work that provided very little pay and exploited them. By the time the girls were school age their parents had separated, divorced or one parent had died. When the parent had remarried the children from the first marriage were treated harshly and seen as a burden. They were often sent to live with relatives against their wishes and used as servants in those families.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- Families were living in poverty and the children were sent off to work to help the family survive.
- The working conditions demanded long hours, very little pay, no time to go to school, separation from their family and not a moment of peace.
- When living at home step-parents were often abusive toward them.
- The armed group provided a way out of a terrible existence.
- Meaningful others were joining or had already joined.
- They felt they could help the masses by joining.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- When possible, reunite children with their families.
- Work with parents to reduce abusive relationships.
- Help girl find work that does not exploit them.
- Help them identify contributions that they can make to improve the lives of everyone.
- Identify sources of funding so they can continue their education.

## TRAINING AND LIFE AS A CHILD SOLDIER

Life for the girls as a child soldier began with training that was intentional. It focused on political organizing as well as physical training. They were taught why the country need to be redirected and how the movement and new political system would help the masses of people and make their life better. The girls, once trained politically, were sent out into the villages and countryside to convert and convince the masses of their cause

Guns and weapons were not issues unless a 12-week training had been completed. There were always people on guard who possessed weapons. Guard duty was usually an assignment given to the men and not to the girls. They were taught that guns should only be fired when there is a specific pur-

pose and that you should never use your gun unless you absolutely must.

The day began very early with exercise and physical conditioning. The physical condition was grueling. Moving from camp to camp was constant and it proved to be exhausting. The girls then went out in small groups, in the late morning, to teach the masses and persuade them of the movement's value. They taught the masses to read and write. The masses in turn provided for many of their needs for food, safety and care and medicine when they were ill or injured. When the masses did not provide for their needs, usually another comrade in the movement came to their aide.

Criticism groups were held in the afternoon where the members of the group confronted each other and their own self about the ways they related and behaved toward each other. The comrades were working at ways of getting along together. The movement provided the sense of family that they had been longing to have with their own family

Intimate relationships were not permitted between men and women. Any girl under the age of 18 could not be approached for a special relationship with a man. If it was found out or obvious that you had special feelings toward a comrade and you were under 18, you were separated. If, after separation, you still wanted to pursue this relationship, special permission had to be granted to continue the relationship or to marry.

Men were not permitted to abuse women. This made the women feel safe. The prevailing philosophy was that men and women were equal. The girls felt free to express their opinions, especially in the criticism groups.

They learned much about self-expression and how to speak publicly for the movement. They were taught that the three basic problems with the government were imperialism, capitalism and feudalism. Preaching this philosophy to the masses they felt a sense of power and authority. They believed the philosophy of the movement offered the masses a better life.

For many of the girls the main task was to avoid the enemy. They were very fearful of the attacks and raids that often came as a surprise that made them

feel even more vulnerable. Their goal was to avoid getting caught in the crossfire and above all else not to get caught by the enemy. They were told that if they were caught by the enemy they would be molested or killed instantly.

They developed loyalties and feelings of attachment toward their fellow comrades in the movement. They witnessed first hand the shooting and killing of men and women who had become very important to them. Their sense of loss and grief over these repeated losses was profound.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- The movement provided them with a family.
- The movement provided them with a venue where they could speak, offer opinions and become leaders.
- The movement gave them a place, a context where they, from their point of view, could help others.
- The movement provided them with the necessities of life, either from their comrades or the masses: food, clothing, inclusion, a voice, care when ill, meaningful relationships, protection from intimate relationships they did not want.
- They did not want to be a party to the killings, raids and attacks even though they participated.
- The physical demands, moving from place to place and the constant walking, taxed their ability to endure.
- They acquired educational skills that would help them develop public speaking, organizing skills, communication skills and a stronger sense of self.
- Having been a part of the movement made it difficult for them to return home to their family, even that was what they wanted most of all.
- Being afraid of the consequences of being turned over to the government troops may have kept them in the movement longer than they would have chosen if they had not been so afraid.
- The girls want to be involved, participate in a higher calling and want to contribute to the well-being of others.

- They are tired of war, fighting and killing.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Provide safe places that are easily identified where the girls know they can go and be safe. They need to be in multiple places where they are accessible. They would be places where the girls could re-consider who they have been, what they have done and what they wish to become and how they can contribute.
- Assist the girls in locating their family and, when possible, aide them in beginning a reconciliation process.
- Afford them freedom of thought and a voice in the decisions that are going to affect their life in a safe place that may be able to offer a small caring community.
- Help the girls identify the projects they want to pursue and help them fulfill their needs and wishes to follow and participate in a higher calling.
- Provide medical care that returns them to the highest level of physical functioning that is possible.

## RECONSIDERATION OF THE DECISION

All of the girls soldiers in this study were captured by the government forces. They did not make plans or attempt to escape. They all agreed that the time with the movement had been demanding and very tiring. They indicated they would for many reasons like to return. The one factor that kept them from returning to the mountains and the armed group were the encounters that would place them in harm's way. One girl expressed regret that she had not graduated before joining. Even though they appreciated, for the most part, how they were treated, they felt guilty for not helping their family. They were conflicted between their loyalties to their family and to the movement. There were ways in which they were disappointed with both.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- Based on their experience, many of the certainties and beliefs they had about the movement proved not to be true.

- Disappointment and anger the movement and at their own self is ever present.
- It is overwhelming to face, even think about, the contradictions they feel and are living with.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Create a supportive environment where they can begin to process their many losses and disappointments.
- Help them identify at least one concrete action they can take, when realistic, towards reconciling with their family.
- Support them in looking at the multiple contradictions they are feeling and living with.
- Assist them in appreciating that the divided loyalties they are feeling are understandable and will take time to resolve.
- Acknowledge the lessons they have learned, acknowledge what they have done, consider some ways forward without totally condemning their own self as unfit for life.

## SENSE OF SELF

For all the girls their sense of self improved when they went to the mountains and became a part of the armed group. They were respected and given assignments (political, not combat) that made them feel good about their ability to perform and be responsible. They had a sense of belonging to a family that for the first time understood, respected and cared for them. The movement became the family they longed for and the one you could turn to if you had problems. They had a higher regard for their own self while in the armed group than they had when they were domestic workers who were exploited and abused by their employers, a step-parent or other extended family member.

Conclusions based on these observations

- The girls stayed in the movement because they felt respected.

- They were acknowledged for their talents.
- They were provided for.
- They had group discussions about their emerging self.
- They were able to offer their own criticisms.
- Their opinions were taken into account.
- They felt like they belonged to a community where they shared equally.
- Women were as important as men.
- They were given important tasks.
- They proved themselves by carrying out major assignments.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Institute programs that allow for group discussions and decision making.
- Assume that the girls can be responsible.
- Take their opinions seriously.
- Find ways for them to interact with others at all levels, not just their peers.
- Provide for their basic needs and their medical needs.
- Respect their individual contributions and capacities.

## TIME AND THE FUTURE

The future did not hold great promise for these girls to pursue any chosen vocation that they had hoped to follow. They mentioned returning home, possibilities for employment, future study and marriage. They all recognized that the future did not hold great promise to pursue any vocation that required higher education. They did not have the financial backing to follow their vocational dreams. The future they were moving toward was one of returning home and helping their mother in any way they could. A second future choice was to continue to

study so they would have some vocation that would lead to a job. If they could not return to school, then they were hopeful that they would find meaningful work. Those who had returned home and were unable to go to school were working as domestics or nannies. They saw marriage as an alternative if they could not find meaningful work. They did not wish to be used as domestic slaves performing menial tasks day after day — the same sort of work that led them to join the movement. They recognized that life was going to be difficult and they would have to strive and persevere just to survive. They expressed some fear regarding their life and were afraid that they might be labeled as traitors. They saw war and killing as a poor alternative for solving problems.

They hoped young people in the future would be helped so they did not feel it necessary to participate in war as a way to survive. Even though they did not want to participate in war and fighting they saw the movement as providing them with a rather good life. If they could see their family and have some time off they would seriously consider joining the movement again.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- Most of the girls were determined to strive and persevere and are committed to not allowing their self to be weakened.
- They remain uncertain about the future, they want a chance to think, forget, laugh and rest.
- Some of them fear God.
- They want to go home, especially to be with their mother.
- They are thinking about and raising philosophical questions such as, “Is it necessary to kill?”
- They want decent, equitable treatment from other people.
- A broken divided family was one of the compelling reasons they became a soldier.
- Fear of enemy attacks and encounters is the primary reason for not returning to the movement.
- They want to engage in some meaningful livelihood.
- They want to help their mother have an easier, better life.
- They question their place in the family.
- Marriage is something you turn to if you cannot find meaningful work or if you are fed up with work.
- They want physical body integrity.
- Sometimes they can’t bear to look forward or to look back.
- They are torn between going to school and helping their mother.
- They would like to return to school and study.
- They want to stand up for their own self.
- They need others to help them find a way to return to school.
- They need others to give them encouragement.
- They want to take action and be involved in activities that can be of help to others, such as fighting corruption.
- They want the war and fighting to be over, end the fighting and develop the country.
- They want young people to be given jobs, attention and concern shown toward them.
- They want to have the physical wounds of their body healed.
- They want to have someone to listen to them about the problems they have, especially the ones with their family.
- They want to reciprocate the care and help they have been given.
- Want to show they can make use of the things they have been given.
- They see themselves as strong but afraid they may weaken.
- They are afraid when they realize they need help there will be no one around to help.
- They want to go home with the knowledge that there will be a family they can rely upon.

- They see themselves as having enough innate strength to face a new life.
- They want to have a new life.
- They recognize that others need to be patient with them because of their confused state of mind.
- They abhor “bossy” people.
- They are open to ways new possibilities presented through reason and persuasion not by fiat or mandate.
- They know intimately the need for family.
- They do not have big dreams, but, rather, want a simple meaningful job and the ability to go home.
- They want to continue to support movements that are willing to help the people.

Based on these conclusions, the following options and choices should be considered for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Assist them in establishing a way to return to or be involved with their families.
- Help them identify activities where they feel they can make a contribution and where they are giving back.
- Help them find meaningful work.
- Help them return to school.
- Establish centers where they know they can go when they recognize they need help, where they will be listened to, respected, find encouragement and where their rights will be respected.
- Provide medical attention so their physical war wounds can be healed.
- Help them establish some certainty in their life, assist them in pursuing the direction they wish to take and provide some continued presence until they can stand on their own.

## 8. PHILIPPINES DISTINCTIVES

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Some distinctive features from the armed movements were identified from the interview material that appear to be of critical importance or unique to each country. This is not to suggest that these were the only distinct features but rather they were the ones reported by the girls. The following summarizes the distinctive features associated with the girls interviewed in the Philippines.

The girls participated in criticism groups that were held in the afternoons. The participants confronted each other about their behaviors. They reviewed the ways they related and behaved toward each other. These groups provided them an opportunity to evaluate their own behavior and insights about how others perceived them. The prevailing philosophy was that men and women were equal. Men were not permitted to abuse women.

“In the seminar, it was made clear that it was absolutely prohibited to take advantage of women, for men to abuse women was not allowed. It wasn’t even allowed to touch each other, to speak to someone of the opposite sex alone, especially in dark places, this was also prohibited. I felt very safe; I had no fear.”

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*“The times we would be all together and you could open up all your problems. And you can speak of your mistakes, and of the hurt that you caused someone.”*

Child soldier, Philippines

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“When there were times when we didn’t have work to do, we would relax, there would be lots of jokes and we would sing together. To everyone, if you are upset about something or someone, this can be discussed. Even relationships with women can be discussed. If you want to enter a relationship, then the man can approach the woman.”

“...in the movement, you will be criticized and admonished: Why did you not do your task? Why did you not cook? Why did you depend so much on others? And you must say things frankly. Whether that person is a commander or a teacher as long as that person committed a violation, you can voice out your criticism. There’s no place for fearing reprisal in blurting your criticisms because that person is, say, a commander. If a person has done something wrong, it is necessary that you tell the person that he has done something wrong. That’s the movement’s policy. You must not be wary of giving criticisms. You must shed your bourgeois ways that still come from [traits] outside the movement.”

They were indoctrinated in the philosophy of the movement and sent out to politically teach and organize the people.

“We had to study about why we were there. To explain why there is a revolution now, things like that. They wanted us to really understand. My comrades were very strict during the period of education.”

“It’s important that before you enter the movement, they talk to you to understand the reasons why you want to join. For example, if your reasons for joining are just for personal interests only, they will give you a seminar because that’s not enough good reason to join.”

“...but in the movement, you have to learn to speak to large groups. So when you speak to the masses, you really have to use your brains. When you speak, you have to speak for your principles.”

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*“We had to undergo education first. That’s how it is in the movement, study first. They did not give me any task yet until I have undergone some studies.”*

Child soldier, Philippines

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## 9. WHAT ARE KEY RISK FACTORS IN THE CHOICE TO BECOME A CHILD SOLDIER?

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Three risks have been identified and reviewed:

- being poor and disadvantaged
- inhabiting a combat zone
- being separated from their family

These risks were present for the girls studied and played an important role in their becoming a child soldier.

The girls in these interviews also shared other factors that were important in their becoming child soldiers. These additional risks include:

- dropping out of school
- not having a voice in decisions that affect their life
- being marginalized in new family structures
- failure to be protected by the family

### DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

Girls dropped out of school because the teachers were often punitive and the girls felt humiliated or they could not reach the high standards and expectations set by their parents. They also dropped out of school to provide for the survival needs of their family, i.e., helping to provide food or being responsible for a younger sibling or an aging or sick family member. They often did not have money for tuition or supplies and had to drop out of school. Frequently the school was a great distance from the home village and they had to walk long distances. Public transport was very uncertain.

### NOT HAVING A VOICE IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIFE

Girls were sent, without being included in the decision, to live with relatives or sent off to work as

domestic servants. They also were not willing to participate in arranged marriages and would flee to the armed group rather than marry at their parents' insistence.

### BEING MARGINALIZED IN NEW FAMILY STRUCTURES

When a parent remarried, the girl may have felt rejected by the new step-parent. They were often abused or mistreated in the newly created family structure by the new parent as well as their birth parent. They no longer felt included in the family.

### FAILURE TO BE PROTECTED BY THE FAMILY

Girls were left at home to watch younger siblings without an adult. The girls were emotionally and physically exhausted, an easy prey for armed groups. Girls and women were used to perform tasks for the family such as walking long distances to collect salt or working in the field with other women and girls. They were vulnerable to ambush by armed groups.

## 10. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GIRL SOLDIERS ON THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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The interviews provided a broad understanding of the girls' experience of being child soldiers. They also provided information on the interview process. Comments by the girls have resulted in an understanding of how they viewed the interview process. Two areas are considered: the consent forms and the interview. Most of the information on the interview process came from the interviews in Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Colombia.

### AFFIRMATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

Many of the girls showed heightened interest in the consent form. They took note of every word. They often went through the form repeatedly, reading it in silence. If they could not read, when the consent

form was read to them, they asked for it to be read several times. They raised questions about its implications for them and for their family. They specifically asked if it would pose any danger now or in the future for them or their family. They were very interested to know how the material would be used.

Conclusions based on these observations:

- They recognize that what they do may have serious implications for meaningful others in their life; they now experience themselves in relationship to their family, their community, etc.
- They took seriously what they were being asked to do and felt responsible for the decision they were making in participating in this study; they were being thoughtful and careful about the decision they were in the process of making.
- They want to participate and take an active part in the decisions that are going to affect their life.
- They want their voice to be heard and taken into account.

Based on these conclusions the following options and choices are recommended when using consent forms for research or other purposes:

- Consent forms must be used and written at a level that the girl can understand.
- If she cannot read, the form must be read to her with opportunity for her to have it re-read and for her to ask questions until she feels comfortable with the document.
- She needs to be told of the value of the research, how it will be used and assured of her right to withdraw at any time without suffering any adverse consequences.
- Care must be taken to fully inform and allow girls to participate in decisions that are going to affect their life.
- Confidentiality must be assured.
- A written summary based on the experience of girls who have been through the interview process could be provided so she could read and evaluate for herself how the process had helped, hindered and/or had been of value to others.

## INTERVIEWS

In the beginning of the interview process the girls described feeling nervous and afraid of the process and about giving correct answers to the questions. They were reassured that there were no wrong answers and everything they said would be accepted. Some exhibited curiosity about the laptop computer and the cassette recorder. One girl wanted to review the questions that were going to be asked in advance. Another wanted to know in more depth the purpose of the interviews. Another asked if she could pretend the interview was for the media so that it would be more entertaining. Most of the girls indicated a strong desire to tell their story as they had wanted to do this for some time. They said it was a relief to go to the memories and be able to express and master the process of relating to the happy and sad moments in their life.

One girl stated “I was a bit scared, as I did not know why you people were coming to meet us but as you went along it looked not too bad.” They thought it would be useless and nothing would come out of it and that it would be another waste of time. They found, however, that the interviews brought some clarification to their experience and enabled them to look at their life even when that was difficult for them. For example, “All of us thought that it will be like everybody talking and talking but nothing happens, they go away and do not care about us. This has been different. It has helped me in many ways. First of all I went down memory lane and found out why I ran away.”

Another girl offered the following comment on the interview process: “As for me I can see myself clearly this has helped and given me encouragement to go ahead and improve my life. I can now face my future with confidence. In a way this has been useful. I am able to see what I have learned through all these experiences.”

Two other girls made the following enlightening comments to the interviewer: “After talking to you, lots of thoughts went through my mind. In a way I was happy I could talk about all this to both of you. I do not talk much because I cannot trust any one. All the time I spend here is either with the machine or with the radio.” And: “I have to talk to you. I have not told my story to any one else and I must

now see you and talk to you. I wanted to talk to someone; finally I have got this chance. When I saw you I thought I could tell everything. Now my burden is a bit less. Thank you.” And finally one of the girls said to the interviewer, “Please listen to me; it would be good if you listen to me.”

Conclusions based on these observations:

The interviews:

- were entered into with some amount of fear
- provided many girls the opportunity to tell their story
- provided an avenue for beginning life review
- enabled the girls to begin to evaluate the future
- helped the girls to see their self in a broader perspective
- increased their capacity to trust another person
- contributed to an increase in their self-confidence
- provided the beginning of the integration of past, present and future
- provided a space and time for physical and emotional safety
- helped them see they could be valued and important to others
- enabled them to realize they were not alone
- helped them recognize that others could treat them respectfully

Based on these conclusions the following options and choices are recommended when interviewing and for demobilization and reintegration programs:

- Make available trained sensitive interviewers to conduct in-depth individual interview sessions with each girl soldier who wishes to participate. Participation is voluntary.
- The interviews should take place in an environment that assures physical and emotional safety.
- Multiple interview sessions should be offered and the spacing of the interview sessions should be decided by the girl in dialogue with the interviewer.

- The interview permits the girl to review her life in a broad context where she can take into account where she has been, where she is now and what she sees herself moving toward in the future.
- The interviewer acts with due respect for what the girl wishes to recall, when she wishes to recall information and at what pace.
- The interviewer allows the depth of the interview to be determined by the girl.
- The interviewer does not focus on the girl's strengths or weaknesses but rather listens intently and hears and listens without judgment.
- Confidentiality should be assured.
- Resource people should be available if the interviewee feels a need for follow-up to the interview to deal with emotions that may arise from the interview process.

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# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX I

### AFFIRMATION OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWEE

(This consent form will be reviewed verbally with the interviewee to be certain that it is understood. Once understood the written consent form is presented for a signature. Research interviews may not be conducted before this has taken place.)

I am \_\_\_\_\_ (interviewer's name) and I am working with the Quaker United Nations Office and \_\_\_\_\_ (NGO or University). I am interested in understanding the story of your life. What kinds of things you did when you were younger, where you lived, who you lived with, what you liked to do, who you enjoyed being with and other information about your family and community that you remember and would like to share with me. I would also like to hear about how you became a child soldier. I would be interested in knowing what happened to you when you were a child soldier. What each day was like for you. I am also very interested in hearing about your life as it is now — the way it is today and how you see the future. What you and other young women tell us will be used to assist groups like ours begin to plan programs that will include what young women like yourself tell us you need. It would help us to know the kinds of things that would be most helpful for you to have a better and easier life. The experiences you have had in your life will help us understand what we need to do for young women who have been used as soldiers. A report will be written at the end combining the stories of all the young women we talk to from four different countries. All of this information will help us know what young women want and need as they continue to build their life.

If you give me permission I would like to tape record what you tell me. I can also just write what you tell me. You can decide if you would like me to use the tape recorder or write what you tell me. After we have finished, if you like, you and I can read together the story you have told me. If you want to make any changes in what I have written you can tell me when we go over your story.

When I am writing I will not use your name or anyone's real name. If we are using the tape recorder you can use different names for people so that the person's real name will be private and protected.

I will ask you to meet with me three different times. Each time we would meet for about 1 \_ hours. We will agree on a time and place that is comfortable, private and safe. A second interviewer may be with me to be sure I am recording your story just the way you are telling it to me.

One other thing that is very important for you to know, if you change your mind, for whatever reason, and decide you do not want to continue talking with me we will stop. You should not feel bad about doing this because everyone has the right to change their mind and make their own personal decisions. You can make that decision at anytime, during any of the interviews.

I have reviewed this information and I agree to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX II

### Ethical Guidelines for Interviewers

Having completed the training provided by \_\_\_\_\_ (name of person providing training) in relation to the Female Child Soldier Project being conducted by The Quaker United Nations Office and \_\_\_\_\_ (name of University or NGO)

I agree as an interviewer to:

1. Follow the process for contacting and interviewing as outlined in our training.
2. Keep all names and information confidential. Never use any identifying names in the written or recorded material.
3. Protect the safety, security and privacy of the interviewee at all times.
4. Review informed consent with interviewee prior to any interview taking place and make certain it is understood and signed.
5. Remain sensitive to the interviewee and stop the interviewing if it appears necessary or if requested by the interviewee. Make referrals for emotional support when appropriate and manage any secondary traumatization.
6. Be available for follow-up support requested by the interviewee.
7. Not raise expectations and/or make promises that cannot be fulfilled.
8. Honor all commitments made to the interviewee as outlined in the Interviewee Informed Consent Form.
9. Report the data with as much accuracy as possible and honor the voice, i.e., the story as given by the interviewee.

I have reviewed the Ethical Guidelines and agree to act in accordance with them.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX III

### Interviewer Actions and Responsibilities

At all times the safety and security of the young woman and others involved in this project is more important than the data.

1. Complete days of training as outlined in the training agenda.
2. Identify and interview between four and 10 female child soldiers between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age who have not been out of the conflict for more than two years.
3. Conduct interviews only when assured that the interviewee understands the entire process outlined in the interviewee informed consent form.
4. Times, places and length of meetings will be arranged keeping safety, confidentiality, privacy and convenience in mind.
5. Follow the in-depth interview method being utilized in this study and as outlined and adapted in training.
6. Use of the tape recorder and the computer or willingness to be trained in their use.
7. Follow the contacting and interviewing process as presented in training.
8. Assume responsibility for the recording device and the computer and return the equipment to the project director at the end of the interviewing process.
9. Tape record, when permission is given, and translate the data deleting all identifying names.
10. Take notes in addition to recording.
11. If recording will compromise the girl being interviewed, record data in writing.
12. Translate the material as given without making changes in the words, but clarified as to cultural context where necessary for reasons of clarification. This will take place in dialogue with psychologist/anthropologist.
13. Submit data to a psychologist/anthropologist for clarification of cultural nuances.
14. Submit the material to the interviewee for any changes or deletions requested. If it is not possible to present the material in written form, the interviewer will review the material with the girl interviewed for clarification following the collection of the data.
15. Complete final data sets.
16. Transmit the data to the head researcher after the interviewee and the psychologist/anthropologist have reviewed the material and made changes (following each interview).
17. Call team meetings between anthropologist/psychologist, team leader as needed.
18. Make referrals of girls for outside emotional support.

**(continued on next page)**

## Interviewer Actions and Responsibilities (page 2)

19. Report any problems, broken equipment, safety issues, etc., to team leader or head researcher.
20. Allow for longer interviews or spacing of interviews so that a trusting relationship can develop over time so the real story can be heard and avoid a rush to bring closure.

As an interviewer for the Female Child Soldier Project, my signature on this document confirms my acceptance of the following actions and responsibilities. The fee that I will receive for successfully carrying out my work will be \_\_\_\_\_. This amount will be paid to me following my submission of the translated data to the head researcher of the project. All data will be submitted to the head researcher.

I have reviewed the actions and responsibilities and agree to act in accordance with them.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX IV

### APA Code of Ethics ([www.apa.org/ethics/code.html](http://www.apa.org/ethics/code.html))

In the design and implementation of this research project the APA code of ethics and a statement by the American Anthropological Association serve as the standard to be followed. The significant sections are referenced.

The American Anthropological Association states that in research the paramount responsibility is to those they study: When there is a conflict of interest, these individuals must come first. Anthropologists must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied.

APA standards to be followed:

- 6.06 Planning Research.
- 6.07 Responsibility.
- 6.11 Informed consent to Research.
- 6.19 Honoring Commitments.
- 6.21 Reporting Results.

## **APPENDIX V**

### **TEAM LEADER ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Monitor and provide oversight for the research project in the conflict area.
2. Work with head researcher and research trainer.
3. Identify and obtain agreement with two interviewers.
4. Identify and obtain agreement with anthropologist/psychologist to support the interviewer.
5. Monitor need for girl soldier support/referral and assist with providing support.
6. Make arrangements for training logistics (e.g. place, time)
7. See that research method is carried out in described in training and assist in modifying research training to be culturally relevant.
8. Review data after psychologist/anthropologist has placed it in cultural context and suggest additional clarification as needed.
9. Help identify with the project team an appropriate way of thanking the young women for participation in the research. This would be implemented at the end of the project.

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **AGENDA INTERVIEWER TRAINING GIRL SOLDIER RESEARCH PROJECT** (example: to be adapted in each country)

#### **DAY 1**

Morning

Introductions

Review of Agenda

Description of the project

Reason for study

Qualitative studies: what they are and why do them

Feedback on description of study

Break

Number and form of interviews

Interviewer Actions and Responsibilities

Ethical guidelines for interviewers

APA Code of Ethics

Informed consent

Interviewing

Why interview?

Need to develop the interview guide together:

We have ideas, but they must be culturally relevant or they will not work

What are the cultural norms when interviewing this group in this country?

What are the things with this group that may be different than with other groups in other countries?

What might they expect in the interviewing process?

Working as a team

Lunch

Western ways of eliciting information:

Reducing resistance

Active listening

Open-ended and closed-ended questions

#### **DAY 2**

Morning

Introduction to this interview process

Opening up life histories

Interview role-play one: School headmaster interview

Debrief role-play one

Break

Interview role-play two and three: Affirmation of Informed Consent for Interviewee and Focused Life History/Engagement

Development of Questions  
Role-play  
Debrief interview situation  
Development of preliminary guide with prompts for Initial Interview  
Suicidality  
Lunch  
Initial work with computer:  
    Basic word processing  
    Use of discs  
    Setting up an email account for them

### **DAY 3**

Morning  
Role-play four: Second interview, The Details of the Soldiering Experience/Mid-phase work  
Development of Questions  
Role-play  
Debrief interview situation  
Development of preliminary guide with prompts for Second Interview  
Break  
Training in western model of trauma reaction, part I  
Lunch  
Training in western model of trauma reaction, part II  
Work with digital recorder:  
    Use  
    Transfer to text  
    Setup of voice recognition

### **DAY 4**

Morning  
Role-play five, Third interview: Reflection on the Meaning of the Soldiering Experience and the Interview  
Process/Termination  
Practice interviews  
Debrief interview situation  
Development of preliminary guide with prompts for Third Interview  
Break  
Final questions on responsibilities  
Final questions on hardware/software  
Other questions  
Lunch  
Taking care of yourselves:  
    Stress  
    Working as a team  
    Stress reduction techniques

## APPENDIX VII

### Role-Play

Role-play is being used as a method for learning and practicing in-depth interviewing skills. The goal in the interviewing process is to create an environment in which the young girl feels free to talk to you. Talking about personal, painful matters may not only be difficult, it may also go against what she considers socially correct.

The following role-plays, based on the interview protocols, will enable you to practice ways of increasing communication skills when conducting in-depth interviews. There are no right or wrong answers. However some questions are better than others in eliciting information. The main question is, What is it like to be...? Generally speaking, questions that elicit fuller answers begin with what, when, how and where. As you practice and take on the role of the other you will come to understand and appreciate what it feels like being that person.

Directions for role-play. I will read a role-play situation and then ask each of you to divide into pairs and take turns assuming the role of the interviewer and the interviewee. After assuming each role (approximately 20 minutes) stop and explore how it felt to be in that particular role.

We will begin by working in pairs with a short role-play (about eight minutes); one person will serve as the interviewer and the other person will be interviewee. Then you will change places and explore what it's like in that role. Another option is to stop the sequence of actions and evaluate as you work your way through the role-play. By questioning various ways of asking questions it is possible to evaluate a variety of more comfortable choices.

#### SHORT PRACTICE ROLE-PLAY:

You have just accepted the position of directing a school for young children in a village where the school has been closed for more than three years. You want to employ local people who will be able to teach the children, provide social support and help to create a garden where children can play.

In this role-play, you will work in pairs, one person will be the new director who is conducting the interview and the second person will be the person wishing to work at the school. Change roles and follow up with discussion, discovery, renewed understanding and sensitivity. The discussion begins with the two participants and is followed by a discussion with the entire group.

#### ROLE-PLAYS OF THE ACTUAL INTERVIEW SITUATIONS:

The following role-play situations are placed within the context of the meeting where the Interviewee Informed Consent Form is shared with the interviewee and the three in-depth interview situations that are to be conducted with each interviewee.

#### MEETING: Informed Consent Form

The informed consent form is presented so that it is clear that the young woman understands its contents.

#### Role-Play:

In this role-play the interviewee reviews in detail the informed consent form with the young woman. In this role-play you will work in pairs with one person being the interviewer presenting, i.e., sharing the form and the other person being the child soldier who must understand it. Change roles and follow up with discussion, discovery and renewed understanding and sensitivity. The discussion begins with the two participants and is followed with a discussion of the entire group. (The discussion will include changes that may need to be made in the consent form to make it more culturally relevant.)

## APPENDIX VIII

### The Voices of Girl Soldiers from the Philippines

The transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed to identify important themes. The nine themes identified that were common to the interviews from girl soldiers in all four countries were used as the framework for organizing the data. This section organizes the voices of the girls according to these nine themes. In some instances the themes overlapped. Information on one theme may have been so interrelated with another that they could not be separated. When this situation presented itself the information was included under more than one theme.

Additional perspective on the data presented include:

- The interview quotes do not represent a complete collection of the interview transcripts.
- When a girl made extensive comments on the same topic, a typical representation of those comments is included.
- Each girl did not necessarily speak directly to every theme.
- In many cases one girl's voice represented the voice of others; in general, only one representation of the voice may have been included.

The names used are fictitious and do not reflect the actual names of the girls. Other identifying information has been changed to protect the identity of the girls.

Comments are presented as given and may not be complete sentences.

#### FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

When the girls look back over their life they felt that their family valued them and that they were important to their family. Being valued by their family changed drastically if one of their parents remarried because of divorce or death of one parent. Once a step-parent took their place in the family the children were devalued and treated harshly. If the parent started having another woman or man the same treatment applied but it was their parent that delivered the harsh treatment. In all circumstances the economic realities of their family's life placed excessive burdens on the children as they became older. For the most part families were large and there was very little money and the family had to send their children to work at very young ages in order for the family to survive. The girls did not want to be sent away to work as domestic servants to relatives or to anyone who would employ them. They wanted to be close to their family, especially their mother, and often ran away from the family that had employed them in order to help their mother. They felt their mothers had been good to them. A family's worst fear is that their children will join the movement and they will lose their children either to the movement or to death. After capture, the girls want to go home because they long to be with their parents (especially their mother), yet they also recognized that life in the movement was better than life with an unhappy parent or serving relatives or employers as domestic slaves.

#### DENISE:

We were very poor, so I would also try to help out by working.

My stepfather is in a very pitiful state. He doesn't have a job.

I was sent to live with relatives to help earn money and provide for her own survival.

The people (uncle's family) I lived with has work. I guess they tried to help, but it's really different from having your real parents around. They had to take care of two other children. They had other nieces and nephews, aside from me.

They had arrived first, so they were prioritized and had to be taken care of first.

I was so lonely I really wanted to go home.

I was hesitant to run away because I didn't have any money.

I have to wash the dishes before going to school in the morning and also after school. I would have to cook again, then I would have to do more housework.

Sometimes I would ask myself, why is mother like this? And she wouldn't shut up unless you answered back. But I didn't want to answer back. So I would have to keep on sitting and just listening to her. And I would think, when is she going to stop her talking, it's so noisy and I wish I could just keep quiet.

But sometimes I would lose my temper and then I would answer back. So, sometimes, to avoid answering back to her, I would just leave the house. So I would go to my aunt's house, since I pitied my mother and wanted to avoid talking back to her. I would seldom answer back, but I would realize how painful it must have been for her.

I shouldn't answer back because I am just a child. But sometimes, she kept going on and on, I would say something very hurtful, so that's why I would just leave to avoid saying something painful.

So I told my aunt I would rather leave than say something distressing to my mother.

With regards to my half-brother, I feel that I don't feel any affection towards them, even though we are related. This is probably because when I was still small, I still needed my mother's attention, but suddenly my mother got married again and then I had a younger sibling, and my mother couldn't pay attention to me anymore because all her attention was focused on the younger ones.

I still have elder siblings and I want their attention focused on me and not grabbed by the smaller ones. But sometimes the smaller ones still get all the attention. Sometimes we squabble among ourselves, probably because I'm also hardheaded.

After being captured and when first allowed to see my mother, I really wanted to go home.

My mother was crying, so I told her it's only now that you are crying for me, when I was still at home, you wouldn't pay any attention to me. And when I would stay with you because I had missed you, you would ask what I was doing there in your house. You would even ask me what my business/errand was to visit you. You treated me in this way. When you told me that you would send me to school, this did not happen.

**AIDA:**

The problem then was... at first we were happy... but then there were times that we cannot buy rice because we don't have money, my mother would then be very problematic with what we are going to eat, in fact it was not only our mother who think about this, even us!

I would do what I could so that my mother could eat, so that my mother wouldn't feel so troubled. It's all right that I experience difficulty, as long as I could help my mother.

When I was small, I wanted to do the laundry, so that I could help my mother I would give my earnings to my mother. My employer would give a loan/advance to my mother, and then I would work to pay for that. My father wasn't earning much during this time.

My second employer was the daughter of a teacher I used to work for. When she gave birth, my first employer asked me to work for her daughter. She was also a teacher.

There was no one else who could help my parents then, and I wanted to be able to help my parents. So whatever my mother would request from my employer, they would give to my mother.

I was so exhausted while working there. They wanted me to go to work for their son who had gotten married there. But this was so far, so I didn't want to go because I would like to see my mother often.

We would see each other very often. That's what I wanted, to see my mother often.

My mother is really more progressive or more knowledgeable than my father — in almost all aspects. That's the reason why I really thought of helping the family when I felt I was of age or since we are at the right age. We really worked hard to change our situation.

While our mother works hard, we also do our share. That's how it is in the family.

At first, I would go to my mother...I would cry then because I felt pity for my mother so it was then that I thought of quitting? ...If I become rebellious, my mother could not rely on anybody else.

I am the eldest, I know more than them, I know what to do...I'm not the kind who thinks that it is their responsibility to bring me up... that's unlikely. I really have to work hard so that there will be something to cook.

I will not depend anymore from my mother. When it came to the movement, my mother wouldn't agree to let me go with them.

In the movement they said that if I get caught I will surely be killed.

I really felt so bad that I cried. I was in such a miserable situation, I just thought of walking out of there because I wanted so much to see my mother, my siblings and my father. I felt so bad and sorry for my life.

#### GISELLE:

My father had a problem, because he had another woman. I heard that he had another wife. He moved from place to place. Sometimes he would go home only once a month. I heard that my father had other children. So my father sometimes could not provide the tuition fees for my other siblings.

When he gets home, he would shout and he was drunk. He would say lots of different things. So my sister was not able to finish school and got married early.

My father seemed to be always mad at me and at all of us. My elder brother told me that our father doesn't love us. He had a big stick that he would use to beat us up; this was a branch of the guava tree. That's why we had to follow him. Just one mistake and he would hit us directly.

My sister didn't even have a boyfriend, but she just left because she couldn't stand it anymore. Even when we were bigger, he would still beat us. We didn't even understand what we did wrong.

I can't understand why he treated us that way when we did nothing wrong. We follow all his orders. Just one mistake and he would hit us. When he would start beating us, my mother would tell us, just go to my sister's house and we would reply, No, we will just be an added problem there.

When we were still small, my father wasn't like that. He only changed when he started having another woman.

All of us were badly affected. Children really need their parents.

Sometimes, my elder brother would cry. Even my brother who was 18 then, decided that he would just take care of himself because our father didn't take care of us.

Our mama was also being battered. But we would rather stay with her. We didn't want to be away from her. My father would threaten us that when those two children come, I will kill them!

From grade three onwards, I stayed in my aunt's house.

Then one day, I saw my aunt crying. Then I found out that my mother had died. I didn't have a chance to see her before she died. When she died, that's when everything seemed to fall apart. We didn't know what to do.

My father sold our family house, so we had nowhere else to go home too.

He started living in the house of the other woman. My father had become crazy for the other woman. We (siblings) did not receive a single centavo from the proceeds of the sale of the house.

My elder brother paid for all the funeral expenses of my mother. When my father came to the wake, my brothers and sister and I were all very mad at my father. My brother and my father had a brawl in front of the coffin of my mother, because we found out that my mother didn't have any medical check-ups with the doctor because all the money had been given to the other woman.

We didn't speak to him. We were all grief-stricken and mad with him.

After I finished grade five, I couldn't stand it any more. I wasn't very comfortable in my aunt's house. I was wondering, "Who is my family?"

## **FESTIVALS AND RELIGION**

All of the girls families belonged to a Christian church or some organized group that offered Bible study. There were often strict rules that were to be followed. The families (most often the mother) and the girls made an effort to follow the teachings of the church and follow the traditions of the religious holidays Often they belonged to the church but could not join in church rites because they were too busy in the fields. The theological questions raised by the girls about God did not appear to be addressed by their family or their church. The girls expressed mixed feelings and lack of understanding about festivals and tribal traditions.

### **AIDA:**

Seldom did we join church rites. We're busy and my mother sometimes cannot attend.

Even when I was in the movement I still prayed so that no bad things will come upon us.

Like when we give thanks, we offer chicken and carry and carry some ornaments like those in the (Christian) church. The practice still exists. I have some experiences but I can't claim to have great knowledge.

I know that if they are able to hunt a pig, they offer some thanks. During harvest season we slaughter a pig as thanksgiving for the good harvest.

I don't know our dance. Seldom do we dance these tribal dances. My mother used to chide me for not acting like a native. When they dress me in native costume, I refuse. I'm ashamed. I don't want people staring at me and judging whether these clothes look good on me or not. I just like to wear ordinary clothes...like these. We don't wear these modern clothes in our tribe.

## DENISE:

It is prohibited going to the disco, eating *dinuguan* (a dish made of pork and pig's blood) and watching pornographic shows.

## ELSE:

My mama she is active in church. She attends meetings in the chapel. Papa was not active. Let's go to Mass my mother would say...make offerings to the church.

We pray before we eat. We give thanks to the Lord, then we pray.

On All Soul's Day there is an offering on the altar like rice cakes, sweetened young coconut, water, Kulafo (local wine) and flowers. We also celebrate fiesta.

It was mama who says do not gamble, don't go with your peers, don't go to the disco.

## GISELLE:

We had Bible study. There was a different group for adults and another for the children.

I was a member of the choir. Sometimes we would sing.

Sometimes we had Bible sharing. Then I thought does God know me? But I know that He knows everything about me. I prayed to the Lord for guidance in whatever happens.

But if there is God, why are things this way? I said there is a God. Because we won't be able to come to the mountain and join the armed struggle if there is no God. If there is a God, why is it that you were not given strength to solve your many problems? But God does not give you problems that you cannot solve.

If you are not close to God, then no matter how hard you pray God will not help you. So sometimes I would think, maybe I'm not being close to God, if I really believe in God.

My parents are supposed to be God's way of safeguarding us here on earth, to make sure that we grow up to become good.

But what has happened to me? I went somewhere else. Why did this happen to my family? I am here in the armed struggle?

In the movement they don't discourage you from believing in God. They talk more about the livelihood of the people. There are also some people in the movement who don't believe in God.

I believe God is bigger than the armed struggle. He is the Manager. He gives direction and He is the brain. Everything is up to Him. God will not give you problems that you cannot manage.

## EDUCATION

All of the girls attended school and wanted to continue to be enrolled in school. They often had to stop, drop out for a period of time and then begin again. The reasons for dropping out related to money. The cost of transportation and the amount that had to be paid to the school was prohibitive. The girls felt guilty for using family money that was needed for food. They saw their mothers and fathers toiling for long hours in the fields or trying to find something to sell and could not bear to ask for more money. Frequently they had to drop out of school to work or to watch younger brothers or sisters while their parents worked. There were times when they had to leave their family and go and live with a relative so they would be near a school.

## ELSE:

Sometimes I came late...if my mama has a problem...money is really not enough. Mama is already old...she sells barbecue at the school gate; money for transportation fare is tight.

There are subjects wherein I didn't get good grades, but there are subjects that interest me much when the teacher teaches well. So, I got high scores in exams. I got high grades in math and Pilipino, 90%.

Ah, it's too hard I have no allowance any money to buy snack or food in school. We will just be given 50 centavos. We don't have money to buy food...our life's very hard. Sometimes I don't have lunch.

Sometimes you will be reprimanded when you are not in uniform. For example you are late, it's very hard for me to hitch a ride when I am in my school uniform. So, when I reached the school, my uniform is already crumpled, but I have to make do with it. I will bring my uniform with me...I will hitch ride in a truck...then when I reach the school, I will directly go to the comfort room to change into my school uniform. I don't have money for transportation fare. We have no budget, so I will just hitch on a truck...so I have to bring with me my skirt. ...sometimes you would be late...especially if...sometimes the transportation would have flat tire! When I get late in school, I will just tell my teachers that the truck runs too slow and we had a flat tire. The school is very strict.

## AIDA:

I would do what I could so that my mother could eat, so that my mother wouldn't feel so troubled. It's all right that I experience difficulty as long as I could help my mother. Instead of buying my materials for the school project, the first thing that comes into my mind is to give the money to my mother, to buy food, just so I could help. If I have money I spend it all to buy food.

I was in grade two then. I thought that I would not be able to pass with a score of 85 in the card. I was so worried because I really thought I wouldn't pass. But it turned out that I had the highest grade.

I said to myself I could really make it. But I stopped schooling after that. What a pity.

## PLAY

Each girl recalled the fun and joy experienced during play in childhood and/or in organized play at school. Even though they often had many daily chores and worked in the fields with their family they found short periods of time to play. They even had time to play when in the movement.

## ELSE:

I am playing basketball. Forward. Sometimes guard...it depends, usually.

My father would take me along when he would gad about. He would make an agreement with me that first we would take care of the *carabaos*. Then in the afternoon we would gad about.

We played volleyball then... using rattan ball, then my papa would lift me and then we would play in the ring style... My mama usually teams up with my brother.

My papa got angry while we were upstairs playing hide and seek. At first he would just say, tsk, tsk. you better stop kids, he would warn us then. When we still didn't listen, he would hit us then.

**GISELLE:**

I played with my brothers and sisters. My sister was very quiet.... my sister and I enjoyed playing together and we do not fight when we play.

We know it's just a game and there's nothing personal, win or lose.

**AIDA:**

We would go swimming in the river, we had different kinds of games.

**DENISE:**

When we were in the mountains we played ballgames.

## **REASONS FOR JOINING**

Although all of the girls from the Philippines joined the movement on a "voluntary" basis, voluntary must be understood within the context of exposure to intense propaganda and significantly meaningful people in their lives persuading them to join. In addition they were all living in poverty and engaged in work that provided very little pay and exploited them. By the time the girls were school age their parents had separated, divorced or one parent had died. When the parent had remarried the children from the first marriage were treated harshly and seen as a burden. They were often sent to live with relatives against their wishes and used as servants in those families.

**GISELLE:**

Around that time, the situation at home was getting worse. I had problems with my sister-in-law. I couldn't bear it anymore. My sister-in-law would say 10 things for each statement that I said. I didn't like that. She accused me of being lazy and unhelpful. But I disagree with her... I told her that I was doing my best to be helpful to them. However, she remarked that it would be better if I left the house so that they would have fewer problems. It was very difficult to get along with her. They just wanted me to be there to take care of their small child.

Children who cannot study anymore because their parents are hard up. Their parents cannot provide for the needs of their children, especially when there are too many of them in the family. Poor families have many children and they come one after another just like do-re-me.

But in the movement, there is allowance for each child of the adult comrades. They entered the movement because they were hoping that the movement could help in their family problems. Never mind if the movement's objectives are very difficult to achieve, like defeating the government. Never mind if the movement's chances of winning are unsure.

**DENISE:**

It was then that my sister told me that they wouldn't allow me to go to school or to go work. So I looked for a way to look for a job that would allow me to be a working student.

I was also getting fed up, I had run out of money and my family even borrowed money from me. I borrowed money so that I could look for a job, but I couldn't find a job as a working student. I found one but

they were looking for a high-school graduate, so it was very difficult.

I had a friend who invited me to join a training and I asked her what kind of training, I thought it might be something like karate only. My friend said, not just karate, don't you want to learn everything? So I said yes, so let's go to the training together. She said she wanted to go to the mountains. So I asked her will we become part of the armed group? She said yes. So I said, I don't want to go, we might die there. She assured me, they still have to train us.

Our situation here isn't getting better, we can't go to school and we can't find a job.

When we want to go somewhere, we can't because we don't have any money. And when we do get to go somewhere, when we get home we get scolded so much.

So that's why I was convinced by her explanation. So I said, Why don't we go right away today?

So that afternoon we went. So I made up a story for my mother, just a make believe story so I could go. I told her that I found a job in Binay-binay. I even made a sketch of where I was supposed to work. It was just a fake sketch. I just did that so I could get away, even if it was wrong.

I felt sorry to leave my mother, but my mother was so poor. I couldn't bear it anymore, just suffering there.

For me, I was looking for a way to let off steam and have a chance to be happy. But I enjoyed it so much in the mountains, because the comrades were very good to us.

So I was able to endure it there because almost all of my concerns were addressed. When you make a mistake, they would patiently explain it to you in a soft voice. That's why we got along well with each other. Even when it was difficult, we enjoyed ourselves a lot.

That's why I decided to become a full-time member. But I told my comrades that I should visit my mother. They allowed me to see her, but my letter to my mother wasn't delivered to her.

## ELSE:

I didn't know that my mother would visit my brother in the mountains. My brother brings me with them when they go to visit my brother.

Yes, I am still young then. I remember that I was still very young when I went with my brother in the mountains. Whenever mama goes home, I go with her also.

When I was in third year, I go home alone; with the exposurists...there are many exposurists then, three.

I was being asked then if am going to join the group. I will deliver the message to the assembly...they instruct me which way to go. I also help post the announcements that there are assemblies....what I had in mind then was, these people might be intelligent people, because the people listen to them.

We waited for three days. It was then that I joined them. Two men and a woman were my companions. I already asked them...mama didn't allow me; she said I am still young and she's asking where we are going.

After that we would give some education to the members of this household, then we would transfer to another area.

They are asking why I have to join since I already know that the situation is dangerous... I just informed the people...my brother gave me a book to read. When there are questions that I cannot answer, I would ask my brother about it, so that I know the correct answer.

I did not join the training...I joined the group but not the training.

My two brothers and two sisters are already with the movement. They want me to join them. OK, you join us, my brother said.

LAYLA:

I am always absent from my class that is why my grades are low. It's because I have to take care of my younger brothers and sisters.

I am angry, I get very embarrassed when I have to be absent and whenever I am late for school.

My mama has just given birth when mama and papa separated... that was in November.. We don't have money. All of my papa's money is with my mama.

When I graduated from elementary, we don't even have money to buy a candle... I just bear it all.

I worked with a harsh employer. He got angry because he said the house is unkempt. I am a baby sitter at the same time. Seven hundred a month. We have to buy food, soap...the wife is strict. If you request for a 500 pesos cash advance she will only give you 100.

I get to know somebody; he is asking me if I am afraid of armed group. I told him, I have not seen a member of the armed group.

He became my friend and he confesses that he is a member. I told him, but you are not a killer. He said he's going to take me to the countryside.

We get to know each other in a sari-sari (variety) store. He died in an encounter with the government troops. He said I am too strict. Then he introduces himself. After that, we are always together...we always see each other...perhaps he always goes down from the mountain.

He took me to the mountains. I didn't think that anything bad would happen to me when I joined them. I got tired of my hardhearted employer.

I don't have anybody where I can live at peace.

AIDA:

This was the time I was working. My employers said that they might go back to Sugbu, and they had been thinking what would happen to me if they left?

Maybe they thought that I wouldn't be able to find work without them.

I took care of their children, I did the housekeeping and I would have to feed the pigs.

Her husband worked in the rice field. That's why I couldn't go to school, because I had so many house chores. I had to wash the clothes and then take care of the child. I would wash the clothes at night, so that when I woke up, there would be less work to do. I would start at six o' clock to cook, then wash and then clean the house.

I would wonder how long I could stand the work because I was still a child. When I was already busy with a task, then she would ask me to do something more.

I was still small, so when I joined the movement, the people would point out how small I was. So I went to my mother, and later I joined the movement.

I would give my earnings to my mother. My employer would give a loan/advance to my mother, and then I

would work to pay for that.

My father wasn't earning much during this time.

There were 30 persons (from the armed group), all of them armed. They spoke with me and convinced me to go with them. They told me that I should join them that I should be on the side of the farmers.

They explained to me that there should be equality, that when the farmers sell their products, they should get a fair price for their products, these were the things that they were explaining to me.

They told me that if I was inside the movement, then I would be able to help more people. So I thought about it.

After they spoke to me, that very night, we left. When I arrived to meet them that day, they politicized me. They told me that even if I was still young, I could be a big help.

My mother wouldn't agree to let me go with them.

## **TRAINING AND LIFE AS A CHILD SOLDIER**

Life for the girls as a child soldier began with training that was intentional. It focused on political organizing as well as physical training. They were taught why the country needed to be redirected and how the movement and new political system would help the masses of people and make their life better. The girls, once trained politically, were sent out into the villages and countryside to convert and convince the masses of their cause.

Guns and weapons were not issued unless a 12-week training had been completed. There were always people on guard who possessed weapons. Guard duty was usually an assignment given to the men and not to the girls. They were taught that guns should only be fired when there is a specific purpose and that you should never use your gun unless you absolutely must.

The day began very early with exercise and physical conditioning. The physical condition was grueling. Moving from camp to camp was constant and it proved to be exhausting. The girls then went out in small groups, in the late morning, to teach the masses and persuade them of the movement's value. They taught the masses to read and write. The masses in turn provided for many of their needs for food, safety and care and medicine when they were ill or injured. When the masses did not provide for their need usually another comrade in the movement came to their aide.

Criticism groups were held in the afternoon where the members of the group confronted each other and their own self about the ways they related and behaved toward each other. The comrades were working at ways of getting along together. The movement provided the sense of family that they had been longing to have with their own family

Intimate relationships were not permitted between men and women. Any girl under the age of 18 could not be approached for a special relationship with a man. If it was found out or obvious that you had special feelings toward a comrade and you were under 18 you were separated. If after separation you still wanted to pursue this relationship special permission had to be granted to continue the relationship or to marry.

Men were not permitted to abuse women. This made the women feel safe. The prevailing philosophy was that men and women were equal. The girls felt free to express their opinions especially in the criticism groups.

They learned much about self-expression and how to speak publicly for the movement. They were taught that the three basic problems with the government were imperialism, capitalism and feudalism. Preaching

this philosophy to the masses they felt a sense of power and authority. They believed the philosophy of the movement offered the masses a better life.

For many of the girls the main task was to avoid the enemy. They were very fearful of the attacks and raids that often came as a surprise and made them feel even more vulnerable. Their goal was to avoid getting caught in the crossfire and above all else not to get caught by the enemy. They were told that if they were caught by the enemy they would be molested or killed instantly.

They developed loyalties and feelings of attachment toward their fellow comrades in the movement. They witnessed firsthand the shooting and killing of men and women who had become very important to them. Their sense of loss and grief over these repeated losses was profound.

LAYLA:

We were taught about building an organization. This is being taught for 12 days.

They gave me a hammock and a blanket. They taught me how to tie my hammock. It's too cold there (in the mountain). Our female companions gave me clothes.

There's only a small group in the movement. Someone is in charge of organizing. There are four of us.

We don't have arms. No grenade, only backpacks. If only I have finished the three months training, I should have been carrying a gun.

The men take turns in guarding. At around 4 a.m. all of us will have to get up. We have to exercise at 5 a.m. We run for physical conditioning, because it is a very hilly area... Then at 6 a.m. we will have breakfast. At 7:00 we will call for a meeting with the masses. At 5 p.m. we will leave the place.

We don't stay in one place. We have each a hammock with a roof. Somebody brings us food. Every week someone will have to go down to town; at times, the four of us go. We go down and buy food. We are two females and there are two males.

A male and female are not allowed to talk to each other alone. It's forbidden that you take a bath with thin clothes; this may be a cause of temptation among the comrades. Men and women sleep separately. They said you might do something when there's only the two of you.

Wearing lipstick may cause misunderstanding among the boys. We conduct CSC (criticism self-criticism) every afternoon. During this session the comrades say something like Layla, you know what? You are strict, a snob. That's not good. If you act like that, our comrades will go away from you.

I am the organizer in our group, so I have to undergo three months training. I wasn't able to complete it. I facilitate education sessions.

I have experienced small gatherings inside the movement.

We also disagree sometimes but before the day ends we are in good terms again. Our needs are provided. Someone goes down the town to buy our needs. I send letters but it takes too long before they receive them.

You cannot enter a relationship when you are underage. When a guy has a crush on a comrade, he should inform the committee first. Then you would be asked to meet each other personally. Then, when you have feeling for each other, you would be separated, then after some time, you would be allowed to wed.

All of our needs were being provided by the team leader. The team leader makes the decision. You should tell him what your needs are.

We wear light pants and any T-shirt. We were given shampoo and soap. No perfume. The enemy might

smell you.

I am afraid of encounters.

We organize the youth because they move faster and develop faster. It's too tiring to walk in the mountains, I was not used to it.

When we reached the house of the masses (when I was sick) I was given medicine. That was about for three days. When the doctor arrived, I was given a medicine. I didn't feel better so I was taken to another doctor. The following day I was discharged. The masses paid for my hospitalization. I stayed in their house for about one week, then my mother visited me there.

Two or three of us organize about 50 people a day. There are five families in a *sitio*. For every family there are at least five members. At first, one *sitio* will be organized, then, different *sitios* will be called to a meeting. The masses thank us.

When you get arrested, they have to keep on moving from place to place because the captured comrade might give the information of where the other comrades are. If the name of the place is mentioned, they will be implicated...they will be raided.

I told my mama I will not surrender... The comrades say that I will be beaten by the military if I surrender.

You must first undergo training before you carry a gun. I will be nervous and afraid. There are many children there, males, who are even younger than me. According to them, being a child is not a basis, but on how you understand things. Oftentimes the children there are orphans, or those that do not have a father or a mother, or even battered children.

When I joined them in organizing...I have learned everything...everything. I learned more things in the mountain. We have also taught other people how to read and write.

There is radio for communication, transistor radio.

## DENISE:

It was about guns. Then we had to study about why we were there. To explain why there is a revolution now, things like that. They wanted us to really understand. My comrades were very strict during the period of education. But after three weeks, they were already very fond of me, because they said that I would probably develop very fast, because I learned very fast, my brains were very good. They even said that my brain was as good that of the commander.

But I told them that I'm very new and very young, so I wouldn't be as good as the commander. So they said that I could easily become a team leader. So I told them that whatever they wanted, I was willing to do. If you make me a team leader now even today, I would agree. But you have to help me, just give me a task that is within my capacities. But if you give me something very difficult to do, I would still accept it because that's our policy to accept whatever the decision is. But I hope you will judge carefully.

That's why they said even if you're young, you make a very good point. So I told them even when I was still at home, I was already very mature, I was never very childish in my ways, even if I look young, but in my thinking, I wasn't childish.

When I joined the movement there was just a small group around 20.

They were very united. They carried long and short arms. They would really talk to the new recruits like us.

The training was about one week. I was the only girl. I didn't feel any fear. I felt that we had all been in the

seminar, and in the seminar, it was made clear that it was absolutely prohibited to take advantage of women, for men to abuse women was not allowed. It wasn't even allowed to touch each other, to speak to someone of the opposite sex alone, especially in dark places, this was also prohibited.

I felt very safe; I had no fear.

I understood why the girls would sleep separate from the men. If somebody tried to abuse me, both of us had guns.

I really felt comfortable there with the comrades. They would understand what I was trying to say, so I felt more open with them. For example, at home, I would feel embarrassed to speak about problems; I would hesitate to share my thoughts.

Sometimes, at home, my mother would be shouting, then she would be kind all of a sudden. I don't like that, it seems that's a very artificial way to relate. That's why, sometimes, I'm very distant from my mother.

They would give you some advice. When you feel sick, they would take care of you right away. Sometimes, I would feel mortified, because I would fall and the comrades are there seeing you fall. But I just persevered to be able to endure. There were male comrades so I felt self-conscious. So I tried to stop thinking about that because if I were too self-conscious, then I wouldn't learn.

There, women are equal to the men, so you can really express your feelings. We would be up by 4 a.m. and then we would get ready. That's our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). Either we would walk but we all had to be up by then because they said that's usually the time that the enemy would attack. At 4:30 we would start walking.

After walking for some time, then we would check around, visit the houses of the contacts, because sometimes they would be living in different *sitios*. (People already sympathetic to the movement). Then we would gather the people together for a community meeting. Quite a large number would attend.

Then in the afternoon, around 5 p.m., we would start walking, to transfer to another place. When we reached the place, since it was already evening, we would stop, and that's where we would sleep.

We would eat the food that we brought along with us, sometimes we had some rice, a pot, and we would cook our dinner. We would stay in the houses of the people

But whenever we stayed in the houses, we would be afraid that we might be raided by the enemy. That's why I can't sleep right away when we are in the houses of the masses. I was with a small group. There were just seven of us.

There are propaganda units and also propaganda teams. Sometimes the masses would give some support to the party. I don't really know where the funds come from. It would just arrive, and the team leader receives the money for the team. That's what we would use to buy the needed supplies. The team leader would ask what we needed to buy. We didn't have an allowance. We just specify what we need.

Before I joined, according to the comrade who told my friend who brought me here, that there was an allowance of P300/month (\$6), aside from supplying the things we need, that there was additional P300/month. So I thought that if they would supply our needs, then I could send the P300 to my mother. Then she would believe that I was really working. I thought that I could help my mother, but it turned out that it wasn't true that I would receive this money.

I thought that I might as well not have joined but later I felt it doesn't matter because I'm happy here. At least I don't have to worry about my mother all the time. I felt lonely for them, but I could bear it.

The times we would be all together and you could open up all your problems. And you can speak of your

mistakes and of the hurt that you caused someone. When there were times when we didn't have work to do, we would relax, there would be lots of jokes and we would sing together. To everyone, if you are upset about something or someone, this can be discussed. Even relationship with women can be discussed.

If you want to enter a relationship, then the man can approach the woman, or the woman can approach the man, because women also have the right to approach the man. There is just a period of service that you have to finish before you can approach that person. So for example, if a guy wants to court a girl, then you have to speak to the higher authorities about this. You don't approach the girl directly, and each one of you has to be above 18 years old.

If you're not yet 18, as long as your consciousness is well developed and you know a lot of things [it's permissible]. That's to make sure that you can protect yourself, and you don't let yourself get carried away by the man.

Once you court someone, then you won't be allowed to go together that often. You have to wait for three months before you can speak to each other, then the group decides whether it's time for you to spend time with each other or not.

They want you to really get to know the person, whether this person is really right for you or not. Then when you decide to become sweethearts, then you have to wait for several months before you are allowed to get married. They really give a good seminar about this. The woman doesn't really get fooled that easily because of this.

Also if someone dies, the person is buried. Sometimes they can bring your body, then the comrades will bury you, but they don't have caskets. But if the situation is too risky, then your body will be left behind, and your parents would have to come and claim your body. So when the parents get your body, then can have you buried.

Its important that before you enter the movement, they talk to you to understand the reasons why you want to join. For example, if your reasons for joining are just for personal interests only, they will give you a seminar because that's not enough good reason to join. For example, if you join just because you're attracted to a certain man or woman, it's not good to accept you. This could just become a reason to destroy a group, if that person doesn't pay any attention to you, or, for example, if the guy that you are attracted too, doesn't like you. You have to know why you're joining, because once you join, you just can't go home right away. They also don't accept you that easily.

Once you join, you should understand that you're really decided to join.

I think that the movement was able to help the farmers. For example, if in one *barangay* or in one *sitio*, there is a lack of unity among the people, then the movement tries to help the people to unite. The movement will call for a meeting and then try to resolve the conflicts within the *sitio* or *barangay*.

If there are more problems, then they go to the movement to ask for help in resolving the conflict. So, this way conflicts are resolved. And, for example, if there were a big problem with stealing, drug abuse, gambling, drunkenness, we would look for ways to solve these problems. So crimes within the area are controlled. For example, when the crops are destroyed or stolen, then the people ask our group to come and call for a meeting. So someone will have to straighten up and the communal exchange of labor is re-established.

There were projects that they could make use of. But these plans wouldn't materialize if the comrades had not come to talk to them. But we don't force them. We don't force them to have a communal labor exchange, for example. It's up to them if they want to have a labor exchange.

I learned how to use a gun, but I also learned how to express myself. Before I was very shy. But in the

movement, you have to learn to speak to large groups. So when you speak to the masses, you really have to use your brains. When you speak, you have to speak for your principles.

Now, it's not so easy to convince me (more critical). In the past, I was dependent on my mother, but now I have to assert for what I want.

They taught me a little about guns, but this was only for a week because XX, the one who was teaching me, his group separated from ours. Then we were far away.

I really like the times we come together but there were times, when I felt so tired, because it was so tiring to keep on walking. So sometimes, I would request the comrades to rest for a while because I was so tired. Especially when there are messages that the enemy is around the area. Then they would say, what if we just left you behind because you are so slow. But I knew that they wouldn't really leave me behind, I knew that. It was just a story.

But sometimes I could convince them to rest, because I would really insist. Whenever it was time for our groups to separate, then we would cry. When we have meetings, then we are together for two to three days, then we have to separate again, it would be so lonely, we would cry, hug each other when we have to leave.

So sometimes, we would tell each other not to cry, because tears could lead us to our defeat. So we just cheer each other up. It's hard, but we would tell each other that we would see each other again. There are occasions that women can prove that whatever men can do, women can do well. Even I could do it, if I could withstand all difficulties, then that means that I can persevere.

Sometimes, the men would say, You have to develop politically so that I can court you, and I would reply, so you want to court me.

Then they would say, I would like to court you so that I would be inspired. I would tell them, I really want to develop but don't make me a reason for your development because there might come a time that we get separated, if there's an encounter, I might get lost or die. Then I would tell them, Don't make me the reason that you would lose your commitment, that you would get depressed, or that you be weakened.

It wasn't just one man who said this, but a group of them said they were interested to court me. So I really persevered in my tasks. But when I got arrested, some of them went home, not just the boys, but also some girls as well, because it was so lonely.

The most important thing was to be of help to the masses, so for example, if we stayed in one house, we would talk to the residents. We would help them to understand. For me this was very important because we were there to help them. I would tell myself that it doesn't really matter if we get separated from the comrades because we would see them again, it's not important to be together all the time, otherwise we couldn't do our work.

Our aim was to help the masses understand.

After three weeks, they let me hold a gun, but I was so afraid that it might fire accidentally, then I might get hit and die.

So they asked me, what's more important, that I die or I kill. So I told them. I won't die if I just hold the gun. So sometimes, I had to bring the gun.

Once, XX asked me to bring the gun, but it was so heavy. Especially at night, when we have to walk and we have to carry our pack, then you have to hold your slippers and it's very dark.

So I told him, "You be the one to bring the gun," and he said "OK, I'll carry the gun but you carry the bullets, just stay behind me so if there's any emergency, you will be close by."

When I first joined the movement, I didn't know how to organize the masses, I would just talk to the masses about religion. In our faith it is wrong to kill. But I never got to use the gun anyway.

When I was there, our policy was that if we could still escape and avoid using the gun, then we just run if there's still enough time. But in case the enemy is already there and there's no way to escape, then we have to use the gun.

I was very comfortable there, I really liked to be there, I would have preferred to stay there and follow the comrades.

Sometimes I would have a headache, especially when I was tired and when we would have to stay in the woods, then I wouldn't feel so well. Then my team leader would ask me to write and make the visual aids.

When we give an education, then our team leader would ask me to write on the board. Sometimes I would complain and ask for some rest, then they would give me some time.

And when I have my menstruation, then they would allow me to rest while the men keep on with their tasks.

Sometimes, when we keep on walking you feel very tired and then when there's news that the enemy is close by, I wonder, will I still have the strength to run when the emergency happens? Sometimes when they say that you are one the bringing some trouble and that I'm delaying them because I'm a girl and I'm moving very slowly. And then, most of them are men, while I'm the only girl in the group. But the truth is that, when we are going to move out, I get ready very quickly. Sometimes I would get so upset that I would cry, then, I just keep quiet.

Sometimes I would cry and tell them to stop because I can't bear it anymore.

But sometimes they don't want to stop fooling around, so I cry. The comrade (the one I liked best) who died was the one I would approach whenever I had a problem. He was very good and he knew how to get along with the comrades. He was the one who helped us to understand, I noticed that, but we were just friends, we were together a lot. My feelings developed but I didn't speak about it because I was embarrassed.

When we were raided, I was asleep and he couldn't wake me up. Perhaps if he just left me behind, he wouldn't have died. I didn't hear the gunshots, so I didn't get up, he tried to wake me up, so he lifted me up and then he jumped and I jumped with him. I heard someone moan, but I had to go. I thought of running back but I couldn't do anything more because he was dead. So I thought if I go back, then I would probably die, too, and he wouldn't come back to life anyway. I didn't see whom they had killed. But I think that the soldiers who raided us knew we were there from the start. When they saw me then they got hold of me.

I was so mad, I really would have killed, if only I had a gun, I might have killed them. But by the time we reached the detachment, there wasn't anything that I could do. And then the soldiers treated me well, they didn't maltreat me, so I couldn't do anything. I was blocked, so I surrendered. Before that, we had been walking, and then we reached this house at midnight. We were so tired, so we didn't have dinner, we went straight to sleep. After 12:00, they woke me up because the girls were to sleep in separate quarters from the men, so I slept on the bed of the people who owned the house.

When they woke me up, they said we have to walk again. So I replied, we just got here and you want to walk again. But they told me it was time to move so I got up and packed up. At around 2 a.m., we started walking. We were walking towards the house of the elder. We were going to the house of the elder sibling of the surrenderee who had died.

Then we would organize in that area. After organizing in that area, then we would leave. We started walk-

ing at 2 a.m. and finished at 5 a.m. Then we had coffee and breakfast. After breakfast, we had a meeting to organize. After the meeting, we went home and had lunch. The others went off to take a bath but I went to sleep. But before I went to sleep, that morning I already had taken a bath. So this guy said, can we take a bath together, because he also wanted to take a bath at the same time. He said, Let's go together because I'm the one who knows the way. I was hesitant to go with him because the men and women in the movement are not supposed to go the public bathing area at the same time. That was the only occasion that he requested this. So I told him that you have to ask the permission of the team leader because I don't want to be reprimanded.

After we organized the people, then we went back for lunch. Our team leader and three, no, only two comrades, stayed in the house opposite the one we were staying in. They were chatting with the people there, who were also masses, one was a former comrade. One of our comrades kept on walking back and forth. The four of them were outside the house. I had asked our team leader if it was OK to go to sleep and he said fine, because you must be very tired. At around 3 p.m., they walked off because they wanted to visit someone. I went to sleep. I was up in the house, but I was wondering why one of the comrades would go up the house and then down again. He kept on doing this. So J. was telling me not to go to sleep and I would tell him, I really need to go to sleep. J. was upstairs with me and he would touch me.

I didn't want to be touched because this was prohibited, and if someone sees us, we would be criticized. So I told him not to touch me because if someone sees us, we will be reprimanded. So when I would lie down, he would pull me up, because he said that I shouldn't go to sleep. He even said, If you go to sleep now, you'll regret it. So I told him, No, I'm going to sleep. So after a while, he let me be. When I fell asleep, the next thing I realized was that he was trying to wake me up. He kept on trying to wake me up, but I didn't listen because I hadn't heard any shots.

He said the enemy is already here, but I didn't believe him, so he fired his gun, he lifted me up then jumped out of the house, that's why I had to jump out as well. When I jumped out, the firing started, then I heard him moan. P. and I were opposite each other, we were in just one place, we were trapped and we couldn't escape. So I told my comrade we have to surrender. So we slowly crawled because the soldiers had shouted that we have to come closer to them.

Then I was surprised to see that my comrade who was going to surrender with me had already been killed, because a bullet had hit him. So I was the only one left.

I decided to surrender because I saw that none of my comrades had a gun and I didn't have a gun either. I didn't have a gun, so I decided to surrender.

They asked me to crawl to their position, then, they caught me. Then they withdrew slowly towards their detachment. They were able to run. The only gun we had had been left behind. So that's why they couldn't defend, because they had no arms to use in attacking.

So the soldiers asked me if I was in the armed group and I said no, because I was afraid that they would hurt me.

So I said that I was just one of the masses. They asked me why I was in that area, so I said that I went there because they had called for a meeting. So it was only when we arrived in the detachment that I admitted that I was in the armed group.

## GISELLE:

Inside the movement it's like I have a mother, a father and elder siblings but we get along well with each other even if we don't even know where each of us comes from. I don't know the details of their life.

Inside the movement I found the family life that I was searching for. I really do not know who they really are but they are very good people and they are like my family.

They're very different from my real family. The things that I have been looking for in a family, it seems that I found it with my comrades. The only difference is that it's not done through the correct means.

I said, Comrade, what if we get shot? I would ask them the most difficult questions. She replied, Well, if that happens, it's plain misfortune. I asked her again, What will I do if I see you losing your breath and dying? And what will you do if you see me with bullet wounds?

We'll just administer the medicines that we have with us. But these are not proper medicines that the doctors will prescribe. Just give whatever medicines as long as there is medicine. But that means I'll really die. Maybe, you'll even die ahead of me.

I have experienced seeing someone die. He was assigned to guard the entrance of the camp and then there was an ambush. They really held the enemy outside the perimeter of the camp. They did everything to keep the enemy from entering the camp. Unfortunately, he was shot.

I really became more inspired by the group. They became even stronger and even more courageous. We saw him, freshly wounded. We asked him, A., can you make it? He just shook his head. A., can you make it? Please get hold of yourself, strengthen yourself and do not let fear overtake you.

But he has so many wounds. Then he could no longer hear us. When we arrived in this second place, we told him: A., we are going to treat you. We will extract the bullet from your leg. When we got the bullet, he died.

It was a pity because we were already very near the area where he worked.

Our policy is to fight as much as possible, but when the situation is too difficult, then we have to save/ preserve the group and ourselves. He was in a hurry to leave. He belonged to our group.

I was searching for something, the feeling of belonging to a family. I like sharing stories and ideas with comrades. All of them have very interesting experiences; I wanted to know their stories before they die.

I picture myself dying too. But then I also feel that I'm not going to die yet. But I can't help feeling afraid. It is difficult to die in such a situation — no relatives, no siblings and perhaps no one will see you die.

Not one relative came to his wake. I thought this is the big problem. If that happens to me, I thought, maybe my brothers and sisters will not be able to see me too, because they don't know I'm in the movement I don't want to... If something happens to me, it's OK. If ever anything happened to me, well that's how it should be. You have to accept it.

I know it's wrong to kill. But this was before I became a member of the movement. So I prayed to the Lord, when this happens to me, whatever happens to me, please help me. Then I thought does God know me? But I know that He knows everything about me. I prayed to the Lord for guidance in whatever happens.

In the movement I took this course on the three main problems. It's about the country, the government.

So that you understand why we are combating the government, the roots of the hardship of the people, the history of the country. Then afterwards, when you know all of this, how to contact, how to organize the people/masses (according to the armed group, the three basic problems are imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism).

If you have understood the basic education, then you can proceed to contacting the masses. I had this contact, he was a village councilor. He was about 50 years old, the age of my father.

So the comrades told me, You have been very quiet, so tonight you will be the one to talk to this person. So I asked, How will I do that? Tomorrow? They said, yes, tomorrow.

At first I said no, that man is as old as my father. Why me? Can I manage that? That was because I didn't have enough confidence yet. So when we met him, I said, Now you will talking to another group that will help you to understand more about the movement.

I was very nervous and it was very hard for me to explain [about the movement]. I turned on the flashlight and started to discuss with him. The village councilor asked me who the leaders of the movement are. So I explained that is very difficult for us to divulge the names of the leaders. It will also be very hard for him if I give him the information.

I told him, You have to understand that we have to keep the leaders names a secret. So he said that he understood that it had to be kept a secret. Then I talked to him about the situation. I gave this example about his own livelihood. Sir, you have been toiling the fields for so long yet you have not become prosperous. You have been working these fields for a long time and life hasn't improved at all.

Then I asked him about his own ideas regarding his situation. So I started talking to him about the things I learned in our education sessions and the stories of the masses.

I gave the example of the price of *copra* (dried coconut) — who dictates the price of the copra? Who dictates the prices of the things we buy? Then I told him that we are in the movement to fight for the masses and to serve the people. We are not being paid a salary.

When we hear a movement of the leaves, we have to get up because it might be the enemy. But when the soldiers come to you, they will wake you up, to get your properties and yet they are receiving salaries from the government. The farmer said, You're right, they got my chicken, I was planning to sell that on Sunday.

I am afraid of the soldiers, the councilor said. So I asked him, Do the soldiers abuse you? I realized that we have to respect the opinions of the people and not get into arguments with them. I explained to him, we are ready to undergo hardships but we won't give up on our fight. We are ready to face even death.

Then I told him that the second point that we wanted to explain to him was the need to organize. Then I suggested to him to gather all the people so that we can organize them. When everyone becomes active, then they can choose their officials.

Then I became nervous again because I suggested a different point. That person was our second contact in that area. Then you meet with contacts.

You approach each contact and convince them to go to a certain place where the meeting will be held. You have to choose the active and the reliable ones. Then you can pinpoint the leaders, the officers of the organization in that place.

If there at least three groups in that area, then the movement can operate there. If you are able to do that, then you will be promoted to the level of commander. But it depends on your capacity, your brains.

You have to be careful, because oftentimes, the barrio officials also want to be the leaders of the organization, so you have to explain the difference between the organization and the government.

My favorite task was organizing. To help them set up their own organization, to help understand, to help them understand the security measures. This was the most enjoyable part of all.

You have to be careful not to disclose too much information, to make sure that the news doesn't travel to other people who might use the information for the wrong purpose. I have experienced this, it is very difficult. Sometimes, I am the first to withdraw because I am so nervous. However, the comrades want to

advance, to fight and to uphold your rights.

That's why I fought, but my mind was divided, should I go forward or should I withdraw. That's when I got hit. My comrade died. I thought then, come what may, I have not done anything wrong, I was still able to call out to the comrades, so this is what happened to me.

What was difficult was the hiding all the time, but the raid went very well. I didn't like to use a gun, to have to kill someone. I was afraid to carry a gun because I wondered, "Where would I use this?" I cannot deny that I may have killed someone. I was very anxious. But I had to fight! When we have a military operation, we wear uniforms, like the military fatigues. We have our *malong* as our blanket.

We have a hammock also made from taffeta cloth. In our group, we also have a nurse and a doctor. In each group, there is a raffle to choose who will become the medical officer. He/she is trained outside, not locally. But all of us have to learn medical skills and survival skills. We have to be complete, just in case something goes wrong.

There is someone in charge of finances. Every month, our unit receives 5,000 pesos. But there are many of us in a group, from 15 to 20. Sometimes, there is some money left over. There are some comrades who have children. But the children don't join the fighting. If someone in the group has a family, then we have to budget for the children, for school needs and other things that children need. Other comrades are able to go home twice a year. I wrote to our family but I didn't put a return address. I told them the address wasn't important.

We get up at 6:30, then we go to the barrio, visit the people. Then at 5:00 p.m. we start walking again.

In our camps, we had small huts. Then we hang our hammocks inside. Once I slept on the floor of the small hut and a snake came crawling inside. Then when it had gone far away, that was the only time when I shrieked! One of the things that really scare me is a snake. Others are afraid of ghosts or spirits, but I don't believe in those things

There are formalities and ceremonies. That is their policy. You have to share your ideas, be open or honest about what you are thinking.

In weddings, instead of rings, you hold bullets. The one who officiates is the commander. Then you talk about the couple about to be married. Then they discuss the group, the movement and its principles. They hold three real bullets. There are no godmothers or godfathers in the wedding. After the ceremony, then they sing revolutionary songs. When they celebrate the anniversaries they are very festive, even when they are in the mountains, it is very lively!

Some people will bring a chicken, or a pig or a *carabao* for the feast, so that everyone can have a good meal. There are theater performances, other cultural presentations. But we had come from an expansion area, which was far from the base area where this celebration was held. So we only got to see half of the program because we came late.

Yes, there are policies, that have to be followed and nobody is allowed to violate them. For example, you cannot go out with your old friends. When I first joined the movement, they wanted to assign me to the area where I came from. I declined because I told them that there are too many people who will recognize me.

It is prohibited to have other relationships with the opposite sex if you are already married. I didn't see any fights or conflicts inside the movement.

The comrades were always happy and they enjoyed themselves. I was really sad when I heard that my sister was getting married because I really wanted to witness it. So I asked the comrade, may I go home to visit? I had heard of the wedding through a neighbor of one of our contacts. I saw the pictures of the wedding later,

when I got injured in the encounter.

The comrade said, How would you explain to them where you came from? It's possible for you to go home as long as you think you can explain without giving them the real information. So I thought, How am I going to be able to explain why I do not have any money and why I have become so dark complexioned.

Therefore, I told the comrade that I would not go. I was so mad at myself. I saw the pictures of the wedding later, when I got injured in the encounter.

It was there in the movement that I experienced being respected, no matter what your age was. They were very helpful. Sometimes, I would request an older comrade to make me a knot for my hammock and he would do it. Even they, the older ones, whatever tasks they ask others to do, they are also ready to do.

We had our own assignments. Someone had to be up earlier, someone else had to cook breakfast; all of us had our chores. We had to study; we were very serious about the studies. Then one week, I was assigned to be one to speak in front of the people. That's where I learned to speak in public. I was no longer shy. Before, I never used to speak in public. That's where I learned to speak in large groups, to talk to other people.

But now, this isn't important anymore. What is important is the respect for the people.

It was in the third encounter that I was injured. At first, I thought, I can't fire my gun. Because if I fire my gun, someone might be hit. We were staying in the woods, far away from the houses, so there was no one to warn us.

So they asked me why didn't I fire my gun? I was afraid to get hit, I'm not used to firing a gun yet. The second time, we were having training. We were about to leave but we encountered the military forces. There wasn't that much firing. Our commander shouted that we could not surrender, if you do not interfere with us, we will not meddle with you. We want peace, he shouted. I was very afraid, I wanted to run. So our commander said, That's enough, let's go.

The other side (military) had a microphone and we didn't. So our commander said, Go ahead, run. I was very amused because some of the comrades slid and we kept crawling to get away. Later, someone said, There are no more soldiers, we can get up now. One of those who run stumbled. The other comrade hit his abdomen on the rock. I thought a bullet hit him.

The next day, we had a lecture to discuss what had happened the day before. I was laughing, so they asked me, Why do you have that attitude, you are laughing at the comrades?

The third incident was this: there were very many of us then. The comrades said that it was just a practice run. But I knew that this time was really the event we had been preparing for.

When I wasn't feeling well, they threatened, we will leave you with the family of the masses until you feel better. We had very good relations with the people. The people felt that it was better to deal with the armed group than with the government. They preferred to assist us than to give help to the government army. They were more afraid of the soldiers, but they felt more comfortable talking to comrades.

When we didn't have food and we passed by the house of the people, we would ask whether they had left-over or cold rice. Then they would say, That is OK; we will just bring you some food. Then when they come, they would bring the chicken already cooked. They treated us like their own children.

When a bullet wounded me, one comrade pulled me out. I told him that I was feeling very tired. I got something to bind my wound, so that it wouldn't bleed so much. It was around 6 p.m. when I got hit. When I fired my gun, everything seemed to stop, but I'm not sure if I hit anyone.

I felt we would probably lose this fight. The only one left was my elder male comrade and another chubby

comrade. The others had been hit but they were still alive. But I told my comrade, so you're still alive. So my comrade told me, You've been hit, but you're still making us laugh. But I was crying already and feeling very weak. I wanted to cheer him up.

He said that he could carry me on his back. But I told him to go on and try to save himself. Then I rested my back on a tree. When the soldiers came, they said, Hey girl, you're still very young! We will take you with us.

I replied, What for? To use me to get back at my comrades there in the mountains? Then the other soldier said, We will kill you! You are just an added burden to the government! I replied, Go ahead and kill me, do you think I'm afraid to die, but the first soldier said, What if it was one of your own family who was hit? Help me lift her, don't make me an accomplice (partner-in-crime) in killing her. Then they told me you're very audacious!

When we arrived at the headquarters the soldiers said, You're very lucky and you even have air-conditioning! The other three boy comrades were arrested. The other comrades died.

In the movement I felt this sense of power. I was carrying a high-powered rifle but then I always remembered that I must not waste any bullet. And one must not play with rifles because there's the danger of accidental firing. I always clean my rifle. I like cleaning it, but I remind myself I must not use it.

In the movement the policy is there is a basic difference between men and women. If you are a woman, you cannot be a commander because it is the commander that launches the defense in case of an ambush by the enemy.

A woman combatant is not as strong as the male combatant who is quicker in evading bullets, stronger and more capable of climbing high terrain. Given a gun-fighting situation when there is already the need to run and retreat, a woman is usually left behind because she is weaker.

In the beginning when there were just a small number of members, both men and women were issued guns. But then the women were slow in moving and running and cannot follow the instructions of the commander quickly. That's why now you cannot see women commanders anymore. Then men are the ones who are leading.

Women are not allowed to wear skirts because it will be difficult for them to move freely when evading or running from the enemy.

One cannot apply perfume because the dogs will smell that. Sometimes dogs can remember the smell of perfume, so perfume is prohibited. We are also not allowed to use make-up. Short or long hair style is fine. In the revolutionary army sometimes it's OK to have long hair. Like when we had to do a military operation, when some of us had to pretend to be employees.

One of the female comrades, who were very pretty, wore a skirt, and when we saw her legs, they were very fair. She had smooth legs, so when the soldiers saw her, they just stared, they were so brainless! So this comrade, named J., went up into the office, the soldiers had no idea.

When the comrades already took control of the situation, the other groups, like mine came out of the vehicles. The people were staring because the others like me were very small. Then we went up and I took control of the machine gun.

The first group who went to the military quarters was the taller and bigger comrades, who looked like the ordinary soldiers. So when we came out, they were very surprised. I went to the top and took hold of the machine gun. Then two soldiers chased me, I really thought that would be the end of me. Our operation was successful.

I don't think I can face up to the responsibility of being a commander. If I am the commander and I am

shot, I do not think I will survive the gunshot wound while the revolutionary troops are retreating.

That's how I feel. If I were the commander, I really cannot make it. I don't think I can take on the role of commander. But then I don't think there is any difference in the treatment or the relations between a commander and a subordinate inside the movement.

There was no higher distinction if you were in the military, work or education, because the movement's main goal was giving education to the people.

If there is no food, everybody has no food. Sometimes, when there is food, our food is even better than the food for the commander.

When we prepare our sleeping quarters, sometimes the space is very small, so I have a hard time going to sleep

I actually told one (comrade) that I don't want to be courted when he was showing some signs. That's how I discouraged suitors. But there were times when I was kinder and I entertained them. But in the end, I told them they couldn't expect anything from me. I was still under age. That man who was trying to court me got a disciplinary action.

## ELSE:

I did not join the training. ...I joined the group but not the training. I just listened while they explain to us the Party...my brother introduced me to the comrades...I just stay near the blackboard. They are explaining about the party lists. There were politicians present in the meeting.

I put manila paper on the blackboard for them to write on. I don't help in writing, I am afraid to do that...they gave me the radio...I should inform them if there are approaching government troops It was only that...to join them...(look if there are) soldiers they said, (I have to) crawl...glance... Then I became interested to go back in the mountain.

The people, they are so kind. They have a lot of questions. There are projects, they would ask the politicians for large amount to for *barangay* projects ...they help organize the projects and they would solicit and then plan.

I became interested. The people can easily understand things. What was not too easy for me to understand are the terms that they mention having books. I have books on their policies.

You should not be a burden to the masses. If you combine them, there are men in the group. My brother belongs to a different group...the combatants are another group. My brother's group organizes. They have guns. They bring guns. All of them have guns.

There, in the group, you have to change your character. You have to follow many policies. You cannot think of wandering around. Sometimes you want to wander around, but you are not sure of the situation.

I have seen medical teams. Medical teams are composed of females. There are many children like us. When I was recruited I was afraid of what the plans might be, who did the recruitment, I am thinking what would be the next plan for me, why is it that children like us who have parents who are in the mountains?

What they are looking for are You don't steal, you don't take the things of others, you are not hardheaded and you don't have any record. A bad record means you steal. They don't they look for those who faint very easily.

Nobody in the group is younger than me. There were four girls. Two already died. Our group organizes the masses. We wake up at 5 a.m. One of us does the talking. We stay at the house of the masses. Then we

would help the house owner with the housework...at night, we informed them that we would be having a meeting or an assembly...then we will eat...rest and leave the place. After explaining to the masses, then we help the masses with their work. I will not run...we didn't put away our backpacks; we would just give an excuse or an alibi.

We bring our own food. Sometimes when we don't have food, the people feed us...they invite us to eat with them...they would say, One of you can eat with us. The people treat us well...unlike now, it's like they disagree with the policies. They are united before...it's a pitiful situation.

In our group team members help one another. The females have different tasks from men. All of them prepare the agenda...they divide the work, they help each other...all of them cook. All of them have guns.

I could not send my family letters, same as the situation of my comrades...my brother would just inform us if it were safe for us to visit our families

We use herbal medicines...sometimes we buy medicines...we also have medics.

In connection with courtship should be made known to all...secrets are not allowed. We have a book on that.

We have projects about children. We tell the children to avoid drugs...refrain from going around...my brother and our other comrades help in planting, they plant rice.

The movement will help if you have any problem, if you have offended anyone, then you have to speak to that person and the group will discuss it together. If you disobey the policies you will be criticized.

One unforgettable experience in the military was, I was nervous, it was morning, we didn't join our other comrades. The soldiers passed by...we walked away from the fiesta...there are three of them in the house of my uncle. They passed by the house. We're lucky that they did not go up the stairs. Because if they did, we would surely die. If they come up the stairs I will not run...we didn't put away our backpacks; we would just give an excuse or an alibi.

It was an unforgettable experience when we were informed of approaching government troops. I carry a gun, when I was younger. It is not proper to fire gun without a purpose. You should not use your gun if you don't have to kill anybody. You should not use your gun if you don't have to kill anybody.

When I left the movement I told them that I am going back to school. They say it's fine with them if I want to study. They said that it's a good thing I informed them about it. They did not stop me. They said that I could always go back anytime. They are good people. They understand.

#### AIDA:

When I first joined (the movement) I felt no fear and I asked so many questions like what was the life of the masses, why is there war. I asked them what do we do with the masses. They said that we should help the masses and make them understand our principles.

We had education meetings. At first there were 30 in our group. We were reduced to five people. The others formed other groups. We were reduced to five people. The others formed other groups.

We had to undergo education first. That's how it is in the movement, study first. They did not give me any task yet until I have undergone some studies. Only then did they give me some task.

We attacked enemy detachments. We first underwent (military) training. Only for a day. We were 2,000, we were many. You have to be swift, very swift. We were trained and taught how to move quickly. You have to be fast, very fast. We were trained what to do, there are instructions to follow. You are really being taught. We were taught how to run with full pack and M16 rifle. We wear colored clothes (given by the comrades)

so as not to be seen.

There were supplies, sometimes none yet we cannot ask for food; the masses must give food voluntarily. We cannot force them to give us food. Really prohibited (to force them to give us food). It's really up to the masses. The masses were not even informed that it's prohibited.

We had our hammock, complete with covering, the works. Heavy. We wear shoes or boots that we get from the cleaning, confiscated things from the enemy. When they get killed, we get the things.

Well, it's not really just a matter joining for joining's sake. They make you understand. They take good care of you. Without that, I really will just go back home because it's too tiring.

Women also have the right to express their problems. I ask them if they can give some help, they would say, what about? My father needs money. They would always say, don't worry because we will write down your request. But we need to find some money first.

I told them that might be too late. My father's life is more important to me than money. I said maybe it would be better for me to go home first so that I'd be there whatever happens to my father. They tried to stop me by saying it's not my father who will die but rather it's me who might be killed by the military

The highest problem, they say, is capitalism. We had complete stuff like blackboard and the like. If there were new recruits, they sometimes assigned me to handle their education. They gave me many duties then.

We were taught to rely on the masses. For example, if enemy troops are present, we are not afraid we should not be afraid to enter a territory because there are organizations that pass on information to us. The course was over a month long.

We were all considered equal. We do not look at a person as a commander or teacher. A comrade can choose to do some task of her own initiative. In the movement, there was no one acting like a boss. All must work.

In the movement, you will be criticized and admonished: Why did you not do your task? Why did you not cook? Why did you depend so much on others? And you must say things frankly. Whether that person is a commander or a teacher as long as that person committed a violation, you can voice out your criticism.

There's no place for fearing reprisal in blurting your criticisms because that person is, say, a commander. If a person has done something wrong, it is necessary that you tell the person that he has done something wrong. That's the movement's policy. You must not be wary of giving criticisms. You must shed your bourgeois ways that still come from [traits] outside the movement.

For example, you were a teacher and you still carry on some of the privileged attitude like asking people to bring you food. You must change that. If you want to join the movement you must change your ways. You cannot bring your old attitudes to the armed struggle. You must change some traits. You must be advanced in your character because you are given tasks.

You educate the new recruits; you have to be calm in the face of many things [like being criticized]. You have to make people understand many things. That's what I learned in the movement. And if you have proven yourself as advanced, you are given many tasks.

For example I have this idea, then I became a leader. Then I explain to them what we are supposed to do. I explain about exploitation. You have to teach them whatever it is you have understood from the education sessions.

I taught a small group of about 15. We go out as teams to different areas in groups of three, four, two or five. And we go to different areas and we only see one another during meetings when there are things to

discuss. Otherwise, we are apart sometimes for many months — intervals of three, four or two months. We'll see each other again during another meeting.

In the movement, such groups are not attached permanently. They are thankful that I was able to help them. In fact, they did not want to release me because they said I am a big help in educating the masses. But I really tried hard to study. When I tried so hard to absorb the lessons, I felt like I'm going out of my mind. I had to understand immediately. Because in the movement, you really have to be quick in understanding, cannot afford to be slow.

In the movement, the schedule is very fast and these lessons will not be repeated anymore. We only had one education session a year. You have to understand at once because the lesson will not be reviewed the following day. Education sessions must be finished fast because we must be quick and vigilant against a lurking enemy. You must absorb the instructions given by the teacher so you can immediately apply these later in your subsequent tasks. For we have a ruling in the movement: when the commander says that you have to be deployed in a new area, you have to go.

In the movement, you must obey the command of whoever is above you. In fact, I was captured because of the many errands that they asked me to do. When we meet people coming from our tribe, we speak our tongue. I was forced to politicize people although I was not used to that. But we still had to make the people from our tribe understand about the education session of the movement. There should have been many recruits from our tribe. It's the same whatever tribe you come from. The commander treats everyone in the same way, no one's given special treatment.

The best part of the teaching was teaching the whole idea of cooperation and mutual support so that if somebody gets sick, say the children, there's some money that has been kept as savings.

Like when there is a need to plant corn, it's better if this is done collectively. This was our advice but we did not dictate, the masses did what they wanted to do. This was our advice to help them during times of need like when somebody gets sick, there will be some money for the hospital. After all, you cannot go to the hospital without money. You need to pay cash in the hospital.

Thus we taught them to do collective farming. That's what we teach the people. We don't really tell them to just join the movement, it's really up to the individual's desire to join and serve the people. We do not recruit indiscriminately even though we do not know the person well. We have to make them understand [what the movement is all about] and then, they think and decide for themselves. It depends upon their own decision if they want to join or not.

We do not allow deception. The teachings we impart to them can really help them. We do not teach things that will not be beneficial to them.

I was responsible for giving advice or relaying messages given by our commander to other groups. Likewise, I was also the one who relayed messages to our commander from other groups.

I had initiative. The truth is I did not finish grade two, but I learned so much from the education we had in the movement through my own effort. I learned how to read at that time.

It was during (my stay there) this time that I really learned to read and write. Although they taught these things to us, I really tried to learn arduously until I can read and write a little.

In the beginning I did not want to handle the radio because I did not know how to operate it. I just tried it hands-on. Our commander did not even have to give me a one-on-one lesson. He just handed me the radio and said, it's up to you..

I was anxious because I did not know how to use it. (I really tried to learn it, until I knew about it, that's

how I learned to use the radio.) I started with a little learning and then developed my skills, until I really learned how to use the radio. If I had not been captured, I would still be the radio operator because I was the most reliable female operator.

Being a radio operator was not my sole duty. I also had other tasks like, for example, handling people, I experienced it.

I was a leader. That was disturbing because I was very young, yet I was leading people a lot older than me. Like when enemy troops are near, I was supposed to be responsible for other people's lives.

It was also physical burden because I had to carry my radio; the radio is my permanent responsibility. I had to lead the members since I was the squad leader. Just thinking about all these burdened me so much. But I just carried on these tasks. But being responsible for other people was distressing. What if an encounter happens?

My God, it's either they die or I die in the crossfire. Because I am the one leading them. That's my problem in the movement. But I was not forced into this. If you can't handle it, why force yourself?

If you can stand up to say no, you can say so. I came to the point when I reasoned out that I couldn't handle people. My commander just said that it's a temporary situation and that I was just being tested if I can handle a team or not. They said that I was good because even if I face great difficulties with my tasks at hand, I really tried hard. That's the reason why they gave me important responsibilities. They had such regard for me.

I had mixed feelings. I thought that I could handle them well but what disturbed me was when the time came when we were faced with the enemy. I got nervous when there were enemy troops around.

God forbid, our experience was merely avoiding the enemy. Nothing happened. If we can withdraw, we will. Thank God that nothing bad happened, no casualties.

Then I told my superiors that I really couldn't carry on with such responsibility. They said no problem. I was the team leader for maybe for a month. It was up to me if I could take it or not, that's what they told me. But of course I have a radio and I can connect with them. I can call them. What they did not agree with was for me to just return to my old position once that I had already handled the team.

The men took care of me and did not make me carry heavy loads. But I never allowed them to carry my gun [rifle?] even if it's heavy. It cannot be anywhere but near me because if ever the military attacks, I will surely retaliate and get even. My team members would say what a brave commander I was then.

Even cadres from the region would comment on my courage. I really felt so bad when I was captured because I stopped my [revolutionary] work. I even got sick because of too much thinking — thinking of all the tasks that I left behind and that I might not be able to go back to the movement again. I cried so much when I was with the infantry battalion because I really wanted to go back. I wanted to go home.

They chided me: We're not against your going back. But sorry, we cannot do that. We cannot be sure that there won't be military operations anymore. This is our last warning to you, if you get caught again; we are not sure what our companions (referring to the government troops) may do to you.

But, sorry, you can't go back. And if you do, you will have to face military operations again. So we are warning you about your desire to return: We can't help it if anything happens to you when you encounter our forces again. We are already trying to help you but you refuse it. So we couldn't care less if anything happens to you again inside the movement, that's what the leader said.

Totally incensed, I just kept quiet even if my chest felt like bursting with anger. I should not have been captured, if not for a comrade who packed his bags, surrendered and identified me.

He surrendered to the soldiers and was given money in return [for information]. That's what happened, I wouldn't have been caught if he didn't pinpoint/identified me. I was caught at the time when we were on the way to the city for a rally.

When I was captured, I was very hostile to the military and resisted being brought to their camp, I don't like to go to the camp. If only I had my gun then I would have fought them. I don't care if I get killed as long as I also kill those who betrayed and identified me. I was thinking, I don't care if you kill me or do whatever, as long as I can

They forced me and I threatened them about how they will pay for what they've done to me. You see, I was already sick then, but I was so angry too. They [military] said that there's no problem and that they will arrange for my medical check-up, they will have me cured.

I could have been killed then. I heard them talk about killing me. I just thought they might kill me. I imagined they'd kill me if I refused to give information. I was so desperate because I was captured alone, I did not know where to ask for help.

I am alone. I did not even know these civilians who accompanied me. My anger had not subsided when they investigated me.

I was actually afraid they might molest me. They said I should be thankful because the soldiers who captured me were good. I was just lucky to have humane captors because other captives were just killed instantly.

What I really liked in the movement is the fact that I could be of help and I could give some advice whenever there is some problem in the area.

Besides my capture another time that I was afraid was in one encounter, there was a comrade who died. It was in our area. We raided a detachment. I was new then, just three months in. I already joined the raid. We raided the detachment. We got rifles. One of our comrades was killed. We could not conduct funeral rites anymore because we were in haste. When we finish a difficult operation, we travel to a position that is very far from enemy position. There we build huts just like in a camp. There we express our grief for the departed comrade. We hold a testimonial and a tribute to the comrade — reviewing the things he had done whether favorable or not. We all cried then.

Weddings were allowed as long as both parties are compatible. It's up to the person. Women have rights as well as men. Women can initiate courtship. Both men and women can freely express feelings of love. Because both of you can fall in love. For example, if I'm in love with you, I will not tell you directly but to the commander. You would first inform the commander about this, just like, Hey commander I like that comrade. The commander then tells the other party about this. Then the commander will know about the feelings of the other party, if s/he has the same sentiments or not. For all you know s/he shares the same feeling but is just hiding it. There will be some appraisal whether both of you are compatible. When you are finally allowed to court the other, you must be ready to either acceptance or rejection. Because a man, just like a woman, can also reject a lover.

There were other problems. I experienced so many problems. Regarding food because there were times when we had no food to eat. The presence of enemy troops was always a problem.

During military operations, sometimes for a week, there were times when we could not eat at all. Cooking rice is not allowed to avoid producing smoke. Usually, we would be able to eat only during nighttime. But the next day, you cannot be choosy with food. You have to fill your lunchbox with whatever leftover food is available. You eat even the leftover.

As for long walks, it's really very tiring to walk under the heat, in the dark night, or through the rain. You'll

really feel some crisis inside. Once, I wept when I fell off a cliff because I was so sleepy but still had to go on walking. It's not a life with few problems.

But the worst is when you are sick and there are enemy troops around. It's likely that your condition will worsen into a very severe disease. That's the life in the group. Perhaps the hardest for me was about getting sick. Sometimes I get sick for a week. That's my most difficult crisis. I can go on without food but I really cannot bear getting sick. What I really want to avoid is the situation wherein I'm so sick, of course I'm not a civilian but in the group, but still had to walk far and fast but what if I cannot do it, what are they going to do with me?

When we start walking, we really walk fast! The medical [team] brought medicines with them. In the movement, they try to cure you. If the medics could cure you, of course they would do everything. But if it's too difficult, they bring you to the city. I used to be sickly but when I entered the movement my health improved. I get well easily when I get sick. Also, I think I have more endurance now. It's like I can carry heavy objects and I feel tireless. Before, when I carry heavy things, I easily get tired, but now it seems lighter to carry.

About shooting? Yes, sometimes I wondered whether my bullet really shot somebody or not. When the shots are fired, you get the hang of it and killing people seems exciting. You become hotheaded. It's not just in a situation of battle.

Even during military trainings, they also fire guns at us to train us with the idea that there's an enemy. Comrades are worse because they spray bullets on you, sometimes even using an M-16. It's a good thing no one was injured by gunfire because we really crawled so hard. You just have to make your body move in whatever way and get used to it. Sometimes you have to race to a hilltop to train yourself to be faster than enemy troops.

I experienced gunfire only once. There was one incident that we were supposed to be the one to conduct a raid, but instead we were the ones who were almost caught by enemy troops. They came right after we left the area. We had just left when the enemies arrived. I fired my rifle but I had not killed anyone yet. I'm even afraid of looking at the dead, how much more in killing someone? I saw a comrade dying, but I never had the chance of killing anyone.

But I feel so sorry. I have gone through such grave experiences. Imagine the stories I'll tell my children. If it's only possible I would like to go back to my tasks in the movement. I really don't know. I just want to forget everything because I really feel like dying inside when I remember my experiences in the movement. So when I just don't want to remember the experiences, I take a breather and go outside. I just want to forget...or else I'd go crazy.

I would say to the staff [in the Center] that I just want to go home because I can't take it any longer; I don't know what's going to happen here. So, I really can't bear going back.

I think it's best for me to go home to give me the chance to think of what I should do, rather than stay here and remain uncertain about my life. The best is to go home. I have this feeling that I'd be able to forget about the movement. At home, I think I'll be able to forget about my dilemma.

If ever I want to go on with the struggle, I want to know where will it take me and how long will it be until we reach victory. That's what I really want to know, how will I be certain about winning or not? But it really depends upon each of us, how long will it take to defeat the enemy.

Because it is impossible that we won't have enemies, it all depends on what side are you. I cannot deny that I'm still interested in the movement, but some of the things I believed in have been disproved by my own experience. Some of the things I learned in the movement, I no longer believe that the soldiers would

kill me.

We had seen how some comrades surrendered, yet they were still killed. But the women were spared. That's why the people don't believe us, of who is kinder, the soldier or those in the movement.

I am confused. Usually there are comrades who get captured. That's why people are confused as to who is better between the soldiers or those in the movement. We also heard that there are others that were captured that are being killed readily. Others are spared, perhaps they want to appear they're kind. Comrades who were captured were killed too, but the others were lucky to have captors who were not abusive from the IB.

But some were killed and tortured and some were spared, so perhaps they were just pretending to be good. That's what our experience is inside the movement.

What I know in the movement is that they are not accepting minors that are not allowed. But at that time, there were many, a lot of minors who joined the armed struggle. Well, I think the leader is also correct in some ways. They are discussing things to us that look like they are right.

Like they were questioning why the armed group accepts minors since they cannot recruit those of age, so they accept underage. I was really struck by the statement of the soldier that I did not have any [legal] case. I asked why I was not accused of anything, knowing that I belong to the armed group. I am thinking that maybe they are just getting my sympathy. Maybe he wasn't saying the truth and I told them [soldiers] that I really wanted to know what's the case against me. But they said even if I had killed someone, I would not be penalized because I'm still a minor.

The soldier said that I can say how many I've killed and, still, that wouldn't be against me. What happened, he said, was that I was deceived by the armed group. I tend to believe that's true. They said that the leadership of the armed group receives money.

There is a leader who receives all the money while we in the Philippines do not receive a single centavo. According to the soldiers, we are only being used...that is true anyway. And then we that stayed here in the Philippines...we are the one being, ah...they said we are pitiful, because he continuously receives money while we do not receive even a peso.

The soldiers said that we would just die in the struggle, yet there's still no future. That struck us, gave us some food for thought. It's true, we're still so young to be in this struggle and we end up not being able to follow the laws [structures] outside the movement.

But in the armed group I also know that we have some right to say what we want to say. But I think there were also those who were deceived. Because in the movement, you just can't question things and say that maybe the group is deceiving is. That's a no-no. That's why whatever the soldiers said, I just kept quiet. I really don't know.

We are afraid that we would be victimized that's what we are afraid of, why can we speak of things like that, they said that those who can discuss things like that were considered as enemies.

Why is it that the things that were discussed to us there were not the same as the policies here. We are afraid to be persecuted and accused as an enemy, why are you doing and saying things that are not the same as our policy? For example, if I were given a task to get rice and I questioned it, they will question my being critical. Because you cannot really be disobedient, you have to follow their word.

## **RECONSIDERATION OF THE DECISION TO BECOME A CHILD SOLDIER**

All of the girls soldiers in this study were captured by the government forces. They did not make plans or

attempt to escape. They all agreed that the time with the movement had been demanding and very tiring. They indicated they would for many reasons like to return. The one factor that kept them from returning to the mountains and the armed group were the encounters that would place them in harm's way. One girl expressed regret that she had not graduated before joining. Even though they appreciated, for the most part, how they were treated, they felt guilty for not helping their family. They were conflicted between their loyalties to their family and to the movement. There were ways in which they were disappointed with both.

LAYLA:

I would prefer to stay there (in the mountains with the armed group). It's just that it is very hard to stay there. Enemies might track you.

Perhaps if there were no encounter anymore, I would stay there. If they invite me again to join them, I will tell them, I will first think about it. They said that I know how to decide.

We are happy there.

We take care of the masses.

ELSE:

That time when I entered school, when I was in first year, I had peer groups, I wasted the year.

But in the movement, I don't have anything to change...I still want to stay there.

I miss them so much. They are good to me as far as I can remember. It was very good there because they explained so many things to the people. I want to go back. But my brother is not there. My companions are still there. I still get news about them. I want to go back there, but only if the situation is better.

My brother doesn't want me to go there, he won't allow me to go there, because many were already killed.

AIDA:

And now that I'm not with her (mother) anymore, I feel guilty and think that what I did was wrong.

For example, while I was inside the movement, my mother is having a hard time. My cousin sent me a letter requesting me to come home because my younger sibling is sick. Of course we're far from each other.

It was then that I made known to them. Even if I am still this young, I really make sure that I am informed about the situation of my parents.

It is just fine for the comrades that I tell them my problems. I try to send money from the person who brought me here.

So I really tell my comrades about my family problems.

Women also have the right to express their problems. I ask them if they can give some help, they would say, What about? Because my father needs money. They would always say, Don't worry because we will write down your request. But we need to find some money first. But I told them that might be too late. My father's life is more important to me than money. I said maybe it would be better for me to go home first so that I'd be there whatever happens to my father.

They tried to stop me by saying it's not my father who will die but rather it's me who might be killed by the military. They said that if I get caught, I'll surely be killed I really felt so bad that I cried I was in such a

miserable situation, I just thought of walking out of there because I wanted so much to see my mother and my family.

The comrades refused my request to go home, but I wanted so much to be with my mother, my siblings and my father. They really prevented me from going and suggested that my mother come to me instead. I just felt so bad and so sorry for my life.

I could not stop wondering about my father. I thought that if something happened to my father, I would really blame the comrades.

I suppose, what happened to me, regarding my experiences, there are some things I regret and lament. If it's only possible I would like to go back to my tasks in the movement. I really don't know.

I just want to forget everything because I really feel like dying inside when I remember my experiences in the movement. So when I just don't want to remember the experiences, I take a breather and go outside. I just want to forget...or else I'd go crazy.

I would say to the staff [in the Center] that I just want to go home because I can't take it any longer; I don't know what's going to happen here. So, I really can't bear going back.

I think it's best for me to go home to give me the chance to think of what I should do, rather than stay here at the Center and remain uncertain about my life. The best is to go home.

I have this feeling that I'd be able to forget about the movement. At home, I think I'll be able to forget about my dilemma.

I cannot deny that I'm still interested in the movement, but some of the things I believed in have been disproved by my own experience.

Some of the things I learned in the movement, I no longer believe.

## **SENSE OF SELF**

For all the girls their sense of self improved when they went to the mountains and became a part of the armed group. They were respected and given assignments (political, not combat) that made them feel good about their ability to perform and be responsible. They had a sense of belonging to a family that for the first time understood, respected and cared for them. The movement became the family they longed for and the one you could turn to if you had problems. They had a higher regard for their own self while in the armed group than they had when they were domestic workers who were exploited and abused by their employers, a step-parent or another extended family member.

## **ELSE:**

They will help you if you have any problems, if you have offended anyone, then you have to speak to that person and the group will discuss it together.

## **AIDA:**

Well, it's not really just a matter of joining for joining's sake. They make you understand. They take good care of you. Without that, I really will just go back home because it's too tiring.

We were all considered equal. We do not look at a person as a commander or teacher. A comrade can choose to do some task of her own initiative. In the movement, there was no one acting like a boss. All

must work.

In the movement, you will be criticized and admonished: Why did you not do your task? Why did you not cook? Why did you depend so much on others? And you must say things frankly.

Whether that person is a commander or a teacher, as long as that person committed a violation, you can voice out your criticism. There's no place for fearing reprisal in blurting your criticisms because that person is, say, a commander. If a person has done something wrong, it is necessary that you tell the person that he has done something wrong. That's the movement's policy.

You must not be wary of giving criticisms. You must change some traits. You must be advanced in your character because you are given tasks.

You educate the new recruits; you have to be calm in the face of many things. You have to make people understand many things. That's what I learned in the movement. And if you have proven yourself as advanced, you are given many tasks.

They are thankful that I was able to help them. In fact, they did not want to release me because they said I am a big help in educating the masses. The commander treats everyone in the same way, no one's given special treatment.

In my team I was the radio operator. I was responsible for giving advice or relaying messages given by our commander to other groups. Likewise, I was also the one who relayed messages to our commander from other groups. I just had initiative.

The truth is I did not finish grade two, but I learned so much from the education we had in the movement through my own effort. I learned how to read at that time. It was during (my stay there) this time that I really learned to read and write. Although they taught these things to us, I really tried to learn arduously until I can read and write a little.

In the beginning I did not want to handle the radio because I did not know how to operate it. I just tried it hands-on. Our commander did not even have to give me a one-on-one lesson. He just handed me the radio and said, it's up to you. Yes, I managed a team.

Despite the fact that comrades have reached a common understanding, there were sill problems. Like the case of a comrade who thought about lying low and going home because of a problem this is discussed on a higher level. The highest leader talks to the person concerned to ask about the problem. And all of us in the army will help the comrade in this way.

The person will stand in front of us and we ask him about his problem and we also give advice. Each will try to help the person, give some support to the person to help solve the problem. Just because this person has a problem, doesn't mean that we just allow him to leave, so that there will no problem. We have to help him deal with the problem.

LAYLA:

We conduct CSC (criticism self-criticism) every afternoon. We are happy there.

During this session the comrades say something like, Layla, you know what? You are strict, a snob. That's not good. If you act like that our comrades will go away from you.

I am the organizer in our group, so I have to undergo three months training.

Both males and females were treated there equally.

I have experience of small gatherings inside the movement. We also disagree sometimes but before the day ends we are in good terms again.

Our needs are provided. Someone goes down the town to buy our needs. All of our needs were being provided by the team leader. The team leader makes the decision. You should tell him what your needs are. We were given shampoo and soap. Perhaps if there were no encounter anymore, I would stay there.

## GISELLE:

Sometimes, the other comrades ask us, what do we want from the city?

We have our supply of pajamas made of taffeta, which is very lightweight. We are not allowed to wear clothes that are heavy. It is very difficult to wash denims, for example.

When we have a military operation, we wear uniforms, like the military fatigues. We have our *malong* as our blanket. Then we have a hammock also made from taffeta cloth. In our group, we also have a nurse and a doctor.

There is someone in charge of finances. Every month, our unit receives 5,000 pesos. But there are many of us in a group, from 15 to 20. Sometimes, there is some money left over. There are some comrades who have children. But the children don't join the fighting. If someone in the group has a family, then we have to budget for the children, for school needs and other things that children need.

Respect for others, especially those who were older than you. It was there in the movement that I experienced being respected, no matter what your age was. They were very helpful. Sometimes, I would request an older comrade to make me a knot for my hammock, and he would do it. Even they, the older ones, whatever tasks they ask others to do, they are also ready to do.

We had our own assignments. Someone had to be up earlier, someone else had to cook breakfast; all of us had our chores. We had to study; we were very serious about the studies.

Then one week, I was assigned to be one to speak in front of the people. That's where I learned to speak in public. I was no longer shy. Before, I never used to speak in public. That's where I learned to speak in large groups, to talk to other people.

But now, this isn't important anymore. What is important is the respect for the people. I am being compared to a spring of water. I am also strong and I can climb well.

After my injury I was in the hospital. I took off my IV (Intravenous fluid); I felt that I did not want to live anymore. I was thinking that I will be rejected by my family and my peers in my community, because when we were still together (before I joined the armed group), they said that the armed group was bad.

I wasn't ready to explain to them (family) then. But all they said was that they had missed me. I couldn't face my father. I didn't want to live. I didn't take my medicine. I flushed my tablets down the toilet. What I wanted was to go out of the hospital, already dead. The hospital staff wanted to me to see a priest, but I said what's the use of seeing a priest, can he fix my injury?

I also didn't want to see my comrades because I felt so ashamed.

When I was still inside the movement I learned to strengthen my spirit and I learned a lot. I had learned to defend myself. Now, I am happier with myself.

Before I didn't know what direction my life would take. Here, my attitude to life changed.

Many people here were telling me, why look down at your self. You have to stand up, do not give up the

fight, you have to help yourself.

I learned a lot of things here. I have been here for one year now, since November.

## **TIME AND THE FUTURE**

The future did not hold great promise for these girls to pursue any chosen vocation that they had hoped to follow. They mentioned returning home, possibilities for employment, future study and marriage. They all recognized that the future did not hold great promise to pursue any vocation that required higher education. They did not have the financial backing to follow their vocational dreams. The future they were moving toward was one of returning home and helping their mother in any way they could. A second future choice was to continue to study so they would have some vocation that would lead to a job. If they could not return to school, then they were hopeful that they would find meaningful work. Those that had returned home and were unable to go to school were working as domestics or nannies. They saw marriage as an alternative if they could not find meaningful work. They did not wish to be used as domestic slaves performing menial tasks day after day. The same sort of work that led them to join the movement. They recognized that life was going to be difficult and they would have to strive and persevere just to survive. They expressed some fear regarding their life and were afraid that they might be labeled as traitors. They saw war and killing as a poor alternative for solving problems.

They hoped young people in the future would be helped so they did not feel it necessary to participate in war as a way to survive. Even though they did not want to participate in war and fighting they saw the movement as providing them with a rather good life. If they could see their family and have some time off they would seriously consider joining the movement again.

### **LAYLA:**

(Employed as a domestic and a nanny, employer will not allow her to go to school on Sunday provided for girls working in households.) I wake up at 4 a.m. I start working...cleaning the house, looking after the child...wash my employer's laundry.

When I was a child I wanted to be a stewardess (airline). I still want to be a stewardess.

I would prefer staying in the movement rather than here. It's just that it is very hard to stay there. Enemies might track you. Perhaps if there were no encounters anymore, I would stay there.

If they invite me again to join them, I will tell them, I will first think about it. We were happy there. We take care of the masses.

Armed struggle is not the solution, it would just cause disorder. The solution is how the president would act on these things. She should help in whatever way she can. She should give houses....there are many people living on the streets. Give children jobs or let them study.

Children should not go to the mountain anymore. I would provide them a good life. I would be a good mother or a good student.

I fear God.

Once I had a dream that I jump off from the hammock...that there is a raid...that all of us would be hunted. I jumped off

**AIDA:**

I really want to go home. I wish that I could go home. I already decided that I would I help my family.

My mother used to wonder what would happen if I leave them. She would say, Where are you my child, what will happen to us if you leave us? I told her that I would not leave them, that I would just be around to help them.

Just like before, when I left home to work...The Center advised me to study but I don't want to.

I want to go home, get into some livelihood project.

In my mind, I imagine many untoward things that might happen. I really want to rest and be with my mother.

A soldier told me that in the movement I would just die without a future.

They made me understand that I am still so young. That's really true.

I want to go home, not to join the movement again, but to just engage in some livelihood to help my mother.

I just want to forget everything because I really feel like dying inside when I remember my experiences in the movement. So when I just don't want to remember the experiences, I take a breather and go outside. I just want to forget...or else I'd go crazy.

I would say to the staff [in the Center] that I just want to go home because I can't take it any longer; I don't know what's going to happen here. So, I really can't bear going back.

I think it's best for me to go home to give me the chance to think of what I should do, rather than stay here at the Center and remain uncertain about my life.

The best is to go home. I have this feeling that I'd be able to forget about the movement.

At home, I think I'll be able to forget about my dilemma. I just want to laugh [and be happy]. I am always crying (when I was in the movement), always crying because of my problem.

I cannot deny that I'm still interested in the movement, but some of the things I believed in have been disproved by my own experience. Some of the things I learned in the movement, I no longer believe.

The soldiers said that we would just die in the struggle yet there's still no future. That struck us, gave us some food for thought. It's true, we're still so young to be in this struggle and we end up not being able to follow the laws outside the movement.

For me, if I can return home, I can go to school.

My big problem is my mother because she is quite old already (she can no longer look for a job.) and has no clear livelihood.

I really want (to ask for) help, if there's anybody to help me continue schooling.

How can I continue school when I'm torn between going to school and helping my mother? My mother is more important to me, I really want to help her.

**DENISE:**

I would really want to finish school. It would really help me.

I have cousins who talk about going back to the movement, but for me, the future is very dark if you go back. Even if there's so much hardship, you shouldn't mind it too much, just keep on persevering, then I

can go back to school. I have many cousins who are in school.

I would have stayed in the city to go to school and then to work, I would work and then study, but if you get fed up with work, then there's no alternative but to get married.

It is necessary to work hard, in spite of the hardship we are going through now, for example now we are having all these problems, we need to buy rice.

Through all these hardships, I am determined to strive, to persevere.

My mother keeps on arguing with my stepfather, they keep on fighting. So I tell them, we need to stop bickering, because the rice will not just appear on the table, can you send us to school if you only use your mouth, if you just keep on fighting?

We need to work, if doesn't matter if we don't own anything, as long as we understand each other. We really have to stand for ourselves. Even if I am still young, I am training myself to be strong, even when the going is difficult.

We never know what might happen, what's important is that we stand for ourselves.

Amongst my friends when I was still in school, I had a teacher who used to tell us of the difficulties she had gone through. Then I thought that she has been through a worse situation, even worse than our own situation, but she was able to graduate in spite of all the problems she faced.

So I tell myself, we can look at the difficulties, but I will persevere, I won't allow myself to be weakened. Because if I let all these problems overwhelm me, then I stop going to school. Maybe I should just get married. So it's important to strive.

For example, in going to school, if someone could help me to go school. In our poverty, nobody has enough. There is no one who can help, because the people have no drive, but at least they can give encouragement. I would be happy to accept some help...So I tell myself, just pray, just keep on striving, and somehow this can help in my studies. I want to graduate so that I can help them.

My mother would like to see my younger brothers in school, to enroll them, if only my stepfather could provide the things they need for school, but he doesn't have a job.

So it's already very difficult to buy food. So I'm thinking of going to the city to become a working student, but that's very difficult, and it would even be worse, because my elder brother is here and I would be there and the transportation costs to go back and forth would cost a lot, that I could just use for my studies.

If I have any money, then I need to explain to them, that I have to hold on the money, because my elder brother would tell me not to give the money directly to my mother. My brother would tell me, Denise, here's some money but hide it and if you have money don't give it directly to mother, because our stepfather would just rely on that.

It's not my obligation to provide for rice, soap. Those are not my children, those are their children. But when there's nothing left to eat, I would pity them, so I would spend my money. But for now, I will just study a two-year secretarial course.

I want to get involved in actions that can be of help. They can help in fighting corruption, or to help those in difficulties. Even when I was in the mountains, I was thinking very hard, even when I was very active, is it really necessary to kill? Then I would think at the time of the raid, can we shout and say let's just talk about this?

If only the enemy would listen, it would have been wonderful to shout, and the firing would stop and we would listen to each other. We would just talk and try not to use guns. I wish we could end all this violence

and we can develop our country.

Livelihood, that's what's really needed at the *baranggay* level, because many young people are jobless. They are just hanging around, that's why they get involved in many kinds of vices. Giving them attention, being concerned for them, to give them guidance.

## GISELLE:

I would like to have my injury looked at again. I hope that they can put a stainless steel pin inside, so that I can be useful again.

Sometimes, I feel that I am a burden; I would really want to be operated on again. I have been here for some time already. They helped me to learn new skills. They (social workers) took care of me, I learned a lot from them. I tell them all my problems with my family.

My most recent doctor's examination of my injury was last June. The doctor will examine it again this coming June. I want them to operate again, but I am hesitant to tell them (the Center) this because I know that this will cost a lot. I would like the stainless steel pin to be inserted.

I don't have any communication with my comrades. I don't want to be in touch with them now because I am still in the control of the other side (meaning the military).

I had many aspirations in life, but I never thought that I would ever be injured like this.

I don't have any fears.

Why should I be afraid? The comrades have been good. The military and the Center have been good to me. God has given me back my trust. I don't like being intimidated!

That's why I say that I like my life better now than before. If I meet my old comrades I will talk to them. But if they don't want to talk, then I won't. I cannot snub them. But I will try to persuade them to go down from the mountains.

I will try to discourage them. I will ask them if they want to be injured like me. Just stay here (in the lowlands).

I want to be able to study, to stand on my own and be able to help my father.

When I am in front of my father, I cannot talk to him. I am still mad at him. But sometimes, I feel that I would like to go home with him. After a while, I will eventually be able to stand on my own, and then I can help my father.

Whatever my dreams are, I have to act on them, otherwise nothing good will happen to me.

I think of how can I reciprocate the care and help that has been given to me? I know it's not money that they want, but to see me follow them. I want to show them that I have been able to make use of the things they taught me here. I will visit them here.

What I need now is patience, perseverance. I ask the Lord, Don't allow me to become weak! I am being compared to a spring of water. I am also strong and I can climb well.

Once, when I was climbing, there was this person who pointed to another person who was climbing. The other person was panting and looking pale, while I was taking it easy.

Once someone pointed out that the clothes that I wash are cleaner than the clothes washed by someone who used two good hands!

In volleyball, even if I'm injured I can hit the ball stronger than the others. My performance is similar to the abled persons there.

But sometimes there are obstacles in my life and I just pray to the Lord. Sometimes when I need help and I worry that there might be no one around to help.

But the mind can be strong. Sometimes I worry that I can't manage, but in the end you realize you can do it.

I entertain the idea of going back (home) if there are people there who I can rely on. But I will not go back with such an intention.

Well, maybe I can go back to my brother, if my family is still there. But then I don't think so. I'm in a difficult situation.

I met a social worker that said that my case is just a minor one, did I have any apprehensions? She told me that I could be hidden if I stay in this place. She said that I could stay here to recuperate and rest. I also asked her what I would benefit if I stayed here.

She said I can take advantage of the trainings and I can also initiate my own activities. She also said that I could undergo treatment for my injury.

I want to take a break. I think with my innate strength I can face a new life. But I still don't know how I will go back home.

I think it is better for girls still in the movement to decide to come down on their own.

But it is difficult if you go to the revolutionary area, to talk to them and try to convince them to go down from the mountains, it can be dangerous and difficult to go inside. Better to talk to them here. There are many who want to have new life. But comrades prefer it if you ask permission to go home.

But comrades do not want comrades to leave without asking permission from their elders. They do not want people who just disappear and leave, because the comrades will worry lest something bad happens to them. One must leave the movement properly.

It is OK to go home because you can't stand the pace or bear the hardship of life in the mountains. I felt that if I go home, nothing good would happen to me. If you want to leave, you just say you want to get out because you want to either study or go back to your family.

It is acceptable as long as they know where you are going and where your whereabouts are. What they want is for you to get out formally. They want to be sure that you will be all right. They want to know who your companions will be. I am used to talking to them.

But here they tease me here in the center, that there are so many people coming to see me, its as if I am agent of a big company, so they tease me if there's a problem in the company, that's why I have to make all sorts of excuses, because they (the other clients in the center) don't know what my case is all about

I was comparing the people working here and the ones in the movement; because I thought, both had responsibilities to serve the people.

I have observed one staff member who joined only last June. She did not know how to deliver the services and what her duties were. She has not undergone enough training and seminars. She did not know how to deal with us who all have specific problems. She sometimes raised her voice against us. I was one of those who experienced that and I felt that she should have understood my situation because I had problems of my own.

I thought that if I were in her shoes, I would have been more patient with the client. Because a client needs

abled persons there.

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I thought that if I were in her shoes, I would have been more patient with the client. Because a client needs more patience and care, considering her confused state of mind. But this staff member did not know how to

deal with clients who were high strung and unwieldy.

We all live under one roof, in one house, so we must imagine ourselves as one family. I said, ma'am what do we do when we all live under one roof?

I told this staff member: ma'am, God created us all as brothers and sisters in this world. But ma'am, you were given the responsibility to lead us to the right path. But it seems you don't carry on this responsibility. The responsibility to promote goodness among us, to give advice to clients regarding the right mindset and to help change the client's confused state. You must make us understand these things. Instead, you act thoughtlessly, like this instance when you came from training and yelled at us. That was uncalled for, ma'am.

The problems here are quite petty but because of such an attitude, they become bigger. She really caused confusion in the clients' minds. One of my companions told me: Giselle, instead of persuading me, she tells me that I plan to run away, even if I had no plan of doing so.

So I questioned her method of treating clients, why she was telling clients to leave New Haven instead of persuading them to stay. I told her that the girl she ordered to go had no plans of leaving but then because of her words, she now thought of leaving the place.

So the head of the staff called for a meeting regarding the performance of this staff member. She was just a new staff member, yet she was already showing signs of being bossy. Here, you must have the initiative to learn on your own because no one will teach you to do things. If you are not accommodating to people, then you will not be well liked.

But they are not used to criticism and they are uncomfortable in disagreeing with me. I think here, they are very relaxed and permissive. They just allow clients to do what they want to do. Then I thought that because they give us some assistance, we in turn must also do our share to help in any way. We should strive to do what is good. We need to hold meetings wherein we learn many things. This way we can prevent more problems from getting worse.

That day I was feeling very happy, I didn't know why. There was a lot of work that day, and I noticed that my classmates and the staff seemed to be glad that I was very gay that day. As long as they are happy, I feel happy, too.

When my name was called, I was wondering why there were so many people standing in front of me. Then I saw my younger brother, I thought I was dreaming or that somebody was playing a joke on me.

I thought I saw my mother, even though I knew she was dead already. I was so happy that they came to visit me. I can't take it anymore when they visit me then leave again. I hope when they come here I can come with them as they leave. Or maybe I can go to them as a surprise. How I wish that when they come to visit me I could come home with them already.

I don't know how life is outside anymore.

I don't have big dreams. My only dream is for me to have a simple job and to be able to come home and be with my family again.

I'm not afraid to come face to face with my comrades. I will tell them that I did not surrender, that I did not betray them and that I did not leave the movement because they were bad people.

I will explain to them why I was not able to ask permission to leave the movement. I cannot go back to the mountain... in this condition.

But I will still defend them [the cause]. I did not say anything about life in the movement as being full of



Quaker United Nations Office  
777 UN Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
tel: 212.682.2745  
fax: 212-983-0034  
qunony@afsc.org  
www.quno.org

Quaker United Nations Office  
13 avenue du Mervelet  
CH 1209 Geneva  
tel: +41 22 748 4800  
fax: +41 22 748 4819  
www.quno.org