

# WORKING TO END CHILD LABOR IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a nation of over 7,000 islands located in Southeast Asia. It is the 12<sup>th</sup> most densely populated country in the world, with a population over 100 million people. The Philippines is a diverse nation with a rich cultural history. The vast majority of Filipinos are Roman Catholic with a small Muslim minority concentrated in the southern islands. Tagalog is the national language but there are 87 officially recognized languages, and many more dialects spoken. The Philippine islands are located along the ring of fire and within the typhoon belt, making it prone to natural disasters.



## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- More than 50% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day
- Child labor is pervasive, especially in agricultural regions
- Children begin working in the sugar cane fields as early as 6 years old
- Children are exposed to scorching heat, dangerous snakes and insects, machetes, and hazardous chemicals



## BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Located in the Visayas Region, Negros Occidental is the Sugar Bowl of the Philippines. The municipality of Bago City includes 24 barangays. Most people find employment in the sugar cane industry, earning very low wages for long hours of hazardous, manual labor. Poor farmers often count on their children to help with planting, weeding and harvesting sugar cane. Child labor is dangerous and denies children their basic right to an education.

## PEACE CORPS CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES VOLUNTEER PROJECTS AND OUTCOMES

### Children, Youth and Family Development (CYF)

Peace Corps Volunteers have served in the Philippines for more than 50 years. As a volunteer, I worked in the Children, Youth and Family sector work with Child Fund, a Philippine NGO to reduce the number of children working in sugar cane through livelihoods, education, advocacy and protection. I engaged in my community and worked with a Filipino counterpart to:

- Strengthen Agency Capacity by Developing Youth Training Modules
- Empower Youth by Training and Supporting Little Teachers for Catch Up Program
- Increase Capacity by Training Adults in Community Savings and Rice Distribution Programs



### Alternative Learning Systems (ALS)



ALS is a non-formal education program for children, youth and adults who are not enrolled in the classroom education system. ALS instructors teach outside of the classroom, with inadequate resources and limited training. The Padayon Mindanao Project is a partnership between U.S. AID, Peace Corps Philippines, and the Philippine Department of Education that brings together ALS teachers from different regions of the Philippines to provide ALS instructor training and cross-cultural awareness. I worked as part of the Literacy Summit Team to:

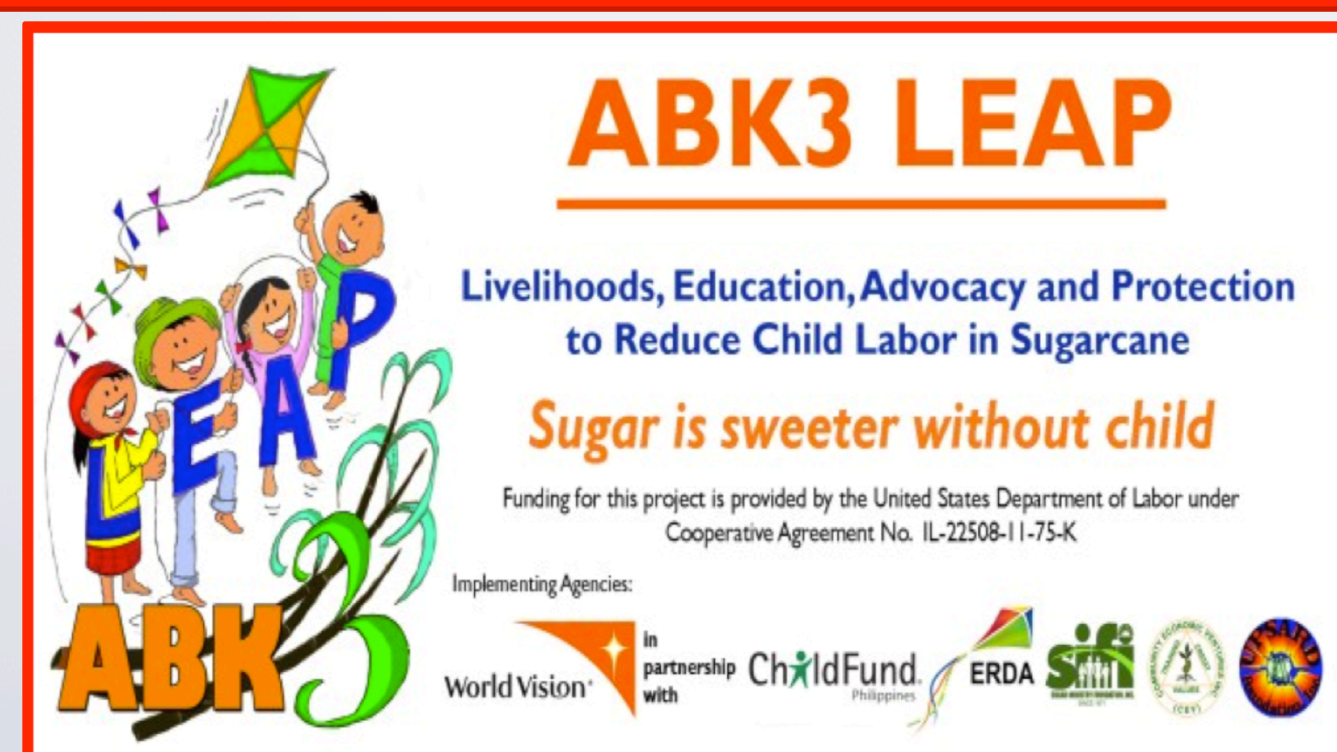
- Create Teaching Modules
- Facilitate Learning Sessions
- Develop Instructor Facilitation Skills

### Life Skills Training

Youth are one of the most vulnerable populations in the Philippines. There are over 12 million unemployed, out of school youth who lack access to basic services and concrete skills to escape from poverty. The SCALA Program (Sharing Computer Access Locally and Abroad) provides computer literacy training, life skills education, resource linkages and employment support to underprivileged youth. I worked with the Department of Social Welfare in Bago City to co-facilitate Life Skills Sessions in:

- Decision Making
- Communication Skills
- Assertiveness
- Self-Esteem Building
- Resisting Peer Pressure
- Goal Setting

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION: CHILD FUND PHILIPPINES



Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor



Community Watch Group Advocacy Effort

**Child Fund Philippines** is a non-governmental organization working with World Vision to implement the ABK3 LEAP project. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor with the goal of reducing child labor in Sugarcane, the 4-year project encompasses interventions and development by providing education opportunities for children, sustainable livelihoods for their parents and youth employment services across 11 provinces. Programs include:

- **Community Owned Managed Savings and Credit Association**
- **Barangay Children's Association**
- **Policy Write-Shops for Local Government Officials**
- **Livelihoods Trainings for Youth and Parents**
- **Direct Support Services and Catch Up Program for Students**

## SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

While serving as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer I developed:

- **Adaptability:** Flexibility and cultural humility are essential to successful integration into a community
- **Resiliency:** Some projects failed the first – and the second – time and I learned to measure success in small gains
- **Resourcefulness:** Community based work was unstructured and there were very few resources, demanding creativity and perseverance

## CONNECTIONS:

**Coursework Connections:** Social Work Course 560, Community Organization, Management, and Policy/Evaluation emphasized strengths based community development which provided a solid base for the tool we used for community engagement, PACA (Participatory Analysis for Community Action)

**Career Connections:** I am committed to an assets based approach to community development and will use this approach in my future career.



Children get extra help in Catch Up Program

## LESSONS LEARNED:

- Development work takes time. The most important part of development work is integration into the community and building relationships.
- Volunteers are guests in their host country. As a PCV I challenged myself to recognize my cultural biases and understand my position in the Philippines.

## ADVICE:

- Throw out preconceived expectations and be open to new experiences.
- Be prepared to practice patience.
- Say "Yes!" to every opportunity you are given to integrate into your community.

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