

CARING COMMUNITIES FOR NEGLECTED CHILDREN YEAR 2  
REFINING IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES, DEVELOPING CORE APPROACH  
Summary of project implementation for Year 2008

I. Context : Back to basics

The rural poor could say that the much-talked about global crisis could no longer hurt them, poor as they are already. This feeling of resignation becomes a coping mechanism of the poor to face the tremendous burden of daily survival.

Figures estimated that 4.3M Filipinos were unemployed and 6.8M underemployed in 2007 or about 11% of the population. (Ibon Features: Coping with Crisis in 2009: Back to Basics <sup>1</sup>) The incidence of hunger is very real.



The government takes pride in its actions: it sells “cheap rice” (sold at ₱0.40) by making people line up for hours under the sun or rain to buy a kilo or two; it even initiated an insulting media campaign to let Filipinos eat rice mixed with cassava or camote (a root crop) claiming it is nutritious. Alongside with this were scandalous reports of government corruption and squander.

As a community we really need to go back to basics to fight poverty and hunger. The rural communities have possibilities to improve on: a portion of land could be tilled to become source of food; family life is encouraging, people could join together to help each other for their common benefit and interest, and help is available through willing individuals and groups who work for change. Where government fails, improvement to the quality of life becomes a community responsibility.

People taking action. That is essentially back to basics.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://info.ibon.org/ndex.php>

## II. Overview of project objectives for the period

The year 2008 is the second year of the project: Caring Communities for the Neglected children.

This period has allowed substantial experience in developing the core approach of the pioneering alternative of finding caring communities so that neglected children could live again in families.

Targets during the year:

1. to find families for additional 15 children in adoptive families, bringing the total to 25 kids;
2. to develop functional support structure for each child placed in the community (at least three support families for each child, and two members of the monitoring team in every community);
3. the residential care shall maintain 30 kids;
4. on-going awareness raising in the communities in the alternative approach;
5. on-going advocacy work in the communities for the protection of the rights of the children;
6. on-going local fund raising campaigns.

## III. Results of project implementation during the year

### A. Community re-integration program (CRP)

#### 1. Number of children living in the communities

During the year, 27 children joined the re-integration program, 17 of them proceeded to trial re-integration Level 1 and 4 reached Level 2.

Level 1 trial re-integration is characterized by short stays with host families, which is often during weekends, school breaks and short holidays. After repeated hosting time, the child and the qualified adoptive family may agree to proceed to Level 2.

Level 2 trial re-integration is the time that the child starts living with her/his adoptive family for longer periods, at least for one school year.



New light. During the baptism of six-year old Alexander, his new parent stands by him.

Below is the table showing the number of children actually living with adoptive families.

Table 1 Number of children actually living with adoptive families

| Municipality        | Pilot Area (PA) | No. of children | Status     |          | Period of stay |           |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|----------|----------------|-----------|
|                     |                 |                 | Pulled-out | On-going | Pull-out       | On-going  |
| Carmen              | PA1 Cantumog    | 3               | 2          | 1        | One year       | two years |
| Danao               | Binaliw         | 1               |            | 1        |                | 10 months |
| Liloan              | Jubay           | 2               | 1          | 1        | 3 months       | 10 months |
| Consolacion         | PA1 Cabangahan  | 3               |            | 3        |                | One year  |
|                     | PA2 Polog       | 1               |            | 1        |                | 3 months  |
| Dalaguete           | Angas           | 2               |            | 2        |                | two years |
| Special Arrangement |                 |                 |            |          |                |           |
| Cantipay (Carmen)   |                 | 1               | 1          |          | One year       |           |
| Alcoy               |                 | 1               |            | 1        |                | Two years |
| Total children      |                 | 14              | 4          | 10       |                |           |

In 2008, one child who was actually living with an adoptive family was re-united with her mother, while three children, who stayed with their adoptive families for over a year returned to the center: main reason for return was that these kids were on their difficult age (16-17) and no longer matched the expectations of the adoptive families.

The target number of children to reach Level 2 for the second year was 25 but actual was only 10. Thirteen kids remained at Level 1. (See Attachment for Summary of hosting experience)

There is a great need to raise the level of awareness of families to prepare them to accept children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC). The engaged personnel likewise need to improve on its skills for timely and necessary intervention. This has been pinpointed out extensively in the mid-term evaluation report. Above all of this, a change of mind set is required from those involved in the program (community level, partners' level, personnel level), which is exactly what the community re-integration program is about: that caring for the abandoned, neglected and abused children is both an ongoing process of understanding CEDC, and a community commitment to care.

## 2. Establishment of community structure to support CRP

- a. Support families for the adoptive families were formed in each community. This group of parents gives support to the adoptive family in caring for the child: they gave school supplies, invite the child during family gathering and occasions.



Adoptive and support families of nine-year Anagen give time to understand better ways of handling the child.

For many situations, the support families become extended parents of the child. For this period, three children, instead of returning to Batang Pinangga, were transferred to their support families when their adoptive families decided to discontinue.

Shared parenting is seen as a potential alternative.

- b. The community monitoring team gave feedback as to the child's performance in school and observed behavior among his/her peers. The team members are either a school teacher or a day care worker or a member of the women's desk.

## 3. Pilot area activities

- a. Opening of new pilot areas

### a.1 Barangay Polog, Consolacion

Located around six kilometers from the town center, Barangay Polog is distinctly rural. The community has a population of 2,200 and a land area of 302 hectares. A portion of the population tends a small farm, others raised livestock while some are motorbike and skilled workers. The population is still young with an average household size of six. The local officials are noted to be young, dynamic and educated. Its incumbent barangay captain works for significant community projects like their water system. The community has a day care center, a public elementary school and is accessible by all kinds of vehicles. However, only motorbikes ply the area as public transport.

Partnership with the community was established in October 2008.

Community activities conducted:

1. Orientation and partnership agreement with the barangay through its council
2. Massive hosting activity and children's night-November 29, 2008.  
Nineteen kids lived with host families during this time. The children's cultural night, first time for the community, enabled the children to participate by making presentations and games.
3. Trial reintegration for four kids. One child is actually living with an adoptive family since December 2008.



New partnership. Polog barangay captain Rey Balaba (third from left) opens his home and community to Batang Pinangga, shown here with Emma Bantiles, social worker, and Butch Carpintero, executive director.

#### a.2 Barangay Guinacot, Danao City

The community has a population of 3,948 or total households of 658. With maintained public road, Barangay Guinacot, about four kilometers from the city, is accessible by all types of vehicles, although public transport is through a motorbike. People are engaged in farming and livestock-raising, particularly in the upper part. Others earn income as motorbike drivers, by operating a small store, or working as skilled workers in home-based crafts such as stone crafts, weaving and pottery. With land area of 300 hectares, the area has enough water supply from a spring and artesian well, has a public elementary school and a day care center. Elected local officials are mostly relatives and families of the early settlers of the village.

Community activities conducted:

1. Conduct of orientation seminar with local officials
2. Ocular visits to prospects host and adoptive families
3. Orientation meetings in the sitios and with the local school officials and teachers are scheduled in March 2009.

#### a.3 Barangay Cantucong, Carmen

Cantucong is a mountain barangay where farming is the main economic activity. Located five kilometers from the town, it has 150 households or a population of 864, with a land area of 550 hectares. The community has ample water supply, has an elementary school, a day care and health centers. The local officials, mostly farmers, are very eager to become partners of Batang Pinangga.

Community activities conducted:

1. Program orientation with the local officials
2. Ocular visits to prospects host families
3. Orientation with the sitios is on-going

#### b. Existing pilot areas

Monthly follow-up, monitoring and necessary interventions were conducted in all the pilot communities, with focus on the child, and his/her interaction with the adoptive family.

##### b.1 Barangay Cantumog, Carmen

Partnership developments:

1. Three children have lived with adoptive families in the community. One child lives with his adoptive family since September 2006, two for over a year.
2. The two female teenagers were pulled-out in May 2008. The main issue is the parenting skills required for teenagers.
3. Conduct of youth leadership training workshop held in the summer of 2008, attended by 25 youth, mostly students and members of the youth barangay council.
4. Trial re-integration of one child was started in November 2008. The host family is currently being qualified as an adoptive family to proceed with Level 2 trial re-integration.



Stop child abuse. Several fora were conducted in the communities as awareness campaign and gain support to protect the children from abuse.

5. Conduct of children's nutrition month in partnership with the secondary school in July 2008 by launching "AYAW", a banner campaign to stop child abuse.
6. Conduct of massive hosting activity. Twenty one kids slept overnight with host families in July 2008.
7. Batang Pinangga gave educational support to 11 academic performers, as part of its scholarship program " Batang Pinangga, Batang Bright", now on its second year in Cantumog.



Scholarship project. Eleven outstanding students get educational support as part of community support service of Batang Pinangga.

## b.2 Barangay Binaliw, Danao

### Partnership developments:

1. The community is host to six children during summer, school breaks and Christmas holidays.
2. One child is living with an adoptive family since May 2008.
3. The community was host to 15 kids staying overnight in June 2008.
4. Conduct of gender seminar directed to the male parents of the community on July 2008, attended by 28 parents.
5. Conduct of children's toy-making competition on June 2008, showcasing children's craft and encouraging creativity.
6. Conduct of partners' conference in June and November 2008, attended by the adoptive parent and her daughter and four members of the support families, discussing roles and parenting needs of the adoptive child.



Toy-making. Children are encouraged to have fun creating their own toys.

### b.3 Barangay Cabadiangan, Compostela

#### Partnership developments:

1. Conduct of re-orientation meeting with the barangay council
2. Launching of "AYAW" movement participated by the local elementary school, community officials, local police and social welfare services.
3. Community is host to 17 children during the massive hosting activity in July 2008.
4. One child finds a willing host family. He goes to this family during summer, school breaks, fiestas, Christmas and holidays and is welcome any time, except that the family is not yet ready to have the child for longer arrangement.

### b.4 Barangay Jubay, Liloan

#### Partnership developments:

1. Conduct of seminar on enacted law on anti-violence against women and their children in July 2008 participated by 20 local officials of the barangay.
2. Two children find adoptive families in this community. One of them however was reunited with her mother in September 2008, which somehow gave mixed feeling for the adoptive family for they really love the child.  
The family is not yet accepting a new child but becomes a support family of the other adoptive child.
3. Conduct of consultation meetings with the current adoptive and support families. One of the adoptive parents lost his job and expected difficulty in supporting his family. Transfer of the child to another family is being arranged.

### b.5 Barangay Cabangahan, Consolacion

#### Partnership developments:

1. Three children live with adoptive families. Two children, who are sisters, live with one adoptive family at the start but later on one child was transferred to another family. Support families gave food and allowances to the children.
2. The engaged staff of Batang Pinangga becomes a member of the local committee for the protection of children, with coordinated activities such as mother's class and feeding program.
3. Conduct of awareness-raising seminar on VAW-C, March 2008, and parenting seminar on April 2008 attended by 21 and 27 individuals, respectively.
4. Launching of "AYAW" movement, a banner campaign against child abuse on June 2008, participated by the local elementary and secondary school, local police and officials.

## B. The Residential Care Program (RCP)

1. Total number of children at the end of the period is 29 (March 2008-Feb2009), 18 boys, 11 girls.

Movements during the period:

- a. acceptance of 10 new kids
  - b. discharged three teenagers (that turned 18 years old, Jonathan, Kevin, Ricky). One teenager reapplied as a working student in Batang Pinangga, while the other two already have jobs.
  - c. Three kids for CRP Level 2; pull-out of three kids back to center
  - d. turn-over of three kids (Amelita, Ma. Theresa, Jubilee)
  - e. temporary shelter of two kids
2. Preparation towards independent living for children who may not be re-united with their birth parents or who may no longer qualify for the community re-integration program. This becomes an offshoot program of the RCP-a formation program for young adults. The program includes:

- a. Separation of boys aging 11 up. Six boys live separately in the farm of Batang Pinangga.
- b. Separation of girls aging 11 up. A new house is built for this purpose to accommodate six girls.

Separation of the young teenagers would allow increased capacity of the residential units for small children.

3. Conduct of case conference for children's profile update and review. Participated by the house parents, social workers, center management, and the CRP staff, the case conference allows common understanding on the child's behavior and development and address particular concerns. Children who are ready for the community reintegration program are also identified during the conference.
4. A rape case is being heard in court since February 2009.
5. The center also facilitated the on-going educational support for all kids, including five kids who were reintegrated with their own families and all those living with adoptive families. Main sponsorship is from Japan-KADVO Hearth Parents.
6. Acceptance of volunteers. A two-year internship agreement with a caregiving school in nearby Danao has been signed running up to 2010; also one year contract with two foreign (German) volunteers is in effect up to August 2009.



Big boys are trained towards independent living. Six of them reside in the farm of Batang Pinangga.

#### IV. Organization and management

1. Re-commitment of Board of Trustees. In its recent meeting of February 2009, the Board of Trustees elected new set of officers and signed a commitment paper for another three-year term. The Board has a new member as well. The following are the officers and members:

|             |   |                                      |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Chairperson | : | Fr. Pedro Manilag, O.Carm.           |
| Vice Chair  | : | Fr. Christopher Exala, O.Carm        |
| Secretary   | : | Atty. Erwin Nuñez (new)              |
| Treasurer   | : | Cristina Muñoz                       |
| Auditor     | : | Berlina Mariñas                      |
| Members     | : | Christopher Koppel<br>Belinda Burlas |

Mr. Christopher Koppel served as treasurer in the past but relinquished his function due to change of residence (to another island).

2. Management structures are in place. The residential center has the Center Management Team to coordinate activities at the center. The resident social worker remains the focal person directly supervising the house parents.
3. A monitoring team was formed for the CRP. It is composed of the field coordinator, field social worker and documentation officer. The CRP-MT is tasked to qualify prospect pilot areas, recommended adoptive families and provide feedback to the Executive Director about progress and developments of the project.
4. Current number of personnel is maintained at 20.
5. Major staff development trainings conducted: Gender agenda, Team building skills, Cordaid-sponsored conference, follow-up seminar of women trafficking and HIV/AIDS, Religion and Human Rights
6. The following were also conducted:
  - a. External audit, April 2008, and onwards for the subsequent annual finance operation
  - b. Mid-term external evaluation, October 2008
  - c. Completion of the operations manual



External evaluators visit the pilot communities during the conduct of the mid-term evaluation.

## I. Local Fund raising

Fund raising initiatives is a continuation from the past year such as the distribution of donation cans and regular pledges. Total funds raised locally in this period amounted to P150 thousand and within expectations.

It is important to note that previous donors were maintained and new donors are coming in, although donations were mostly one-time and occasional.

Individual friends who have visited the Foundation were able to raise funds as well, to mention:

- a. Het Braambos of the Netherlands via Geertjan Berman of MYCebu, raised around P150 thousand
- b. Fr. Anton Hoogland of the Carmelites Manila who campaigned in Holland during his vacation, raised P417 thousand.
- c. Filipinos, like the group of Ang Bisaya, Inc. working and based in the US through Fr. Pete Manilag, raised P237 thousand.

Promotional campaigns (brochures, newsbulletin, signages, website, t-shirt printing) have helped Batang Pinangga established as a familiar name. However, there are potential opportunities not yet explored by local fund raising. In the next period, fund raising is expected to be more directed and specific targeting a specific niche of fund-givers.



Local support. The municipal mayor of Carmen, Sonia Pua, (fourth from right) brought her family to visit the children.

## VI. Assessment and Forecast

With the help of the mid-term external evaluation, the relevance of the community re-integration program for the abused, abandoned and neglected children becomes clearer.

Batang Pinangga agrees that:

1. These children should not remain in the residential care or shelters but for their best interest and welfare should live with families.
2. We cannot wait for these children to become "normal"; we need to work on raising the level of caring of the communities so that they may start caring for children who are not like their "normal" children.
3. The long-term and sustainable solution to stop child abuse and neglect is for communities to take responsibility.

Batang Pinangga's vision is clearer at this point: no children on the streets, no children at shelters.

For following year, of particular objective is capability building for the engaged personnel and partners of Batang Pinangga that would enhance community participation in the project, and raise level of parenting skills and awareness. A change in the mind set is very crucial for a successful partnership and placement of children. A change in mind set is best expressed in the loving and caring attitude of the community as a whole.

Towards the end of the project year, the experience and the approach is ready to be shared with related groups and agencies.



Happiness measured. Children remain the measure of success of programs and projects.

## VII. Recommendations of the mid-term external evaluation and management response

1. Revise the existing CRP strategies based on a thorough understanding of the nature and needs of children in especially difficult circumstances.

\* Strategy used was to identify qualified parent, come up with an agreement to host a child and trial re-integration commences thereafter.

As a revision:

- Batang Pinangga would give focus on the necessary preparation of the adoptive families in taking care of a particular child. The prospective adoptive families shall undergo basic parenting skills for children in esp. difficult circumstance (CEDC) before child hosting;
- Actual parenting experience in child hosting will be processed together with the adoptive parent and the staff to address particular behavioural concerns in the context of handling CEDC;
- The support families shall also undergo the same parenting skills to build a support system surrounding each child;
- It is significant to let the wider community become aware of the contribution of the adoptive families and support families as motivation.
- A working strategy may require longer presence (longer days) of the CRP staff in the assigned communities.



Street children mirror the urgency of the program of Batang Pinangga.

2. Revise program targets for the last remaining period under the project term.

\*The total target of 45 children actually living in adoptive families at the end of the project term shall remain the same, but with varying degrees.

It is noted that there are alternative and workable parenting system in the communities:

1. *Shared parenting*- based on experience, a child gets affection and support from nearby families other than her immediate adoptive family. For example, a child learns to do laundry from a neighbor parent because her adoptive parent had no time doing it; or a child finds a "grandmother figure" who lives nearby. All of them will become the support system of the child to make sustained placement.
2. *Regular host family but not yet for longer guardianship*. There are families who are very willing to accept a child into their homes but due to circumstances (e.g. working parents, many children) could not let the child stay for a long time. Families like this significantly offer a child a chance to belong to a family, which Batang Pinangga could also work on.

3. *Minimum guardianship/parenting of one year and becoming a regular host for the child.* A period of one year to actually live in a family is already significant for a child. Due to future changes in the adoptive family, a number would opt to accept a child for one year and still become the regular host family of the child.
4. *Long-term guardianship until the child reaches age of maturity.*  
The best possible option for a child is to find an adoptive family to grow up with. But in practical sense, as the child grows to become a teenager, she/he would like to live an independent life just like other children and eventually decide to be on his/her own. Arrangement like this with the adoptive family is possible.

So therefore, at the end of the project term the following are the targets:

1. at least 20 children will live with adoptive families longer than one year
2. at least 10 children will live with adoptive families for a minimum of one year
3. at least 15 children will live with regular host families

Or a total of 45 children who experienced the community re-integration program

Design and implement staff and parent training programs geared towards upgrading their understanding and skills in handling children from especially difficult circumstances, and include RCP staff, support families, and community monitoring teams in the training programs.

\*A capability building program is designed to address this. It is expected that the community re-integration project will be sustained because of enhanced capability of its implementers.

4. Create, in the adoptive homes, a *consistent reinforcing environment that builds on individual strengths, and provides clear structure and limits.*
5. Provide parents with technical assistance, ongoing consultation and support.
6. Develop partnerships with institutions and professionals who can provide BP with specialized services.  
\* Equipped with the basic understanding and parenting skills for CEDC for both CRP staff and partners, this will be clearly addressed. Intervention of professionals, like child therapists, supports recommendations 4, 5 & 6.
7. Review RCP policies and practices to make them more consistent with the goals for the children.  
\* The RCP staff shall likewise become part of the preparation of the child towards re-integration. While food, nutrition, and personal hygiene of each child could, and should not be compromised, other aspects, such as use of facilities, work assignments and chores will be looked into.
8. Develop policies and guidelines for crisis situations.  
  
\* A CRP monitoring team, composed of a field coordinator, the field social worker, the resident social worker of the RCP, and documentor, is formed to answer immediate concerns of the CRP, especially in situations when child is at risk.  
\* Coordination between RCP and CRP implementers, and agreed-upon arrangements are expected to be in place.