



PHILIPPINE CHILDREN'S  
MINISTRIES NETWORK

# Creating Safe Communities For children

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION OF PCEC | SEPTEMBER 2021

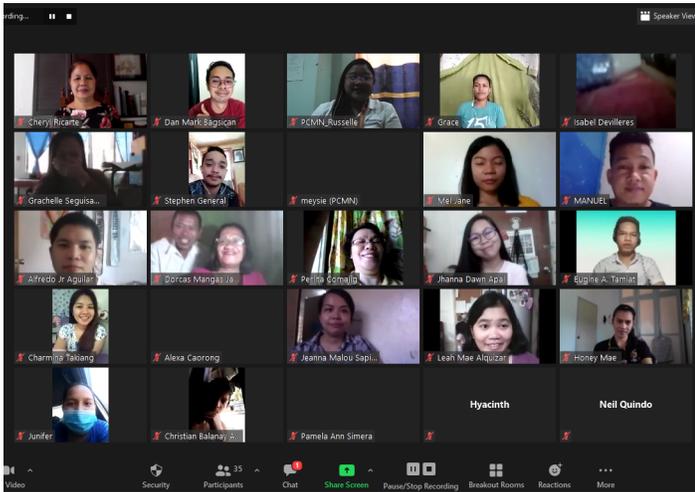


## 3rd Quarter Newsletter

*Safeguarding Ministry Workers and Workplace amidst the pandemic variants*

### What's Inside?

- **Banner News**
- **Feature Stories**
- **Testimonials**
- **Project Corner**
- **Staff and Membership Care Corner**
- **Advocacy Corner**
- **Partnership Corner**
- **Membership Corner**
- **News Stories/News Bits**
- **Message from the National Director**



## PHILIPPINES, THROUGH THE INITIATIVE OF PCMN, LOGS WITH THE HIGHEST DATA ON PHONE MENTORING PROGRAM OUT OF 21 COUNTRIES

By Ma. Luisa A. Bautista, PCMN Communications Officer  
source: Viva KOBO Report

Philippines, through the implementation of PCMN, was able to log the highest data on global entries for first call out of 21 countries where the Child and Family Phone Mentoring program is being implemented.

Last June 2020, Viva launched the phone-based mentorship program to support families during the

***Philippines logs the highest data on global entries for first call with 3,755 calls conducted by trained mentors***

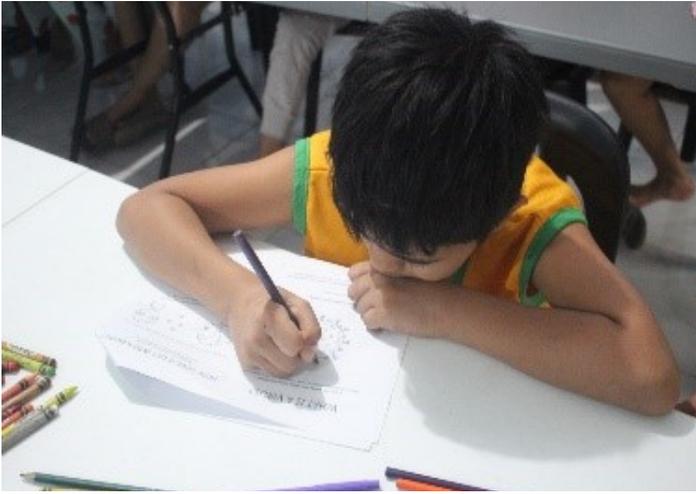
COVID-19 pandemic that aims to reduce violence against children by providing parents with psychosocial support through guided phone calls.

PCMN is the lead organization in the Philippines in implementing the phone mentoring program, through capacity building of phone mentors coming from the regional networks and participating churches. In the Viva Global Phone Mentoring Dashboard, which monitors the number of calls logged by the mentors, Philippines logs the highest data on global entries with *initial 3,755 first calls* conducted by mentors.

As of July 2021, there are 60 participating organizations with 1,139 mentors, who reached 5,161 families all over the Philippines, indirectly impacting 24,750 family members, including 18,142 (73%) children in the household.

Last August 2021, PCMN completed the phone mentoring program project in Davao City, with the Mindanao Children's Ministries Network (MCMN), in partnership with Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation, and commenced anew with Alliances of Children's Ministries in Negros (ACMN) in partnership with Viva UK this September.#





## CONTINUOUS MINISTRY WORK AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

### PCMN MEMBER PERSPECTIVE: AMG BAHAY SILUNGAN

*To know more about the organization,  
visit their website at <https://www.absiphils.com/>*

By: Ptr. Hector Araña, Executive Director

AMG Bahay Silungan Inc. is a temporary shelter for abused and exploited children. It is a place where they will be assisted towards their full recovery while also preparing them towards reintegration where the children return to the care and safety of their families and communities, after the “storm”.

The journey can be long and can vary from one child to another. The destination of each child’s journey also differs depending on their own starting point and their family’s capacities. Thus, each road is unique and requires flexibility in the program.

AMG Bahay Silungan, Inc. recognizes that these journeys can often be prolonged and irregular,

therefore requiring a long-term and flexible commitment and a holistic program that can transport each child towards sustainable transformation and empowerment.

#### ABSI’s Activities During Pandemic

AMG Bahay Silungan, Inc., or ABSI, envisions transformed and empowered survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The Restoration, Awareness Raising through Education, (Re) Integration, Sustainable Empowerment, and Education (RAISE) program was designed to achieve this vision. In the middle of the pandemic, the realization of such vision and goals was challenged but it did not stop us. Online sexual exploitation increased during the lockdown due to the increased screentime of perpetrators who seek victims locally. We had 15 children before the pandemic and now we have 29 resident survivors. Two (2) survivors have been reintegrated through the Kinship Care Program considering that the perpetrators are their family members.

Various measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 at ABSI was implemented like frequent handwashing, disinfection with an alcohol-based sanitizer, respiratory hygiene such as covering coughs, the physical distancing of at least one (1) meter, wearing of masks where distancing is not possible, regular environmental cleaning and disinfection, and limiting unnecessary travel.



Clear policies and messages, training, and education for staff and children were conducted to increase awareness of COVID-19. The management of people with COVID-19 or their contacts was also critical e.g., requiring workers who are unwell or who develop symptoms to stay at home, self-isolate and contact a medical professional or the local COVID-19 information line for advice on testing and referral.

The pandemic has caused some children to be uneasy when they were confined already at the home for months feeling fear and sadness. The staff created activities so that children will be able to find ways to express their feelings and emotions. A monthly creative activity is conducted such as a music festival, arts celebration, etc. where at the end they presented and showcased their talents or lessons from the activities that enhanced and improved the self-esteem and confidence of children.



Somehow, the pandemic had a positive impact on the lives of the survivors since the contact and influence from outside were limited. Therapeutic programs and activities were furthermore implemented including seminars and training on

safe touch, lying, anger management, and more. A closer relationship and engagement with the staff were enhanced that developed more trust and confidence where many survivors were able to share their traumatic experiences openly.



#### Other Activities

The survivors are exposed to daily spiritual and social activities such as morning devotion, cell group, discipleship activities, and team building. Aside from learning and listening to their mentors, the children are also encouraged to share their reflections with their fellow survivors.

Physical and recreational activities are included in the program to help in the restoration of their well-being. Sports fest, regular jiu-jitsu training, indoor and outdoor games, and daily exercises are part of the survivors' routine. Every Saturday, the children attend jiu-jitsu classes in partnership with the Fight to Protect and the Philippines Without Orphans. Other advocates such as Ms. Emmanuelle Vera, Miss World Philippines 2021 candidate, visited the shelter and pledged support to ABSI.

The survivors were formed into a group called PROTECTORS which trained them to speak up for themselves and be advocates against Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.



The social workers train the children to be aware of their safety and boundaries, including their rights and responsibilities.

AMG Bahay Silungan, Inc. would like to ask for your continued prayer and support as we continue to implement our programs and services to survivors and continue to advocate for the end of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the midst of these trying and challenging times.

AMG Bahay Silungan, Inc. is a current program partner under the End OSEC project in partnership with the End OSEC Consortium consisting of Viva Denmark, PCMN, and IJM Philippines, funded by the European Union to support OSEC survivors in their needs, and technical support to Social Workers on case management.#

COVID-19 took everyone by surprise in March 2020. At that time, it seemed like it was just going to be a temporary 2-week glitch in our operations. A year and a half after, we are still in the thick of it with the continuing series of lockdowns and no end in sight.

PCMN soon realized that it had to take appropriate measures to respond to the pandemic and to ensure the safety of its employees—from implementing work from home (WFH) arrangements to drafting a PCMN COVID-19 policy. Management gave all workers instructions on protocols to be followed, provided them with vitamins and medical supplies, and scheduled their flu and pneumonia vaccines. PCMN also encouraged the staff to avail the government-provided COVID-19 vaccines.

PCMN successfully navigated the first year under the “new normal.” The project activities continued and were adapted as needed with more events being held virtually. However, no matter how careful we were, the variants and surges caught up with us. Two months ago, in July 2021, PCMN came face to face with exposure. This incident put a COVID management response team into action. Meetings focused on the immediate needs: RT-PCR COVID testing for those exposed, strict home quarantines, closing and disinfection of the offices, and

## PCMN TODAY: HOW THE ORGANIZATION MANAGES THE COVID-19 INFECTION IN THE WORKPLACE

by Katerina Veneracion, PCMN Project Coordinator for End OSEC and Ma. Luisa Bautista, PCMN Communications Officer



provisions and psychosocial support for the employees affected.

What did we learn from this experience? We saw the gaps and challenges. Each worker has a specific case and different needs that have to be met. This brought about the chance to revisit the existing COVID and health policies of PCMN to account for the changing landscape of infections and government guidelines.

### Practical Tips in Managing the COVID-19 infection in the Workplace

PCMN strives to keep the staff and its workplace safe against COVID-19 infection. Based on the 3rd quarter experience where PCMN managed infections in its four (4) offices, the following are some of the practical tips you may wish to adhere to when managing COVID-19 infection in the workplace:

## 1 Focus on Mitigation

As an organization, PCMN has set a COVID-19 Protocol which indicates what the staff must do in preventing and mitigating COVID-19 at work. It is crucial that the COVID-19 Incident Management Team is prepared to convene and respond fast on how to support the staff, whether they have mild symptoms, a need for home quarantine, and/or refer to a government facility.

## 2 Support to the Staff in Three Aspects

The holistic response of the convened COVID-19 Incident Management Team, together with the support from the Human Resources has been an excellent practice in PCMN. PCMN provided support to (1) essential needs: food packs, and hygiene kits,

(2) application in government benefits, and (3) platform for a mental health check for the staff who were infected by COVID-19. These aspects for support are necessary to show staff care, especially it is anecdotal that people experiencing COVID-19 infection have a huge risk of emotional turmoil.

## 3 Review of Areas to Improve

Based on the experience of PCMN, it allowed the organization to take a step back and review the existing policies (HR Policy on sick benefits) to support COVID-19 infection and the safety and security of the staff. By reviewing lessons learned, and best practices, each new step provided better action in responding to the needs of the staff who were infected by COVID-19.

### Salient Features of PCMN COVID-19 Protocol

PCMN has an existing protocol on COVID-19 which outlines the measures the organization has in place to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). PCMN staff, Board of Trustees, volunteers, and visitors are required to adopt these measures and to ensure their implementation, to maintain safe working places.

PCMN stated in this protocol the General Guidelines the staff must adhere to in the workplace, and minimize the contact with COVID-19 (Section A and B). Section C clearly states the steps on COVID-19 Response to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19, the staff shall observe the following: when suspected of having COVID-19, such as when (a) temperature is greater than 37.5 degrees Celsius, or (b) experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, dry cough, or tiredness or (c) informed to have been in close contact with a person declared positive of COVID-19:

1

Proceed to the isolation area.

2

Contact the City Health Department or Office via the following numbers, and follow their instructions:

- a. For the Quezon City office: 703 2723
- b. For the Dasmariñas City office: 416 0279, 416 0809, or 416 5638; or
- c. For the Iligan City office: 221 6174, 221 6517, or 221 6108.

3

Get tested for COVID-19 via the COVID-19 rapid antibody test in the nearest hospital or clinic; (The expenses incurred will be reimbursed by PCMN).

4

If tested positive in the COVID-19 rapid antibody test, or even tested negative but are experiencing the mentioned symptoms of COVID-19:

- a. Report the condition immediately to the direct supervisor who will report it to the City/Municipal Health Department or Office, and to the Safety Officer.
- b. Inform individuals that have been in close contact with the staff within the last (2) days, and advise them to get tested for COVID-19 if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, dry cough, or tiredness.
- c. Subject oneself to confirmatory test via swab testing, and if found COVID-19 positive, self-isolate in government healing centers or facilities. If hospitalization is necessary, existing PhilHealth and insurance will apply. Support of PCMN will be based on the

approved policy to access the funds. See Annex A on policy to access PCMN COVID-19 Emergency Health Fund.

d. If found negative for COVID-19 via swab testing, self-isolate for fourteen (14) days, and seek immediate medical attention if serious symptoms of COVID-19, such as difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain, or loss of speech or movement, become apparent.

e. After the fourteen (14)-day self-isolation, get tested again for COVID-19 via COVID-19 rapid antibody test (The expenses incurred will be reimbursed by PCMN).

5

Once an employee tested positive in the rapid test, the said staff should consider taking a sick leave for 14 days based on the prevailing policy of DOLE.

6

If an employee tested negative in the COVID-19 rapid antibody test and is not experiencing the mentioned symptoms of COVID-19, continue normal work arrangement.

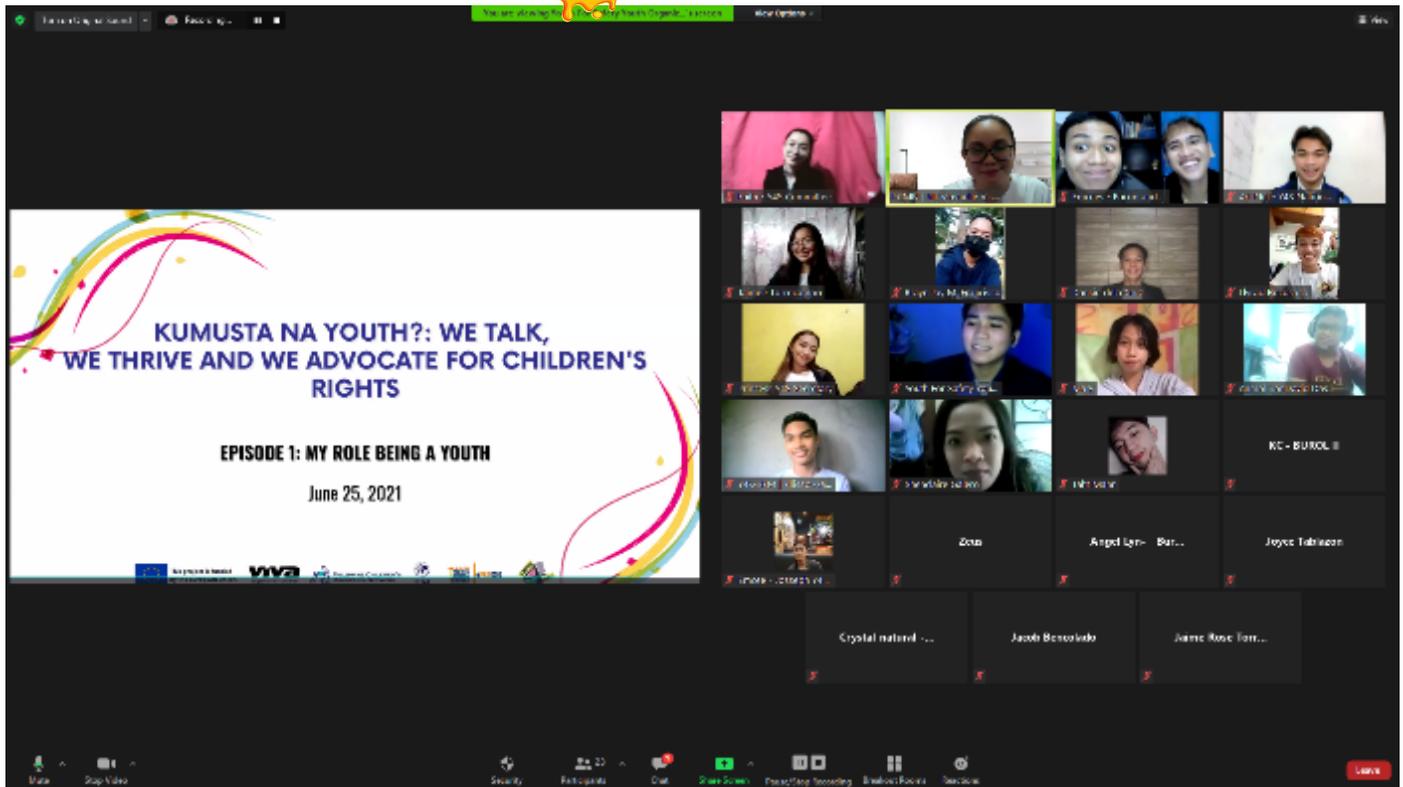
7

Decontaminate the workplace with the standard practice of DOH/IATF.

8

If an employee is sick with non-COVID related, regular PCMN's policy applies.

# Project Corner



## “KUMUSTA NA YOUTH?: WE TALK, WE THRIVE AND WE ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS”

By Jill Maynelle R. Visbal, End OSEC Project Officer in Dasmariñas City

PCMN’s End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (End-OSEC) Project in Dasmariñas City conducted a four-part webinar series to further engage Youth Advocates as well as to welcome new enthusiasts in the advocacy.

The series was held once a month having plenary speakers who discussed a specific topic and followed by breakout sessions on a staggered rollout of Training of Trainers for the Safety of

Children Online module for new and interested Youth Advocates, and peer-to-peer Kumustahan.

Episodes 1 to 3 of the four-part series were conducted last June 25, July 23, and August 27 respectively. For its first episode, My Role Being a Youth, SK Provincial Federation President and Board Member Hon. Jerome Napoleon Gonzales discussed the important role of Youth in advocating for the rights of the youth and children.

Mr. Gonzales advised on how to spread the advocacy and access support from the local government offices. The activity also had breakout sessions for the training of new advocates on Safety of Children Online Module (Sessions 1-3) led by trained Youth Advocates and PCMN Youth for Safety Youth Organization Officers; and Peer-to-

Peer Conversation (Online Kumustahan) of existing Youth Advocates with resource speaker, College Lecturer from Batangas State University - Main Campus I, Mr. Romar Andrade Mandayuhan.

Online Module Sessions 7 to 9; and Kumustahan Session of Youth Advocates with Mr. Leovegilio II D. Beler, RPM and NCST Psychology Faculty, discussing on giving importance to one's mental health.



*"I enjoyed joining the Kumusta na Youth. It is a double-purpose event. First, I gained new friends through peer-to-peer conversation and second, I was enlightened regarding End OSEC advocacy. I highly recommend my fellow youth to engage with this kind of advocacy."*

- Youth Advocate, Mary Cler Gabriel said about her experience on the training. -



*"I'm happy to get invited. But every time I've been called (during the interactive activity), I felt nervous because at times, I don't know what to say or what the answer is. While listening to the speaker about the topic on OSAEC, it reminded me of my cousin who got sexually harassed. I learned (to protect myself from online abuse and exploitation) from the session."*

- Youth Advocate, Anmol David S. Das, added as a testimonial to his experience during the TOT. -



Episode 2 is about Creating Safe Spaces with Plenary Speaker PMSG. Maria Victoria J. Divina (WCPD PNCO, City of Dasmaringas) and Breakout Room Speaker Ms. Niña Marie Ligan, Governor College of Liberal Arts and Communication Student Government, DLSU-D. Topics discussed by PMSG Divina are related to child abuse and exploitation including RA 7610, and RA 8353. Breakout rooms include continuation of the Training of Trainers regarding Safety of Children Online Module Sessions 4 to 6; and Kumustahan session of Youth Advocates with Ms. Niña Ligan discussing Advocacy and its recipe for success.

Episode 3 is about Redefining the Future with Plenary Speaker Ms. Ma. Diana Bianca Silva, PCMN Advocacy and Partnership Officer discussing the Anti-OSAEC Law (SB 2209). During the third episode, breakout rooms include the continuation of the Training of Trainers regarding Safety of Children

PCMN Youth For Safety (Y4S) Dasmaringas Chapter connected its activities with End OSEC youth empowerment activities and will wrap up on September 25. With the learnings they gained from the previous episodes, the Youth Advocates are at the best version of themselves and are ready to continue to advocate for the rights and safety of our Filipino children.#

# Project Corner



CFO Prosecution Development provided an orientation on OPSG and its goals in increasing the support and capacity of partner prosecutors in handling OSEC cases. Atty. Therese Salomon led in discussing OSEC cases dynamics and handling OSEC cases for successful convictions.

The activity is under the training component of the End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (End OSEC) project consortium which benefits and supports our justice operator partners in the Philippines in the management of OSEC cases. #

## LAUNCHING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING OF THE OSEC PROSECUTION SUPPORT GROUP (OPSG) IN REGION 10

By Andy C. Alegre  
Senior Strategist, Church Partnerships  
IJM Philippines

Last June 16, IJM Cebu Program Office Prosecution Development Team led the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children Prosecution Support Group (OPSG) Capacity-Building and Launching in Region X in partnership with PCMN supported by the EU End-OSEC Project Consortium. The OPSG is a support group that provides an avenue for learning about the crime of OSEC to prosecutors and prosecution experts in Region X. The activity aimed to build the capacities of the Region X prosecutors to successfully handle cases of OSEC in the whole region.

The activity was attended by 79 prosecutors from region 10 led by its Regional Prosecutor Atty. Merlynn Uy. Atty. Liza Tan, Executive Head of the



## PCMN PARTNERS WITH THE DEPED ANTIPOLO TO HOST THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN ONLINE WEBINAR FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

By Michelle Albacaro, LE-OSAEC Project Officer in Antipolo City and Ma. Luisa Bautista, PCMN Communications Officer

PCMN identified that parents have a significant role in protecting their children from any form of sexual abuse and exploitation. With this, Let's Eliminate Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (LE-OSAEC) project

in partnership with the Department of Education Division of Antipolo City conducted Safety of Children Online Webinar for Parents and Guardians with the theme: Protecting our Children against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Antipolo City via Zoom and Facebook last June 26.

A total of 118 participants from barangays San Roque, Sta. Cruz and Cupang attended the said webinar. The project invited various set of speakers to discuss topics from the Safety of Children Online Module.

“

*“Mahalaga na mapagtuunan din natin ng pansin (ang OSAEC) sapagkat maiituring din natin itong isang pandemya na may permanenteng epekto sa aspetong mental at sikolohiyal na kalagayan ng kabataan. (It is important that we also pay attention (to OSAEC) because we can also consider it a pandemic that has a permanent impact on the mental and psychological state of the youth).”*

”

OIC Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Division of Antipolo City, Mr. Christopher Diaz, message to the participants during his welcome remarks.

The webinar aimed to encourage the parents, guardians, and teachers as active advocates of the anti-OSAEC campaigns in Antipolo City such as in raising awareness and imploring active participation in community-based activities that will contribute to the widespread understanding of the advocacy and development of their fellow parents.

MCMN Executive Director, Ms. Leah Y. Genson discussed Session 1: “Ano ang Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) at kung paano ito maiiwasan? (What is OSEC and how to prevent it)” followed by Senior Pastor/ Founding chairman City Word Family Church, Inc., Rev. Pastor Rolando C. Paloma, who tackled Session 2: “Lumikha ng mas ligtas na bahay para sa isang bata (Creating safe environment for children at home)”.#

## Project Corner



## PCMN YOUTH ADVOCATES AS PHILIPPINE REPRESENTATIVES TO THE GLOBAL YOUTH PLATFORM

By Hanna San Jose, PCMN Network Development Officer

PCMN is privileged for the opportunity to tap its Youth Advocates from PCMN Youth For Safety (Y4S) Youth Organization, both national and local chapters, to represent the Philippines in a global movement that will promote youth initiatives towards social justice.

In May 2021, PCMN signed a partnership agreement initiated by Viva Denmark and participated by five (5) countries, including Denmark, Honduras, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, and Philippines. The partnership agreement is on the implementation of the movement called **Global Youth Platform**, wherein the youth volunteers from these five (5) countries will unite and interact as they all are empowered and capacitated to take responsibility and act upon the global challenges the youth is facing in their generation.

The Global Youth Platform also aims to strengthen youth participation, volunteering, and civil organization in the Global South, as well as in Denmark, by reinforcing the network among these countries.

With this campaign, Viva Denmark looks at allowing its youth volunteers to have a comprehensive understanding of the global challenges being faced by the youth from across the countries. This gives Youth Advocates of Y4S a platform to impart experiences and advocacies and to learn from the other volunteers, at the same time. Overall, the campaign targets to reach a total of 4,000 youth from among the participating countries.

Applications for the campaign were opened to all Y4S chapters, wherein five (5) of them were screened and selected to represent PCMN Y4S and the Philippines. The five (5) Youth Ambassadors will be leading the implementation of the action plan and projects under this campaign. They are set to start orientation meetings this quarter and plan for a launch event hosted by Global Youth Platform and Digital Justice on March 2022. Part of this campaign is a training program that the Youth Ambassadors will take on as

the campaign moves forward to fully equip and capacitate them in initiating this youth movement.

PCMN and the Youth For Safety mentors are all delighted for a global experience that our Youth Advocates can gain through this campaign!#



## Project Corner



### IN THE QUEST OF REINFORCING THE ORAGON SPIRIT, A RESILIENCE BUILDING IN BICOL

By Ronilo A. Oyanib, PCMN Program Manager  
and Ptr. Jackson Natividad, Gintong Aral  
Director

In the quest for building strong and resilient communities in Bicol Region, the Philippine Children's Ministries Network, Viva Hongkong, and Gintong Aral Community Development, Inc. with support from Global Care Germany implemented the Community based Psychological First Aid Program after Cyclone Goni in Tabaco City and Guinobatan, Albay.



and refer them to concerned authorities. The training covered nine (9) themes that shall be discussed during phone calls including the introductory and wrap-up calls.

Currently, the project was able to reach the following Barangay Local Government Units from the two project areas in Guinobatan and Tabaco City. For Guinobatan, the project was able to engage the following communities: Brgy. Quibongbongan, Brgy. Ranao-Ranao, Brgy. Binogsacan, Brgy. Calzada and Brgy. Linao-Libon. For Tabaco City, the project was able to engage the following communities: Brgy. Mariro, Brgy. Bayandong, Brgy. Basagan and Tabaco City.

PCMN and Gintong Aral (GA) concluded the week-long activities last June 6 to 11 on Vision Casting, Training of Trainers (TOT) on Operation Safe, Child and Family Phone Mentoring Program, and Hope Bearers. Partners and stakeholders in Albay were very receptive to the program and showed their interest in collaborating with PCMN and GA in building disaster resilient communities for the protection of children.

The weeklong training is in preparation for the implementation of "The Community-based Psychological First Aid Program after Cyclone Goni" in Tabaco City and Guinobatan, Albay in Bicol Region, and was able to train 256 training participants.

A total of 20 volunteers from the participating communities in Tabaco City and Guinobatan actively participated in the training to build their capacities on how to use and navigate the CFPMP toolkit. 20 of them were selected to participate as phone mentors. The mentors were taught on how to conduct the dialogue during phone calls, tips on how to engage the parents and children, and how to do follow-up conversations during the next call. Mentors were also taught to be sensitive and keen on the protection issues that may arise during calls

**Observed and Documented Impacts**

After the meetings and follow-ups to all Pastoral Movement Leaders in Tabaco City, Church of the Nazarene, and groups in Guinobatan District 3, talks about exploring the establishment of a network started.

At least 23 churches are representing 23 communities and not less than 40 key community leaders are already involved. Groups are coming in from District 1 (Tabaco Area), and District 3 (Guinobatan Area) of the province of Albay.



Another significant impact of the project is the addition of 200 more reached children to the original target numbers of the project: 1000 children for Operation Safe and 500 parents and 500 children for phone mentoring.

The project results reach only a limited portion of the population. Bicol Region, annually, is at risk of typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and other disasters. This situation is exacerbated by the pandemic. Apparently, there is a need to reach for more children and families in the areas needing psychosocial support intervention.

An assessment report will be rendered at the end of the project. #



## Global Partners on COVID-19 Response

### COLLABORATIVE EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMME (CERP)

(source: CERP Newsletter by Gary Kamaal,  
Director of Viva India )

To help covid affected patients and their families, Viva in collaboration with other NGOs started the Collaborative Emergency Relief Programme (CERP) in May. The purpose of this programme is to provide patients with medicine, oxygen concentrators, blood units, food and admission in hospitals. CERP is currently underway in Patna, Pune, Bangalore and Dehradun. If you know of a family struggling with covid in any of these cities do let us know. We are ready to be of service to all who are in need.

#### Beneficiary Testimony

One of the CERP's beneficiaries, Rajkishor Kumar from Patna in his testimony said, *"two weeks ago I tested covid positive, I started medication at home, but my condition became worse, I had difficulty in breathing and other medical problems started. My wife and elder daughter also tested positive. Being a daily wage earner, it was really a hard time for me to survive. A week back, I received a call from a CERP team member and he asked a question which no one asked me before, "Brother do you need any help, our team is here to help you. I felt like someone cares for me and wants to protect my family. They arranged a hospital bed for me and medicine for my family. They also provided us with dry grocery supply for a month. They supported me in way of finances to cover my hospital bills. I am still in the hospital recovering and the CERP team is caring for my family. They have helped us like we are their family, may God bless the team abundantly."*

## Phone Mentoring Programme

While the CERP is for addressing the emergency needs of covid affected families, our Phone Mentoring Programme is to keep a check on struggling families and children through weekly phone calls through mentors. Our Phone Mentoring team has connected with 2667 vulnerable families through weekly calls. In these calls, a mentor speaks to parents and children regarding their health and emotional well-being.

Anita says it is a wonderful programme and she is thankful to be the instrument for bringing a change in the lives of children and families.”

While the CERP is for addressing the emergency needs of covid affected families, our Phone Mentoring Programme is to keep a check on struggling families and children through weekly phone calls through mentors. Our Phone Mentoring team has connected with 2667 vulnerable families through weekly calls. In these calls, a mentor speaks to parents and children regarding their health and emotional well-being.

## A Mentor's Experience

Mentor Anita recalls, “I called a family with a plan to speak to them on the theme ‘being a strong family during covid’. I spoke to the father in the family, after briefly talking to him on the theme, to my surprise, he started sharing that over the years he has been dominating his wife and children in the house, acting as the head and boss of the family, to gain respect and honour from them. This opened an opportunity to share with him how to have a cordial relationship with his family. We discussed that his behaviour may keep his wife and children distant from him. A week later, when I called him back to know how he is doing, in a teary voice, he shared how beneficial my counsel was for him and that he started putting it into practice. He saw an immediate change in the behaviour of both his wife and children. They had become more loving and joyful. Not only did they respect him more, but he experienced the love of a father and a husband from his family. Previously, the children feared him whenever he returned from the office, but now as soon as he is home, the children run to get him a glass of water and sit in his lap. His wife is very happy too and extremely thankful for the counsel”

## Challenges ahead for poor and vulnerable children

From field reports, we foresee more challenges ahead for the poor and vulnerable children in the months to come. We are seeing an increase in:



### School dropout.

Already, there were six million children out of school. This number threatens to go up due to economic insecurity in their families due to COVID-19, causing many children to leave their studies. This has especially affected the girl child. Across India, 39.4% of girls aged 15-18 years drop out of school and college, according to a report by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.”



### Early marriage

Childline, a children's helpline, has reported a 17% increase in distress calls related to the early marriage of girls in June and July 2020 compared to 2019. According to the government, more than 10 million of these works, many of them young men, returned to their hometowns and villages during the lockdown because of loss of work. So parents of young girls - worried for their safety and anxious about their future prospects - are marrying their daughters off to ensure their wellbeing. Another reason is that parents are expected to pay for big weddings, but covid restrictions have limited the size of weddings.



### Trafficking

According to Patna's Centre DIRECT, 362 children were rescued in 2020 and another 136 have been rescued so far in 2021 — all working in the factories of Jaipur. The average age of these children was 10 years.

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### Viva's Teacher Support Programme

Covid has affected the education of nearly 290 million children. These children will need extra teaching support to catch up with studies they missed during the lockdown. We have put together a team of teachers, IT programmers and digital media developers to create and distribute teaching videos and learning activities for teachers to help children who have missed school#



## Staff and Membership Care Corner

### PCMN PROVIDES TWO DAYS OF WELL-BEING BREAK FOR ITS STAFF

By: Ma. Luisa A. Bautisa, PCMN Communications Officer

Due to the deluge of work during the second quarter from succeeding meetings, and online activities, PCMN Management saw the need to provide its staff with a two-day off last July 16, and July 19 for a wellbeing break.

This is in coincidence with the National Holiday last July 20, a regular holiday across the country in observance of Eid'l Adha or the Feast of Sacrifice, stretching the rest days of the staff from July 16 to July 20 (5 days).

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The following are some of the sharing of the PCMN staff on how did they spent their two-days wellbeing break:

# Advocacy Corner

THANK YOU SA WELL-BEING BREAK, NAGAMIT KO PO SIYA PARA MAKAPAGPAHINGA SA SIDE EFFECTS AFTER NG VACCINATION KO.

JILL



## WDAT CELEBRATION: VICTIMS VOICES LEAD THE WAY

By Bianca Silva, PCMN Advocacy and Partnership Officer

Human trafficking still exists and the campaign for the eradication of human trafficking globally is relentless. The fight against modern slavery has always been incorporated with dreadful emotions which we, as humans, cannot avoid as we watch children of different ages being rescued and offenders imprisoned.



“

WEEKEND DAY CAMP. QUALITY REFRESHING TIME WITH FAMILY AND NATURE

HANNA

”

“

"AFK"



KEEPING MYSELF SANE DURING THIS TOUGH TIMES IS MY RESPONSIBILITY. I OFTEN GO TO THE BEACH TO UNWIND AND TO ENJOY THE SUNSET AND ITS SERENITY. WHILE I ENJOY WORKING ON THE FIELD, SWEATING INSIDE THE GYM RELEASES ALL THE REMAINING ENERGY I HAVE FOR THE DAY... PARA MESHEREP ANG TULOG KO KINAGABIHAN.

MEYSIE

”

In 2013, a resolution was adopted during the UN General Assembly in improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons. It is also included in this resolution,

*"... in the context of the need for raising awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights, to designate 30 July as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, to be observed every year beginning in 2014..."*

Hence, making every July 30 the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

With this year's theme "Victims Voices Lead The Way", we are honored to hear the powerful testimonies from the survivors of modern-day



HAPPY TO SHARE MY TRIP TO BAGUIO DURING OUR WELL-BEING BREAK. I HAD FUN VISITING NEW PLACES, REFLECTING AND MEDITATING WHILE VIEWING BEAUTIFUL SCENERIES. I AM THANKFUL TO GOD DESPITE OF ALL MY SHORTCOMINGS IN LIFE.

MICHAY



slavery -- labor trafficking, sex trafficking, and online sexual exploitation.

PCMN serves as the Children's Commission of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) that concentrates on combating human trafficking especially in the form of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC). Together with its partners, it addresses its efforts in combatting human trafficking.

*"Aside from being part of the Secretariat, PCMN through its National Director, Ms. Fe Foronda, delivered a response on human trafficking, most especially on PCMN works on prevention of OSEC,"* stated by Ms. Snap Mabanta of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP).



*She also stated that, "Together with collaborators, we advocate at the highest national bodies to campaign on policy reform. To strengthen the prevention mechanism, both at national and local levels, it is crucial that the Anti-OSAEC law is passed, as well as the amendment to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act which, among other timely revisions, will provide a more victim-centered and holistic approach in addressing trafficking in persons."*

*"PCMN have served as a shield against human trafficking through their awareness campaigns, consultations, and provision of social services to assist and bring justice to survivors,"* remarks from Ms. Jocelyn Eguico of PCEC. *"PCMN through its partner churches open their doors to provide a safe space and sanctuary, help the survivors restore their life through psychological and financial support, and accompany them to a journey of healing caused by the nightmares of human trafficking."*, Ms. Eguico added.

Beyond all the melancholic stories we often see on our televisions, articles we read in newspapers or online, let us not forget that there is also a story of redemption and salvation. Voices that prove that despite the increasing numbers of cases, we are also making a change and providing hope and a future in somebody's lives by providing care, nurture and support, and ensuring that they are not alone in this battle. #

**"NOBODY SHOULD GO THROUGH WHAT THEY (SURVIVORS) HAVE ENDURED IN THE HANDS OF UNSCRUPULOUS HUMAN TRAFFICKERS."**

According to PCMN National Director, Ms. Fe Foronda, *"Nobody should go through what they (survivors) have endured in the hands of unscrupulous human traffickers. My tears moved me to anger, and then to hope – hope, to action because I know of people who work together to recover, rescue, and tend to their healing. By working with groups such as PIMAHT, IJM, and PCMN's stakeholders to protect thousands of children from experiencing this horrible crime in the at-risk communities."*

# Partnership Corner

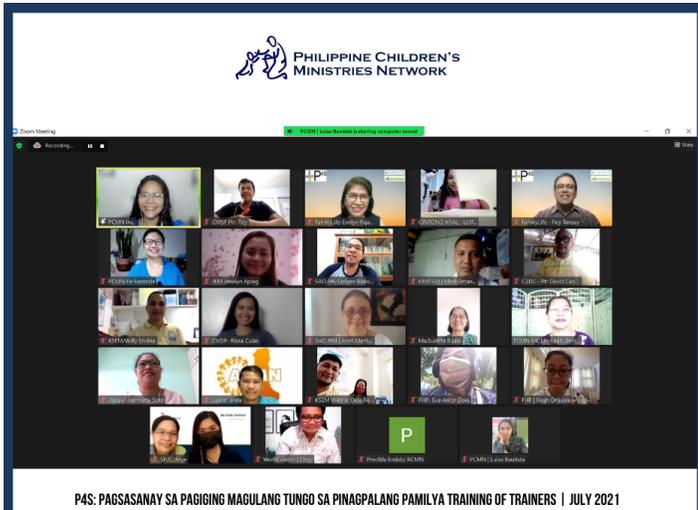


In July 2021, FamilyLife Philippines facilitated an online Training of Trainers (TOT) composed of member organizations of PCMN comprising the Family Strengthening Working Group. It was a first for FamilyLife Training Team to conduct the training of the 14 lessons virtually, but the pandemic did not stop them to impart the program, which was the result of the research and diligent work of their former team leader, Dr. Evelyn R Pajaron. Other facilitators during the TOT included Mr. Glenn and Ms. Bing Velasco, Ms. Marife Palima, Mr. Teody Pajaron, and Mr. Rey Tonsay, the current National Team Leader of FamilyLife.

*"I thank the Lord for the opportunity and privilege given to me to attend the P4s Online TOT every Thursday morning of July. Makakatulong ito (P4S curriculum) sa mga churches kung sila ay may programa para sa pamilya, related ang bawat lesson tinuturo na families need help and parents need to be equipped too, at walang perpektong pamilya pero may perpekto tayong Diyos. It also teaches that parenting is not just about providing physical needs of their children, but also giving the emotional support they need."*

-Pastor Mark Emanuel Reyes, San Mateo Rizal (RCMN) -

Conducted every Thursday of July, a total of 25 participants from twelve (12) member organizations of PCMN gathered via Zoom together with Ms. Leah Genson, PCMN Regional Network Coordinator, as a co-facilitator and support. The participating organizations were Alliances of Children's Ministries in Negros (ACMN), Christian Churches Convergence Dasmariñas City (C3DC), Christian Mission



## PCMN CONCLUDES THE MONTH-LONG SERIES OF TRAINING OF TRAINERS FOR THE P4S: PAGSASANAY SA PAGIGING MAGULANG TUNGO SA PINAGPALANG PAMILYA CURRICULUM

By Hanna San Jose, PCMN Network Development Officer

As one of PCMN's core strategies, family strengthening as a key to child protection, the network continued on with its partnership with FamilyLife Philippines, Inc., a non-profit organization committed to strengthening and equipping the family through an exceptional parenting curriculum called "P4s: Pagsasanay sa Pagiging Magulang Tungo sa Pinagpalang Pamilya."

Service Philippines Inc. Children’s Village, Food for the Hungry Philippines, Gintong Aral Community Development Foundation, Jigsaw Kids Ministry Philippines, Kanlungan sa Er-Ma Ministries, Northern Samar Children’s Ministries Network (NSCMN), Onesimo Bulilit Foundation, Rizal Children’s Ministries Network (RCMN), Samaritan’s Purse and Share-An-Opportunity Philippines.

The participants were divided wherein they co-facilitated in particular lessons, led some of the sessions and program flow since most of them are seasoned trainers and that they are being equipped to train others.

A closing ceremony and planning workshop was also conducted last July 29, wherein the group discussed on the possible implementation of roll-outs in their respective networks and organizations. The P4S Parenting Curriculum is aimed at improving parent-child and family relationships, increase positive parenting practices and increase trust relationship in God. #

movements and promotions. PCMN was pleased to “e-meet” new head of offices and leadership people during the past quarters, and they are the following:



**Olga Rodriguez is the new Executive Director of Food for the Hungry (FH) Philippines** and serves out of FH’s office in Manila. She has over 12 years of experience in program management, donor relations, and staff development, and has held various positions in the NGO sector, including Grants and M&E Manager, Regional Quality Assurance Officer, Program Quality Assurance & Compliance Advisor, and Country Director. Olga has worked in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Philippines. As the Executive Director for **FH Philippines**, she provides leadership and direction in managing change initiatives and in bridging the gap across various units and field offices.

Olga earned a Bachelor’s degree in International Studies from Texas A&M University and a Master’s degree in International Relations from the University of Kent’s Brussels School of International Studies.

Olga shared, *“The most exciting thing for me [in working for FH Philippines] is the opportunity to lead with values. FH’s Heartbeat resonates with me and I consider myself fortunate to have been called to serve and advocate for the poor and marginalized.”*

## Membership Corner



### NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF PCMN MEMBER AGENCIES

By Hanna San Jose, PCMN Network Development Officer

In the midst of the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, several PCMN member agencies adapted to transitions in their workplace. As quite a lot of them had to downsize the number of their personnel, some of them had personnel



**Emilou Vicente is the Managing Director of Harvesters for Christ Foundation Inc. (HCFI)- the Foundation. She is a native of Manila and holds a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education. She is a licensed professional teacher.**

She handles children’s ministry and serves as coordinator in the different projects of HCFI. Her promotion came in the middle of the pandemic. This was a tough year for her because of the work transition and the Covid19 pandemic happening simultaneously. Programs were put on hold due to quarantine and lockdowns, restrictions and protocols of the government. But she believes that God has always been faithful and that He is preparing greater things for His ministry at HCFI.

Emmy said, “Being part of the Foundation and the church for 16 years has been a rewarding experience for me from which I will be forever grateful to Him. And I know that God will be with me throughout this challenging yet exciting journey. As Philippians 1:6 states, ‘Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’”

**Abigail Praise Limpin is the Executive Director of CCT - Visions of Hope Christian School, Inc., the children and youth ministry arm of the Center for Community Transformation (CCT) Group of Ministries. She is an advocate for culture-based education, a Child Champion, and a servant of God. She currently leads two (2) mission schools in the tribal communities of Malungon, Sarangani, and Quezon, Palawan.**



**Jeannette O. Soto is appointed as the new Executive Director of Jigsaw Kids Ministry Philippines, Inc. this year 2021 after serving as the agency’s Program Manager for several years and has program management experience from Food for the Hungry Philippines, and Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation.**



# News Stories



## YOUTH FOR SAFETY OATH TAKING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING: Y4S LEADERS THRIVING AMIDST PANDEMIC

By Art Nel L. Bencolado, End OSEC Project Youth Mobilizer in Dasmariñas City

PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization conducted a Strategic Planning last July 3, 2021. After that was a virtual Oath Taking with Regional Cluster Head (Region XI and BARMM) of National Youth Commission, Mr. Mayjee De La Cruz, via Zoom last July 24, 2021.

The Strategic Planning happened last July 3 and was participated by the National Youth For Safety Officers and Committee Heads and mentors from each local Y4S (Antipolo, Bacolod, Dasmariñas, Iligan, Manila, Northern Samar, and Davao). The National Director of Philippine Children's Ministries Network, Ms. Fe Foronda, gave an affirming message saying *"You're the hope of*

*tomorrow and we have to hone you..."* to the youth advocates and the mentors.

PCMN Program Manager, Mr. Ronilo Oyanib facilitated the strategic planning workshop, wherein the YAs worked with their mentors to develop a VMG and core strategies of the youth organization. Upon finalization, the VMG of the PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization are as follows:

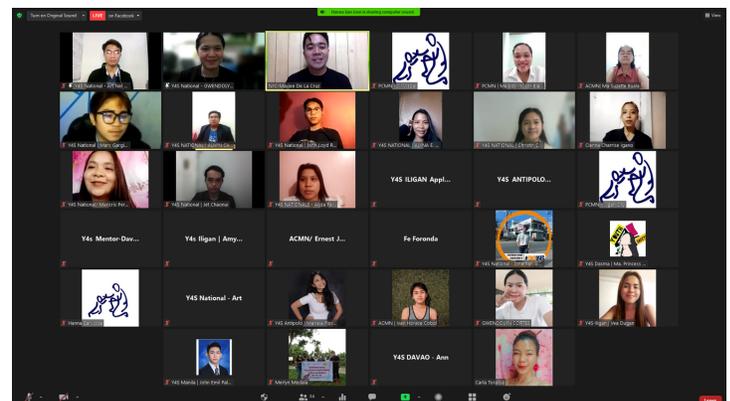
**Vision** - An empowered, dynamic and unified youth enabled to influence others in advocating towards building a community safe from sexual abuses and exploitation of children.

**Mission** - Empowering youth and families to create an abuse-free environment for children.

**Core Strategies** - Collaboration with other organizations; Information and Communication; Resource Mobilization and Linkages; and Policy Advocacy.

Subsequently, last July 24, PCMN hosted the virtual Oath Taking of the PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization National Officers with the theme "Y4S: Maunlad na Pamumuno sa Gitna ng Pandemya (Y4S: Leaders Thriving Amidst Pandemic)".

It was attended by National Youth For Safety Officers and Committee Heads and the mentors from each local Y4S (Antipolo, Bacolod, Dasmariñas, Iligan, Manila, Northern Samar, Davao).





The National Director of PCMN, Ms. Fe Foronda, gave a welcome message to the participants. The introduction of the Y4S Youth Officers was facilitated by the Regional Cluster Head (Region XI and BARMM) of the National Youth Commission, Mr. Mayjee De La Cruz.

Mr. De La Cruz inspired the Officers by being a resource speaker tackling how the youth organization thrives during the pandemic and previous Youth For Safety accomplishments.

Mr. Art Nel L. Bencolado, the National President/ National Youth Representative of PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization, gave a brief background regarding the organization's current status and the annual plan. Y4S also read the amended PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization Constitution and By-Laws.

As stated in the PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization's Preamble, *"We, the PCMN Youth For Safety Youth Organization, aver our adherence to the principles of creating safe spaces for children and youth, the sustainable development as well, imploring the aid of Almighty God, divulge our resolve to promote awareness on prevention of sexual abuses and advocate for the rights and protection of children and youth, do hereby ordain and promulgate this Constitution and By-Laws."* Youth Advocates will thrive despite the difficulties brought by the Covid - 19 pandemic.#

## END OSEC PROJECT IN DASMARIÑAS CITY MET WITH CITY MAYOR OF DASMARIÑAS FOR A COURTESY MEETING

By Katerina Veneracion, PCMN Project Coordinator for End OSEC



Last July 5, 2021, the End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (End OSEC) project in Dasmariñas City met with the Mayor of the City, Hon. Jennifer Austria-Barzaga, at the City Hall of Dasmariñas.

PCMN is a recognized and registered Civil Society Organization (CSO) in Dasmariñas City and is part of the Local Youth Development Council. Since 2020, the End OSEC project has been able to reach 62,140 individuals through awareness-raising activities, including the rollout of the Safety of Children Online modules in partnership with DepEd-Dasmariñas and the training for youth advocates.

The courtesy visit to the Mayor's Office served to strengthen our alliance with the government and to



discuss the project activities being implemented in the city. These activities include prevention, restoration, and rescue activities with Youth Advocates, churches, and the rest of the community. More importantly, the team sought the support of Mayor Barzaga for her to champion the enhancement of the City Children's Code.

Mayor Barzaga immediately called on Local Youth Development Officer, Ms. Katrina Hernandez, to assist the team with its policy advocacy and to make the End OSEC one of its focal projects. Ms. Hernandez accepted PCMN's invitation and, later that week, joined the Policy Development and Advocacy Training with the Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of representatives from DSWD, PNP, DepEd, and other partners.

Ms. Hernandez expressed her full support and advised the TWG to send the final policy recommendation directly to the City Council so that it can be prioritized. With this development, PCMN is hopeful that we are one step closer to the much-needed amendment of the City Children's Code to protect the children of Dasmariñas City from the dangers of OSEC.#

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 The European Union funds the End OSEC project and is under the implementation of the End OSEC Consortium, which consists of Viva Denmark, Philippine Children's Ministries Network, and International Justice Mission Philippines.



# News Bits

## PROJECT EVALUATION RESULTS OF THE PHONE MENTORING PROGRAM IN DAVAO CITY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CONSUELO ZOBEL ALGER FOUNDATION

By Araceli Layog, Principal Evaluator  
 source: Project Evaluation Report



In response to the pandemic, PCMN oversees several projects through their local networks. One of these is the Child and Family Phone Mentoring (CFPM) project which began during the first quarter of 2021, in partnership with the Mindanao Children's Ministries Network (MCMN), with funding support from the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation.

Since its project launch up to its 2nd cycle of operation, it has covered 10 Barangays from the Congressional Districts 1, 2, and 3 in Davao City,

in coordination with the Barangay Social Workers of the City Social Welfare Development Office (CSWDO) and members of the committee on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC).

It has trained 20 volunteers from PCMN and MCMN and representatives from the partner Barangays last February 24. They actively participated in the online training that aimed to build their capacity as mentors to navigate the CFPM toolkit.

Through the project evaluation conducted, the following are the conclusions:

- CFPM Project of PCMN has responded to the United Nation's call to lessen the impact of the pandemic on children.
- Through the project, the expansion of social protection programs to reach the most vulnerable children is amplified in the districts and barangay levels in the City of Davao, in the Region of Mindanao, Philippines.
- Specifically, the implementation of phone mentoring by the PCMN is relevant as indicated in the answers that they found that phone mentoring is responsive in terms of COVID-19 awareness and about their roles and responsibilities either as parents or children.
- The majority of the children and all parents found it (phone mentoring) interesting.
- Moreover, the survey result indicated that the respondents have recommended the program to continue and the FGD results indicated that the participants recommended its replication to other barangays.
- In terms of its effectiveness, it is indicated in the benefits that the participants derived per FGD and survey results as well as the testimonies and the pledge of fund support from the LGU-barangay level.
- In terms of its efficiency, it is indicated in the inputs provided such as training of mentors and the phone mentoring sessions conducted with the parents-mentees and children.
- The overall results indicated the observable changes that are linked to the intervention of the PCMN through its CFPM program that focused on the short-term outcomes of the project.
- The likelihood of achieving project impact is foreseen in the long-run. Project sustainability maybe possible to barangays that pledge fund support and mentors' capability and commitment for skill transfer to other interested and willing mentors to reach out to more parent-mentees and children at the Purok level.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. Phone mentoring as a strategy to reach the most vulnerable children and families in this time of pandemic is novel. There are several areas to explore as pre-condition to project implementation. Specifically, ownership and/or accessibility to digital communication. Otherwise, the mentors may have to resort to the usual way of interaction but with heightened health and safety measures. Thus, making phone mentoring a mixed method.

2. The parent-mentors and parents-mentee in the barangay levels seemed to have other roles and responsibilities. Their various commitments can be harmonized from a systematic way of doing things as they practice several involvements from a holistic, interdependent, and interrelated way.

3. There is a need to emphasize that child protection programs and projects are a shared goal of various stakeholders. A clear mechanism needs to be in place in terms of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation so that there is also a clear identification from the part of each organization and/or partners involved in terms of its potentials and limitations for growth and development.

4. At the outset, it is important that the project proponent include in their proposal the monitoring and evaluation components so that enough time can be allotted for these processes and unnecessary limitations can be avoided.

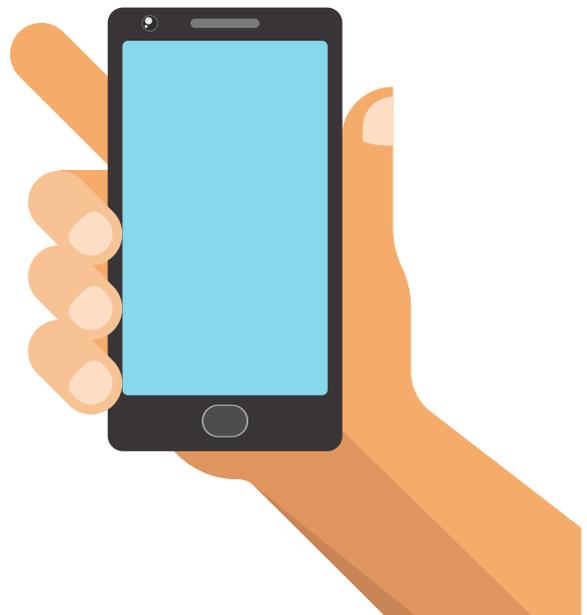
## WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF A MENTOR



*I am CFPM Participant A, from Barangay Sirawan, Toril, Davao City. I just turned 70 this year. Even in my old age I still serve as a guardian to my two grandchildren namely: Arriane and Ardrey. I look after them alongside my husband because their mother who is my daughter is in Manila working as a house helper.*

*Being the primary caregiver of the kids there are times that I can't manage my stress and anger. Arianne, 14, was diagnosed with scoliosis and intellectual disability at an early age. Thankfully Ardrey 8, has no mental health issues but there are times that he is naughty which adds to my stress. Whenever Ardrey would not behave well I would nag him with foul words and punish him with a rod without even explaining why I did that to him.*

*I am able to evaluate myself especially in the area of disciplining my grandchildren. That whenever they commit a mistake, it is better to talk with them first instead of shouting at them. Another thing that brought hope to me is knowing that Arianne will be referred to Tebow Foundation. Added to that are the prayers that we have at every end of each session. I am slowly entrusting to God the endeavors of my life. #*

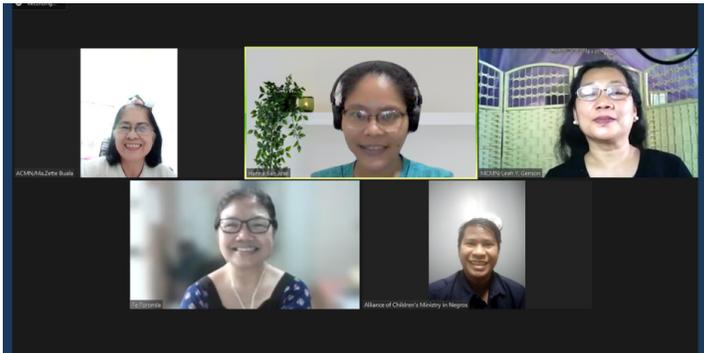


## News Bits



### PCMN LAUNCHES PHONE MENTORING PROGRAM IN BACOLOD CITY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VIVA UK, AND ACMN

By Hanna San Jose, PCMN Network Development Officer



Child and Family Phone Mentoring Program (CFPM) has reached the city of Bacolod in Negros Occidental! At the beginning of this quarter, the agreement has been signed between PCMN and ACMN to launch the program in the city and reach 200 families through the spearheading of Alliances of Children's Ministries in Negros (ACMN).

Last August 24, ACMN conducted its phone mentoring program training attended by 18 mentors coming from 11 churches and one (1) public school in the city. The group was able to cover discussions on the essential roles of the mentors in every theme of the curriculum, as facilitated by Ms. Leah Genson, PCMN's Regional Network Coordinator, and Kobo training, facilitated by Mr. Ronilo Oyanib, PCMN's Program Manager.

Two (2) more mentors were given a catch-up class by ACMN Coordinators, Ms. Suzette Buala, and Pastor Jupiter Arela, with Ms. Leah Genson, to complete 20 mentors trained from the project.

In the given short period, ACMN coordinators accomplished all preparations and deliverables needed for the conduct of the program, such as printing of call scripts and letters to all churches targeted, as well as the signing of the agreements with mentors and church pastors.

During the first week of September, mentors started calling families and children in the targeted areas.

Last September 10, ACMN held its first debriefing session via Zoom attended by 20 mentors, ACMN coordinators, and Ms. Genson. During the debriefing, mentors relayed positive feedback on the Introduction Call, expressing that the children enjoyed the call and even suggested that they be called again so they can tell their stories.

Mentors communicated how families appreciated having someone asking how they are doing and coping with the challenges that the pandemic has been bringing them. Updating the consolidated phone mentoring database and PCMN's Child Protection Policy was also discussed by Ms. Genson during the online debriefing.

PCMN and ACMN are expected to consistently reach these families until the end of the program by November 30, 2021.

The phone mentoring program aims at supporting families to build stronger relationships, encourage positive parenting, and reduce the risk of violence against children at home, especially during this time of Covid-19 pandemic.#

# Devotional Message



## Transcript of the Devotional Message during the National Prayer Gathering



*But, in his deepest sorrow, in the darkest of nights, Sundar saw Jesus in a vision and his life was never the same again! Like Paul the Apostle, from opposing Christianity he found Christ and discovered what it truly meant to be a Christian.*



by Fr. Lendehl Rey Sallidao  
Chairperson, PCMN Board of Trustees

I would like to tell a story about an Indian man called Sadhu Sundar Sihng. He lived from 1889 to 1929 born into a Sikh family in Punjab where he grew up questioning Christianity & Hinduism. But, in his deepest sorrow, in the darkest of nights, Sundar saw Jesus in a vision and his life was never the same again! Like Paul the Apostle, from opposing Christianity he found Christ and discovered what it truly meant to be a Christian.

In one of his trips to the Himalayas towards Tibet, he was traveling with a fellow missionary when a snowstorm caught up with them on the way. A Budha temple up the mountain was the only hope for them to survive the snowstorm but they needed to move faster than their usual phase. However, they heard a wailing voice of a man who fell down the ravine seeking help. Both were moved to consider going down the ravine to help but with the wind getting stronger and fiercer, and if there is a chance of survival, they can't afford such delay. Sadhu was willing to help at however cost, but his companion commented that they can help

much more people if they are alive. For him, such a detour will be a costly delay and a sure death. But Sadhu was determined to help so he went down the slope to himself.

It was about 2 hours delay since he not only had to go down the ravine but to carry the man up the mountain. While slowly navigating the mountain with his heavy load he stumbled on a frozen thing, he first thought it was a tree but on a closer look, it turns out that it was his Christian companion who was frozen to death before he even reached the monastery. Sadhu was saved from freezing because he was exerting more movements and having extra heat from the person he helped. This story has been widely popularized among Indian Christians with a lesson that by being mindful of the needs and wellness of others, you gain wellness and preserve yourself.

Our gathering today, this seems to be a related theme, being mindful of others if we are to collectively strive to go through this pandemic

“safeguarding ministry workers and work amidst the pandemic variants.” through our prayers, thoughts, and actions.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus gave two commands to the Pharisees when one of them asked him what the greatest commandment of the law was.

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like, unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:35-40)

The first commandment was to love God with all of our beings, The second was to love thy neighbor as thyself. We must live by both commandments if we wish to follow Jesus’ word.

We are taught of this command since our early days of Christian formation. Children are taught to treat others how they want to be treated. This great commandment has motivated many of our responses as Christians in the way we treat our neighbor which I am sure has significantly molded and shaped many communities today. We collectively and continually strive to make our love for God a tangible expression of our faith guided by the first letter of John Chapter 4: 20 “those who say, I love God and hate their brother or a sister are liar, for those who do not love a brother or a sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

Yet we often overlook this quote when we are confronted with threats and the need for self-preservation.

It is at this trying time of a global pandemic when everything else of what it is being a Christian seems to have become a paradox, we say we care for others and need human relations and interaction but we have no choice but to distance ourselves from each other, wear a mask and avoid long conversations. When we pray for cure and solutions and trust God’s direction, but many believers look at it as a threat and choose to believe false narratives than being rational and reasonable by what findings of science tell us.

I call it a paradox because, in the same way, we saw many faithful Christians whether individually or collectively become innovative and have taken an active role in responding to human needs in ways beyond the ordinary context of the “normal” ministry. We see people praying for each other It brings to mind the Biblical reflection shared to us by a previous member of PCMN BOT Pastor Noel Pabiona who commented that such a time of pandemic is an opportunity to show what we meant by our witness to the Gospel.

I would like to go back to what does it really means to love others as ourselves and to that famous Indian story of Sadhu Sundar Singh. How do we understand that in our most present context, when there is a great divide among Christian believers all over the world? When we are bound to look after our own health, is also taking into consideration the love for our neighbors because it means that my health is not the only consideration. That I must not be indifferent to the physical and mental wellbeing of others particularly on issues of vaccines, health protocols, and other similar measures that are meant for the preservation of life, which are designed not only to protect individuals but also communities.

The goal of medicine is the good of health, my own and my neighbor's. In other words, medicine falls under the rubric of both parts of the second great commandment: 'You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself'. This in turn is governed by the first and greatest commandment: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (Matt 22:34-40)

Our understanding of COVID-19 is not perfect, and we need not assume that science is infallible to receive the vaccine as a gift. But perfect medicines have never been an option.

Christian Reformer John Calvin is known for his theology of creation by insisting that medicine, is "a gift of creation," in fact he calls it a divine gift.

Much of Calvin's ministry occurred in Geneva, Switzerland, where he lived to witness being visited by plague five times during his active ministry and in fact he suffered being critically ill not once but many times over. Would Calvin assume that these medicines are devoid of risk? Certainly not. Calvin encouraged his hearers to take medicine based upon the best available (yet provisional) understanding of the world. Imagine what he might say about the extensive safety testing for treatments like the COVID-19 vaccine. But even without large-scale testing, Calvin insisted that through medicine God "provides us with the capacity to attend to our illnesses." Indeed, he exclaims, "whoever does not take account of the means [medicine] which God has ordained does not have confidence in God but is puffed up with false pride and temerity."

The Bible informs us about the protection of God. The problem with us humans is that we have the tendency to see God's protection as a magic force

field that keeps us from all harm.

Of course we know as we go through the Biblical narrative in the journey of the people of God, that God can prevent evil or destruction, but we must remember that we live in a fallen world where we have free will. Many times, God works in ways that we do not understand. Sometimes God's protection comes in the form of peace and strength in the middle of despair. Other times God's protection comes as an ending because he sees something more on the horizon that we cannot see.

As a believer in Jesus, we are promised a new life covered under the protection of God in which NOTHING can separate us from His love. But we also know that God speaks to his people, direct their actions and thoughts, and give gifts to people so that we can be an active participant in his plan of restoration of the broken and fallen world.

So our coming together to pray for each other and also to talk about safeguarding our colleagues and workplace is an affirmation of our faith in Jesus and a living out of his great command to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind. And to love our neighbour as our self. By doing so, we join the Thessalonians by the encouragement of Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:11) saying "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

May we seek to display the love and trust that comes from God so that with love that seems strange to our divided age we can join together singing, "they will know we are Christians by our love."#



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