

Share A Child Movement

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In late 1970s, Esperanza G. Valenzona, then a lawyer for a Philippine government bank, started rehabilitation projects for child prisoners at the Cebu City Jail as president of the Federacion Internacional de Abogadas (FIDA), Cebu (Philippines) Chapter. She discovered the dire situation of the children in the jail center, more popularly known as the Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center, who were mixed with hardened adult criminals. She became determined to set up her own organization that would work to promote children's welfare.

When she retired from government service in 1983, Valenzona, together with other like-minded individuals, formed the Share A Child Movement. Ran by volunteers, mostly coming from her own family and friends, the Share A Child Movement started on shoestring budget, and operated out of an office space in a building owned by the Valenzona family, located along Cebu City's main highway going to the south. It was registered as a non-stock, non-profit organization with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and accredited as a child and youth welfare agency by the Department of Social Welfare and Development as well as by the Cebu City Government. The Share A Child Movement sees its role as a bridge between the "haves" and the "have-nots," raising funds out of donations from well-to-do individuals and families as well as corporations within and outside the Cebuano community for programs and services that benefit children and youth. It operated for more than twenty years largely on support from the local community based on the principle that the community had a stake in the rearing of all its children, including the disadvantaged and the marginalized, so that they would grow up self-reliant and productive

citizens, and would not become a burden and menace to society.

Vision, mission and goals

The Share A Child Movement adopted the following vision, mission and goals:

1. Vision: Children and young people who are empowered to be productive citizens of the world.
2. Mission:
 - To offer education to children for them to rise above their current conditions
 - To provide timely and appropriate programs and services for children and young people at risk and those in need of special protection
 - To strengthen families, particularly those living in urban and rural poor communities in Cebu.
3. Goals:
 - To provide access to education, both formal and non-formal, to poor and needy children and children in need of special

attention

- To promote the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation
 - To develop the capacities of families for self-reliance
 - To provide access to microfinance facilities and trainings for livelihood.
4. Values: The Share A Child Movement upholds and promotes beliefs and principles which are fundamental to a just society that values its children and their right to develop into productive citizens. These principles shape and strengthen its commitment, motivate it, and underlie its work.
- *God-centredness*, knowing that God is the ultimate reality and the guiding force in the universe
 - *Honesty and integrity*, seeking always to be true to ourselves and to others
 - *Service*, with utmost efficiency and effectiveness, to reach out to our constituents with relevant, timely and responsive assistance
 - *Fairness and equity*, respecting human rights and empowering the vulnerable, the poor and the marginalized
 - *Discipline*, recognizing that the best way to teach upright behavior is through role modeling
 - *Unity and teamwork*, promoting harmony and cooperation through consensus building
 - *Child and Family Friendly*, in every way, living our commitment to the welfare of children and families.

Programs and services

1. Education program

The Share A Child Movement believes that education empowers people (even the poorest of the poor) by opening a world of learning

and opportunity. It strongly adheres to the total development of the individual through the four pillars of learning, namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning live together and learning to be. Its educational program garnered the Department of Education Region VII's Most Outstanding Literacy Program in January 2003 and also received an award from the National Literacy Council in September 2002 during the 2002 National Literacy Conference and Awards at Pansol, Calamba, Laguna, for having one of the five most outstanding literacy programs.

The program has several components, namely:

a. Formal Education/Back to School

Financial Assistance given to poor but deserving children to enable them to finish their formal education from primary, to secondary, and to tertiary (including vocational school) levels. The assistance covers expenses for uniforms, school fees and contributions, and school supplies and projects. Beneficiaries are selected on the basis of need and interest in school (as manifested by their grades) and are often referred to the Share A Child Movement by school administrators and guidance counselors of public schools (primary and secondary schools) in Cebu City as well as by children who are already beneficiaries of the program. Each child applicant has to undergo a process of selection to verify if s/he fulfills the criteria set by the organization on the basis of:

- Family income
- Family size/number of dependents
- Housing conditions
- Access to basic utilities (electricity, water) and presence of toilet facilities in the house
- Health condition of family members
- Educational attainment/level of family members
- Nutritional status.

Families categorized as level 0 or those with monthly income of one thousand Philippine

pesos (around twenty US dollars) and below are given priority in receiving the assistance. Second priority is given to children from families categorized as level 1 or those with monthly income of more than one thousand but not exceeding five thousand Philippine pesos (around one hundred US dollars). Only one child per family is provided with educational assistance for two reasons; first, to discourage parents from surrendering their parental responsibilities to other people and at the same time to teach them to recognize that education is a priority need for children, and second, to spread the benefits of the program to more families. However, a maximum of two children may be accommodated on a case-to-case basis.

The Share A Child Movement has sent more than seven thousand children to school since 1982. It does semi-annual fund-raising to raise money for its educational grants from local individuals and corporations as well as from associations and organizations abroad. Currently, it partners with the Philippine American Medical Association of Georgia in the United States and Enfants du Mekong, a French non-governmental organization whose main thrust is education, to assist with the school expenses of children enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

b. Non-Formal Education

The non-formal education component has several sections:

1. *Literacy and Value Formation for Children in Conflict with Law (CICL)* – Children in conflict with law incarcerated in the city jail were the very first clients of the Share A Child Movement. It used to field two teachers to the city jail to hold two classes for child prisoners, one on basic literacy and the other on functional literacy. However, with the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act by the Philippine Congress (legislature) that raised the age of criminal liability of children from nine to fifteen years,
2. *Life Skills and Alternative Education for Out-of-School Working Children and Youth* – Children from very poor families are often expected to help support their families and many are forced to drop out of school to work. The Share A Child Movement partners with the Department of Education in providing Accreditation & Equivalency classes for many unreached children, more particularly child laborers engaged in the worst forms of child labor such as children in pyrotechnics production, agriculture, children employed as domestic laborers, child scavengers, construction workers and tricycle drivers. Lifeskills trainings are also provided on sexual health and reproduction, and anger management and violence prevention. The Share A Child Movement works with the International Labour Organization – International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) and Winrock International to mainstream children back to school or provide alternative types of education, to wit:

the Share A Child shifted its thrusts to provide a juvenile delinquency program at the community level. With a 500,000-peso (about 10,000 US dollars) fund from the Children's Hour (Philippines), it organized ten Neighborhood Scout Troops and trained community police and out-of-school children to become the scoutmasters and youth leaders, respectively, and continues to work with these community groups to provide literacy skills and life skills training to children at risk of committing crimes. Each neighborhood scout troop consists of twenty-five to thirty members. One neighborhood troop is now assisting the community police in keeping the peace in the community.

Funding Partner	Target Beneficiaries	Target Areas
ILO-IPEC	• 914 child laborers in pyrotechnics	Barangay Babag, Lapulapu City, Mactan Island
Winrock International – Round Three CIRCLE (Community Innovation for the Reduction of Child Labor through Education)	• 126 child laborers in agriculture	Barangays Adlaon, Guba, and Cambinocot
Winrock International – Round Two CIRCLE (Community Innovation for the Reduction of Child Labor through Education)	• 100 child domestic laborers	7 urban barangays in Cebu City

3. *Balay Bata Preschool Centers* – Balay Bata Centers address the need to provide preschool services for children from the poorest families who cannot be accommodated in the *barangay* (community) daycare centers and public preschools or who cannot afford to pay the fees. The Balay Bata preschool also serves as the entry point for the Family Development Program to set up partnerships with families. Once families in the area are identified, the Share A Child Movement family development workers are immediately assigned to provide trainings on parenting and home-based early childhood care and development, and make referrals for/provide counseling services. On the other hand, the Balay Bata preschool teachers also organize the parents for regular consultations on their children’s development and progress in school and to allocate daily assignments as their counterpart to school operations.

They are also encouraged to participate in a savings program in preparation for their children’s entry to formal school. Three Balay Bata Centers serve the following barangays: Mambaling (Lawis, Sitio Alaska), Labangon and Kinasangan. The Balay Bata center in Barangay Kinasangan was completed with the help of Singaporean youths participating in the Youth Expedition Project of the Singapore International Federation. They raised funds for the project and volunteered to work in the construction of the center building. In all these Balay Bata Centers, the Share A Child Movement hosts a total of six preschool classes with twenty-five learners per class or a total of one hundred and fifty children every year.

4. *Stop Trafficking and Exploitation of People Through Unlimited Potentials (STEP-UP)* is a project that the Share A Child Movement implements with funding assistance from Microsoft Inc through the Visayan Forum Foundation. Housed at the SUPACA R-HUB Youth Center, the STEP-UP Project targets out-of-school children who are at risk of becoming trafficking victims to teach them computer skills and enable them to become more competitive in the jobs market. When the STEP-UP project started, the Share A Child Movement had just completed a seven-month project with the Philippine NGO Support Program (PHANSUP) on Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) with funding from the European Commission. The members of the children and young people’s organization of the Share A Child Movement called “Sugbuanong Pundok Aron sugpuon ang Child Abuse” (SUPACA) were trained to set up a functional mechanism on the orientation and training of young people

on AYSRHR and to provide values-laden child- and youth-friendly services on reproductive health to out-of-school children and youths at the Balay Bata Centers of the Share A Child Movement. As part of the services, the centers have five computers that are made accessible to the centers' clientele. This is the Share A Child Movement's counterpart in the STEP UP Project funded by Microsoft, Inc.

2. Child Rights Advocacy Program

The program was developed in response to the experience of a Share A Child Movement scholar who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of her own father in early 1990s. The lack of understanding of the victims of sexual abuse on the part of service providers and the general public at that time further contributed to the trauma suffered by victims. The Share A Child Movement trained its own beneficiaries on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and child protection laws. As a result of the training, they became enthusiastic child rights advocates. The decision to create a child and youth organization stemmed spontaneously from the children themselves, and in August 1997, the SUGbuanong Pundok Aron sugpuon ang Child Abuse (SUPACA) came into being. SUPACA regularly engages in information campaigns in schools where it has chapters and has become recognized in the community for its work. Three of its members have served in the National Children's Sectoral Council of the National Anti-Poverty Commission and sat in various regional councils in Region VII of the Philippines. One boy traveled to Bangkok, Thailand in April 2002 as one of the country's four child representatives to the Children and Young People's Forum to discuss the document "World Fit for Children" as part of the preparations for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children. There are now twenty SUPACA chapters, both based in school and

the community that involves the participation of out-of-school children and young people.

The Child Rights Advocacy Project and SUPACA earned their niches in development work in Cebu City. UNICEF has provided funding for the training of teachers on Child Abuse Prevention Education under its Country Program for Children and has also recruited SUPACA members to take care of the Cebu Bureau of its Kabataan News Network (KNN) television program which is aired weekly at a regular television channel, ABC Channel 5 and at a cable channel, ABS-CBN News Network, Channel 20. In 2001, Save the Children Fund-UK made a documentation of the Child Rights Advocacy Program as a "best practice" initiative. In July 2004, SUPACA earned a place among the Ten Accomplished Youth Organization (TAYO) Awards of the National Youth Commission (NYC) and its president, Diana Aspiras, went to Malacanang Palace to receive the award from Her Excellency, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines. The award came in the form of a trophy and a check for 50,000 Philippine pesos (around one thousand US dollars) to support the activities of the organization. The City of Cebu also recognized the efforts of the Share A Child Movement in promoting the rights of the child and child protection by giving it a "Most Outstanding Institution" award in February 2004 during the city's 2004 Charter Day celebrations.

The Child Rights Advocacy program has several components, namely:

- (a) SUPACA Activities - School-Based Campaigns – classroom-to-classroom information drive, symposiums, small group discussions, contests (essay and poster-making), television program (Kabataan News Network) with UNICEF and Probe Foundation, Inc., Kids on Air (with Angel Radio)
- (b) Round Table Discussions – held regularly with key adults in schools, such as school administrators, guidance counselors, and Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA) officers to explore ways of making

the school safe and child-friendly

(c) Training and Organization of School-based Quick Action Teams – in coordination with the Department of Education, public school teachers are trained on Child Abuse Prevention Education. The essence of the training is on the dynamics of child abuse, recognition of signs and symptoms, handling disclosures and reporting procedures. Teachers are urged to incorporate discussions on personal safety in their lessons and a team, consisting of the guidance counselors and head teachers of every grade level, formed to handle the task of coordinating with law enforcement agencies and social workers in providing protection to victims. Quick action teams in thirty-one public schools in Cebu City have already been organized. The Share A Child Movement works in partnership with UNICEF in implementing this program that aims to eliminate all forms of violence against children.

3. Family Development Program

Essentially a prevention program to forestall the disintegration of families and prevent children at risk from engaging in risky behavior, the goal of the Family Development Program (FDP) is to build the capacities of parents to care for their children, provide for their needs and protect them from harm. The program operates in the following manner:

- (a) The family develops a partnership with the family development worker (FDW)
- (b) The FDW helps the family assess its needs and strengths on an on-going process over a six-month period
- (c) The family sets its own major goals and smaller goals towards the major goals, and identifies ideas to achieve them
- (d) The family learns and practices skills needed to become more self-reliant
- (e) The family uses basic services available within the community as stepping stones to reach their goals.

The program covers three barangays (Sitio Alaska in Barangay Mambaling, Sitio Almacin in Barangay Calamba, and Barangay Lorega San Miguel) and staffed by one social worker who acts as program coordinator and seven family development workers. The program is linked to two other programs of the Share A Child Movement, namely, the educational assistance program, particularly the preschool component, and the livelihood program. The families of children enrolled in the Balay Bata Preschool and children in primary and secondary schools who qualify under the FDP are likewise enrolled in the family development program to address health and education issues in the family. As soon as a family is deemed ready, the parents are then referred to the Livelihood Program for assistance in starting their own micro-enterprises. The program is funded by the European Commission under a co-financing scheme with a French non-governmental organization, InterAide. The program thus far has covered four hundred sixty-seven families in the three areas with an annual budget of 1,975,000 Philippine pesos (around 40,000 US dollars).

5. Livelihood and Skills Training Program

The Livelihood and Skills Training Program is essentially a micro finance program designed to give the poorest of the poor access to financial services. The Share A Child Movement assists families to enhance their earning capacities and increase their savings in order to minimize the vulnerability of children to abuse. The program incorporates both financial and non-financial services, namely:

Financial Services

- (a) Loan
- (b) Collection
- (c) Savings
- (d) Home Visits
- (e) *Pulong-pulong* (meeting)

Non-financial Services

- (a) Skills Training

(b) Partners' Product Promotions

The program has helped two thousand families since the year 2000 in fifteen barangays. There are several families who were able to rise from poverty by being successful in business. Some of them were even able to save up to 40,000 Philippine pesos (almost 900 US dollars) as a result of their participation in the program. However, because the program's revolving capital was only 600,000 Philippine pesos (around 13,000 US dollars) and its beneficiaries live in urban poor areas that are highly vulnerable to fires, the value of the revolving capital has been greatly diminished by the fact that many of the beneficiaries have been affected by fires that burned their homes and businesses. As a result, the program was temporarily suspended in August 2007 until the Share A Child Movement could secure additional capital.

Strategies for Children's Participation

Advanced levels of children and youth participation can be seen in the Child Rights Advocacy Program (CRA) in schools. The program involves the organization and training of student child rights advocates (CRAs) in public secondary schools. The program operates in ten schools where SUPACA chapters exist. The Department of Education provided legitimacy to SUPACA activities through the endorsement by the DECS Division Superintendent of SUPACA program to school principals.

The Abellana National School (ANS) SUPACA chapter has a membership of fifty students while that of Go Thong National High School (GTNHS) has a membership of thirty-two. About 70 percent of the members in both schools are females. Each SUPACA chapter has two sets of officers – senior and junior years – to facilitate transition when the senior officers graduate from secondary school. Females are equitably represented in the decision-making structure of the organization.

There are SUPACA chapters in Pardo National High School, Florencio Urot Memorial National High School, Carlos Go Thong Memorial National High School, Don Sergio Osmeña National High School, Don Sergio Osmeña Night High School, Vicente Cosido Memorial National High School, Guba National High School, Adlaon National High School, Mambaling Night High School, Don Vicente Rama Memorial Night High School, Zapatera Night High School, City Central Night High School, Abellana Night High School, Regino Night High School, Pasil Night High School, Tiange Night High School, and Babag Night High School.

The members in all the schools cite the following as their group's objectives: to increase awareness on child rights, and to prevent child abuse by increasing vigilance of students. The groups' major activity is information campaign on child rights with particular emphasis on child abuse. School and community awareness on child abuse is enhanced through these activities. Aside from its awareness-raising activities, SUPACA also participates in beautification campaigns and anti-drug abuse education drive.

Nature of children's participation

Children participate in the Share A Child Movement programs in various ways. They strive to raise awareness of the people about child rights, mobilize other children for specific activities, manage their organization and plan their activities, and represent the children sector in regional bodies.

The members serve as Child Rights Advocates (CRAs) by holding awareness-raising activities consisting primarily of classroom-to-classroom campaigns where they talk about child rights focusing on child abuse. These provide the venues for the students to express their experiences. Most of the disclosures of the students are about physical and psychological abuses. CRAs refer the victims to Share A Child

Movement if they want to file a complaint against the abusers. The Share A Child Movement has assisted in filing a case against an ice cream vendor who allegedly sexually molested a child.

SUPACA also holds symposiums on child rights particularly in the month of October and participates in public hearings of proposed legislations affecting the welfare of children. Some members in school are also announcers and scriptwriters of “Tingog sa Kabataan”. SUPACA plans to start working in poor communities in the city.

Annex

SUgbuanong Pundok Aron Sugpuon ang Child Abuse (SUPACA)

In an ideal world, children grow up healthily and happily, full of love, free of abuse, and free to express themselves and be productive members of society. As we all know, however, the world isn't ideal, and children everywhere are exposed to maltreatment, abuse, and crime. This is true even in the progressive city of Cebu, which has its own share of challenges in spite of being rich in culture, steeped in tradition, and immersed in industry.

“Before our organization was born, young people in our community were hooked on rugby [glue used in shoemaking]. Most of the people there... liked to quarrel; kids weren't aware of their rights and feared nothing. And their parents didn't care about them—not even about these children's education,” Diana Aspiras of SUgbuanong Pundok Aron Sugpuon ang Child Abuse (SUPACA) shares in Filipino. “Even in our school, there are teachers who would abuse the kids and hit them if they can't answer questions properly, and especially if they're caught not listening to the teacher.”

“The clincher came when one of our friends... was abused by her father and became pregnant at the same time as her mother,” Diana reveals. “Then we decided to organize ourselves.” SOPACA (Students' Organization for Protection Against Child Abuse), SUPACA's forerunner organization, was born. Its name was later changed when the organization expanded to include even out-of-school youth (OSY) from their communities.

The organization's main thrust is to advocate for and protect children's rights, and to educate their peers about these. It conducts training sessions on leadership and team building; child rights laws (specifically, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child and Youth Welfare Code, and the law on Special Protec-

tion for Children), and the technology of participation; as well as room-to-room campaigns, small group discussions among student leaders, symposiums, and poster- and essay-making contests.

“We started by advocating to our peers about their rights, and then we eventually created training programs to develop young people... It was difficult at first because the teachers didn’t care—they would ask us about our activities, and then ask why these were still necessary. They wouldn’t let us conduct our activities at first, but we persisted and explained our cause to them, and they eventually understood our purpose.”

From its school-based activities, SUPACA went on to conquer the air waves. Its radio program, *Kids on Air*, airs every Saturday over Angel Radio; and its TV program, *Kapihan sa Kabataan*, is shown by the Philippine Information Agency over SkyCable every Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. Four of its members are also part of the Cebu Bureau of the Kabataan News Network, a national program supported by The Probe Team and the United Nations Children’s Fund.

The organization has been lucky so far with the support that it’s been receiving. Diana admits that they don’t have a lot of funding, but they’ve been kept afloat by the generosity of their benefactors. “We’ve been able to sustain our organization because people inside and outside our community, even those from beyond Cebu City, want us to succeed. They see that we really want to educate young people about their rights.”

The founding members’ efforts are now being multiplied by eight SUPACA chapters around Cebu City, as well as by a community of out-of-school youth in Sito Alaska, Mambaling, Cebu. All of these chapters have their respective activities and officers, who congregate at the annual SUPACA Confederation and election of officers.

SUPACA’s members are a cut above the rest. Apart from being recognized as a “best practice”

by Save the Children-UK for enabling young people to participate in governance and nation-building, the organization also counts among its members and alumni:

- Three members of the National Anti-Poverty Commission Children’s Sectoral Council
- Two of the Ten Outstanding Cebuano Youth Leaders (for 2002 and 2003)
- An Outstanding Boy Scout of the Philippines (for 2003)
- And a member of the Cebu City Commission for the Welfare and Protection of Children (CCCWPC).

The organization is also a member of the Cebu City Task Force on Street Children.

So what more could these youngsters ask for? Not too much, Diana answers, only that they want to coordinate with more local government units (LGUs) in order to expand their activities. Nationwide, perhaps!

To other young people and youth organizations who want to make a dent in the world, Diana shares these words: “Don’t be afraid of whatever challenges your organization may face. Finish what you’ve started, be true and sincere to your mission, and strive to achieve your goals even if you don’t have too much funding.”

(Note: SUPACA was one of the TAYO awardees in 2004. **TAYO**, or the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations, is an annual search that aims to recognize, reward, and encourage youth efforts in nation building. Since its start in 2003, it became known as the Philippines’ foremost award for outstanding youth organizations, choosing its winners based on innovative programs or projects that have benefited communities in the country.)

Source: *TAYO 2 - Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO)* in www.youth.net.ph/download/TAYO%202%20mag.pdf