



Philippine Children's Ministries Network (PCMN) is a network of Christian organizations, churches, ministries and individuals working among 'children at risk' in the Philippines. Formed in November 1998 at the initiative of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), PCMN serves as its Commission on Children at Risk. PCMN is an affiliate of Viva Network.

Children's Link is a PCMN publication containing news and stories about the work of the network in protecting children from all forms of abuse, exploitation and trafficking in and around the country.

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Dear Readers,

So many things have happened since the first issue of Children's Link. We will try our best to capture as much as we can in the limited space available. We have named the editorial section "5 Loaves & 2 Fish" to illustrate the wonderful truth that whatever we have though little and inadequate, can be of great use when placed in our Master's hand. The features section will be called "Signs of Hope". Here, we will share stories that signify hope and change because God has intervened.

We welcome your feedbacks and contributions. The newsletter, like all the other network activities, is a work of collaboration. You are welcome to use it as a venue for sharing and blessing.

One thing that we can say without hesitation – God's blessings are indeed experienced in abundance when His people work towards being united (Psalm 133). This is PCMN's experience as we celebrate 8 years of God's faithfulness and goodness this 2006. Come, let us praise and thank the Lord together for the amazing work that He is doing!

Editorial Staff

5 LOAVES & 2 FISH

The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Campaign Against Child Trafficking (and Protecting Children in General)

By PINE GUTIERREZ

The most distinguishing feature of the faith-based organizations' work is its biblical and theological basis. Ministering to the vulnerable, defenseless and the suffering is very clear in its mission. The work of bringing hope and transformation against all odds, because of faith and commitment to obey God is what drives and sustains FBOs.

Another strength is its committed leaders and workers who see their work as a way to live out the Christian values and accountable to God as faithful stewards. Lack of resources have not deterred them in doing their work.

With its strengths, credibility and presence in communities, FBOs has a significant role in the campaign against trafficking in person be it prevention, protection, recovery and re-integration of trafficked persons. The following are some initiatives that they can carry out:

Create increased awareness and knowledge of the issue by holding forum, roundtable discussion and teaching sessions in churches, training institutions and in the broader community.

Our work among children at risk provides us with a platform to share and live out our Christian beliefs and ideals.

Participate in or initiate local actions focused on prevention and education by helping in identifying children at risk in their communities; monitoring potential trafficking situations; and mobilizing members in the education campaign against trafficking.

Develop programs and services that would:

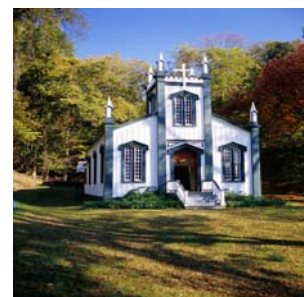
- Strengthen capability of families to become a strong family unit that is able to nurture and protect children.
- Bring about transformation of values and practices so that children and other vulnerable members are protected and prevented from becoming victims of abuse and exploitation.
- Help in the rehabilitation of perpetrators, an aspect of the problem that is often overlooked.

Link affiliated shelter programs with DSWD for the temporary placement of rescued children and facilitate the setting up of foster family care program in the various local congregations.

Work with various sectors in establishing or strengthening of local protection networks in communities.

Our work among children at risk provides us with a platform to share and live out our Christian beliefs and ideals. Let us not squander this God-given opportunity!

Psalm 82:3&4 "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."



NETWORK NEWS

The PCMN Secretariat which for the past seven years was manned by volunteers and the Board of Directors welcomed three new members to the coordination group. They are Ms. Fe Foronda – Program Coordinator, Ms. Mary Rose Oximas – Training Coordinator and Mr. Gerald Tampico – Network Development Coordinator. The additional members have come at a time of rapid growth of the network. The team will continue to provide support service and technical inputs to the different working groups and local networks while continuing its advocacy and church partnership thrust.

For the first time in PCMN's 7 years of existence, 36 members of working groups and developing local networks came together for a five-day Network Facilitators' Training in Cebu City last August 7-11. Ms. Teoh Phaik Hoon, network development consultant of Viva Network Asia Center served as the main resource person, assisted by Pine Gutierrez and Fe Foronda. So far, there are developing networks in Davao, Gen. Santos / SOCSKSARGEN, Negros Occidental, Cebu and the 3 Samar provinces. The various local networks have been linking with local government agencies/units and other NGOs in their current initiatives on child trafficking prevention and other issues.

The Inter-Agency Council Against Child Trafficking organized the 1st National Conference on Anti-Trafficking in Persons on September 20-22 at the Manila Pavillon. PCMN came as a representative of the faith-based organizations (FBOs) that is actively participating in combating trafficking in persons, specifically children. Ms. Pine Gutierrez joined the panel discussion on "The Role of Non-Traditional Partners in Campaign Against Trafficking," e.g. media, academe, business and church groups.



PCMN is PCEC's representative in the newly established Philippine Inter-faith Network for Children (PHILINC). Aside from PCEC, the other FBOs networks in PHILINC includes the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the Muslims and other religious groups. PHILINC's coordinator is Ms. Phebe Crismo of the NCCP. The group in partnership with UNICEF organized the Mindanao Consultation on Children and Peace on September 7-8 in Cagayan de Oro City. It was attended by 88 leaders representing several faith groups.



Another ministry opportunity to reach out to children and youth was formalized during the Adolescence Reproductive and Sexual Health Consultation last October 5, 2006 at the Extended Childcare Center of Precious Jewels Ministry, San Lazaro Hospital, Manila. Seventy participants from the different organizations and churches attended. Ms. Helen P. Orande of the Phil. NGO Council on Health and Welfare, Ms. Lea Edrosalan of Phil. Ministries Family Care Foundation and Bishop Ef Tendero of PCEC provided inputs that highlighted the seriousness of the issue.



Ms. Fe Foronda and Pine Gutierrez represented PCMN in a 2-day annual work planning for 2007 that UNICEF organized for its national partners on October 16, 17. UNICEF has provided grant to several PCMN training activities on child protection and networks development this year.



UP COMING EVENTS TO WATCH & PRAY FOR...

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|-----------------------------|--|
| November 16 to 18 | Child Focused Forum for Pastors and Church Leaders
DepEd EcoTech Center, Lahug, Cebu City |
| November 20 to 24 | Mindanao Facilitators' Training on Understanding God's Heart for Children
Durian Garden, Polomolok, South Cotabato |
| November 22 to 24 | Training of AMG Facilitators' on Understanding God's Heart for Children
AMG Office, Quezon City |
| November 28 & 29 | PCMN's Annual General Assembly
Good Shepherd Convent, Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City |
| December 4 to 6 | Training of Facilitators on Sex, Lies and Truth Module
Philippine Bible Community Church, Kamias, Quezon City |
| December 5 & 6 | Samar Project Implementation Preliminary Assessment
Tacloban City |
| December 9 | Child Participation's Working Group & Children Leaders' Fellowship
(venue to be finalized) |

SIGNS OF HOPE

Project Rhoda

By FE FORONDA

Last July 23, I attended a Celebration Sunday for Project Rhoda at the Alliance Fellowship Church (AFC), a partner of PCMN in Cubao, Quezon City. The church mid-morning service was dedicated to the Rhoda children and the volunteer church workers of the Project. This was a thanksgiving day for what the Lord has done in and through the lives of 43 children domestic workers (CDWs) whose lives were touched by the AFC. A similar event was also conducted last July 29 in Diliman Bible Church which helped 30 CDWs in the past two years. The third partner is Operation Paglingap of Kamuning Bible Christian Fellowship which serves 20 CDWs.

Alliance Fellowship Church runs a 3 hour modular class every Sunday for children domestic workers. I met Lovely, one of the beneficiaries who attended a 10-month class in the church premises. The program is called Alternative Learning System (ALS), a modular academic course for children who are not able to come to a regular school environment.

Last March 2006, Lovely took a qualifying exam through the Department of Education. She passed the exam qualifying her to go to college. She is currently reviewing in preparation for applying to a scholarship in a government school. She plans to take up Hotel & Restaurant Management.

The Project Rhoda Coordination Committee composed of the partner churches' coordinators met in September and October to chart the next round of project life. The 4 church partners are bent on increasing the number of children to be helped



Project partners' staff meets monthly for sharing and updating.

By God's Mercy

By Fe Foronda

My visits in Samar when our team conducted training on Preventive Education Against Child Trafficking told me a lot about its people and the state of events in the island. Christianity is very much alive. This is evidenced by the number of churches joining PCMN in its initiative to put a hold on children being trafficked out of the island. Currently, there are 68 local churches that are involved conducting preventive education against child trafficking in the 3 provinces.

One of the churches is the El Gibor Fellowship – Light of Life Ministries Church of Pastor Mercy Arpon in San Isidro, Northern Samar. In one of my afternoon tête-à-tête with her, I heard a story of triumph of the spirit and God's intervention in the seemingly insurmountable difficulties which I now relate here.

Sometime in August 2006, Pastor Mercy learned that one of her church's young people is being recruited to work in Angeles City as a waitress. Having learned the "modus operandi" of recruiters from the PCMN's training she attended, Pastor Mercy pleaded with the parents not to allow their daughter to leave. She knows well enough the recruiters' approach of promising young girls a decent job with good pay, but eventually are left without a choice but to accept jobs where they are exploited and abused, such as prostitution.

The whole church prayed for God's intervention. About that time a strong typhoon hit the province and the girl's trip was cancelled. Pastor Mercy can only credit for what happened that even nature cooperated to keep the girl from leaving. The typhoon also destroyed the livelihood of Pastor Mercy's family. Their fishing boat was damaged beyond repair. The family lost their only source of income but this did not deter Pastor Mercy from thanking God for the typhoon. The girl, now finally persuaded not to leave, is looking at possible source of livelihood through the help of the local church.

Pastor Mercy is now recognized as an advocate against child trafficking in their area. She partners with the local social welfare office in conducting anti-trafficking education sessions in the schools and barangays in their town. As a combined effort, the local churches in Samar committed to reach out to about 17,000 children and adult alike over the next six months in awareness raising sessions on prevention of child trafficking. We do not have yet a count of the children who are prevented from being trafficked. For now, we can only claim that by this simple act of commitment to raise awareness on trafficking, the churches in Samar are making a difference in children's lives.



Focused group discussion with the Project Rhoda children participants

and in adding on new members to the partnership through expanding the work with daughter churches. There are three new partners who are invited to join the next phase of the project.

On September 2, 9 and 10 a training of facilitators for the Life Skills Training Module for CDWs was attended by 20 participants. The participants prepared an Action Plan describing how their church will implement the modular study among children in the targeted schools.

A group of local churches in Barangay Krus na Ligas, Quezon City is planning to establish a community-based student & youth center in the heart of the congested urban poor community in early 2007. The Center will cater to children at risk with priority services provided for child domestic workers, children in conflict with the law, street children and child laborers. The group is currently exploring ways to involve all the stakeholders in the community, including the local barangay officials and the school officers.

Another group of four local churches with the Volunteers of Christ, Inc. targets to reach 80 children in Barangays Fairview and Commonwealth in Quezon City and Barangays Bagong Silang and Camarin in Caloocan City.

Project Rhoda expects to support more children in 2007 with the active participation of local churches and improved services for CDWs.



Child Participation Implemented in Tangos Church

By Erizelle Linaban

The Tangos United Methodist Church has never had a children's organization. After a series of stakeholders' and children's empowerment training, the Tangos Children's Fellowship was finally realized in a backyard camping activity.

After taking part in the leadership empowerment programs in the previous year and the activities during the backyard camping entitled *Bida Ka, Bata!* ("Child, You are Important and Significant") held last October 27-28, 2006, some 140 children participated actively in the organizing process of the church's children's organization and cast their votes to elect their officers. It was a fitting culminating activity for the efforts undertaken by both the children and workers of the church to make child participation a reality in the church.

The children's organization, aptly called The Tangos United Methodist Children's Fellowship (Tangos UMCF) was established during the second day of the camp. It is to serve as a venue and platform for children to make their voices heard, where they can articulate their concerns and ideas, and be assured that they would be listened to.

Leadership empowerment program was facilitated by the Philippine Children's Ministry Network through the network's volunteer facilitators and those from the church. It included self-assessment/realization tools, orientation on child participation and a guide on discernment and preparation advocacy agenda.

The program is part of the Tangos UMC-Children's Ministries' objective to strengthen children's participation in the church's life and ministry and under the Nurture Ministry's general objective to help the children grow in faith.



Officers of the Tangos United Methodist Children's Fellowship were installed during the church's Children's Sunday celebration last October 29, 2006.

The children's efforts to promote participation culminated during the Children's Sunday celebration on October 29 where they presented their advocacies using various advocacy tools such as songwriting/singing, scriptwriting/drama presentation, reading of child participation definition (summarized by the TUMCF officers). The newly elected officers of the Children's Fellowship were dedicated. They presented to the church leaders Children's Statement that expresses their requests and concerns. The Church Council Chairperson and Administrative Pastor signed the Statement confirming acceptance and commitment to realize them before 2010.

Erizelle Linaban is the Chairperson of the Nurture Ministry and an active proponent of child participation at Tangos United Methodist Church. The church is an active partner of PCMN in addressing child participation and protection issues.



What is a child to me?



What is God's intention for the children?



What is my role in fulfilling God's intention?

Understanding God's Heart for Children is a process of Bible-based reflection and consultation that seeks to enable Christians to hear and understand God's heart and will for children. Initiated and developed by **Viva Network in UK**, the process entails asking questions, such as those above, and finding the answers from the Scriptures and from our personal and collective experiences as children (which were before and even now as God's children) and from our interactions with the children today. By participating in the process, we have the opportunity to reflect on the basis and motivation of our work with children. We hope that it will inspire and guide us to increased action and greater effectiveness in the huge and challenging task of ministering to children especially those at risk.

PCMN has a pool of facilitators that would be more than glad to help your church, ministry, project to go through the process and be part of the growing movement of people that is seeking to do their part in making God's intention for children a reality.

You are warmly welcome to explore with us different ways by which you could be a part of the amazing work that God is doing among children.

You may contact us at

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