

GRIT



God's Grace | Resilience | Integrity | Tenacity

Annual Report 2022-2023



About the Cover

"Children participating in one of the activities in Safe and Supportive Learning Spaces in Glamang, Polomolok, South Cotabato"

These precious children remain at the center of what we do in SAO PH. To see them protected, nurtured, and thriving amidst an environment and circumstances that are often far from ideal fuels our desire to face the fiscal year (2022-2023) with GRIT. We passionately persevere because we experienced God's grace in abundance! The resilience and tenacity of these young ones and the communities they belong to also spur us to do what we do with integrity and faithfulness.

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Message From the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

Thank you for reading this annual report once again! The pages of this annual report demonstrate how God has worked through our partnership and collaboration, changing lives and circumstances. Oh, what a year it has been!

The journey required GRIT – the **passion and perseverance** to carry out the mandate given to us faithfully. Grit is what we aspired to, prayed for, and blessed our colleagues with in the past year. Amidst the noise and glitter, especially in social media, it is challenging for a small NGO like SAO Philippines to focus on what matters most. Thus, we needed the rallying cry ‘GRIT!’ to guide us – relying solely on God’s grace to have Resilience, Integrity, and Tenacity in our work.

Grit is essential, especially considering the shifting perspectives on how long one should stay in an organization. Retention has become more challenging, as moving from one organization to another seems to be rewarded. However, in our line of work, where relationships built on trust are crucial, project staff should stay at least as long as the project. It is by God’s grace and favor that SAO PH project staff continue to be cohesive and committed to the project’s goals.

It takes grit not to secure the future because we are unsure of it. It enables us to exercise daily faithfulness and gratefulness,

putting our trust in God, the only one who is truly in control. This perspective has been truly liberating for us.

Grit enables us to be that tiny morsel of yeast, hidden and barely heard, influencing people and structures to build resilient families and communities that prioritize the well-being of children.

May you sense this passion and perseverance through the accounts and stories and be awed, as we are, by God’s grace and favor. Limitations, such as the number of staff or funding, fade away amidst God’s trustworthiness and a team that chooses to trust and obey.

Armi Martinez
ARMIA A. MARTINEZ
Executive Director

Areas of Operation

Oriental Mindoro

Population: 908,339
Poverty Incidence: 7.3%
Magnitude Of Poor: 14.7%

Iloilo

Population: 2,509,525
Poverty Incidence: 14.1%
Magnitude Of Poor: 66.7%

South Cotabato

Population: 1,672,791
Poverty Incidence: 15.9%
Magnitude Of Poor: 37.7%

SOURCE: 2020 CENSUS, PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY

2023

Impact Numbers



CAPIN

Child Abuse Prevention Intervention Network is a community-based child protection advocacy that promotes child-sensitive systems and structures in the management of child abuse cases.

3	Municipalities
10	Barangays
3	Multidisciplinary Teams
55	MDT & Network Members
773	Children and Youth
417	Adults/Parents



CHAMP

Championing Community Resilience through Children/Youth and Civil Society Engagement and Participation with the Government

1	Municipality
5	Barangays
16	Community Volunteers
326	Children and Youth
1600	Adults/Parents
26	Groups/Associations

Start-Up Projects

Tangland Project



This project involves the development of a sustainable farming operation of Lemon Grass and as well as a conversion operation of the same Lemon Grass into commercial grade quality Lemon Grass Oil and its primary by-product from the extraction process in a pre-identified location in the province of Mindoro - transforming the once idle lands become productive farm lots, generating a sustainable income to every stakeholder.

10 Mangyan farmers

Safe & Supportive Learning Spaces Project



To support primary school children in their learning and psychosocial preparation for in-person classes by providing learning spaces.

1	Barangay
38	Community Volunteers
454	Grade 1 & 2 Pupils
3	Elementary Schools
38	Learning Mentors
38	Learning Groups

SSLS: Ready, Set, Grit!

Helping Children Prepare For Onsite Classes



As the world gradually reopened its borders and prepared for the 'new normal' following extended lockdowns, SAO remained acutely aware of the potential impact on young children returning to onsite classes in November 2022, as mandated by the Department of Education.

To assist children in this transition, SAO initiated the project "Safe and Supportive Learning Spaces (SSLS)" in partnership with TELUS International Philippines. The project's objective is to aid primary school children in their academic

and psychosocial preparations for in-person classes by providing safe and supportive learning environments.

Ms. Armi Martinez, SAO Executive Director, stated, "Leveraging our capabilities and volunteer network, SAO Philippines is ready to tackle the challenge of delivering 'effective remedial learning to help students catch up on lost learning' and preparing the youngest children emotionally for school or an entirely new environment."

The SSLS project was initially launched in Barangay Glamang, Polomolok, South Cotabato, in August 2022 and continued in three elementary schools until November of the same year. It specifically targeted primary school children who returned to in-person classes for the first time since the pandemic began. These students might be emotionally unprepared and lacking in essential grade-level skills due to the pandemic's disruptions. Recognizing the link between a child's psychosocial and emotional well-being and their learning capacity, a dedicated learning space was established to support children in engaging with learning and receiving psychosocial support. By building resilience and coping skills, children become better equipped to re-engage with education.

Mr. Jun Bibiolata, Program Manager, shared insights into the project's progress and impact, saying, "We trained and mobilized 40 community volunteers, including 23 teachers, 12 community organization members, and 5 youth/ AKTIB group members. We tailored activities based on resource materials and designed relevant learning tasks. We successfully conducted psychosocial learning sessions in classrooms, engaging 454 Grade 1 & 2 pupils as part of the remediation effort in each school. We are pleased that parents were supportive of these activities and witnessed their children's active participation."



SAO remains dedicated to nurturing children's well-being. Through this project, they have taken small but significant steps to help young children navigate crises and uncertainties. By providing safe and supportive spaces for them to develop and strengthen their mental and emotional resilience, SAO aims to see these children face the challenges of schooling with grit and confidence.

(with reports from Mr. Juniper Bibiolata, Program Manager)

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."

-Edward Everett Hale | American Author



Tanglad Project: Embarking on a Journey of Sustainability

In Barangay San Roque, Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro, a project has taken root, offering a glimmer of hope to the Mangyan families residing in this rural community. The “Empowering Mangyan Families through Tanglad Planting, Processing & Distribution” pilot project, spearheaded by Share An Opportunity Philippines (SAO PH) in collaboration with the Australian Embassy, has paved the way for sustainable change, marking just the beginning of this transformative journey.

Project Overview

This project, initiated on June 15, 2022, and concluded on March 30, 2023, was a bold endeavor with the vision of empowering Mangyan families through the cultivation, processing, and distribution of hybrid lemongrass, locally known as “tanglad.” With a total project cost of 1 million pesos, this pilot phase aimed to assess the viability of hybrid lemongrass cultivation in the region and empower Mangyan partners to engage in this enterprise.

Planting the Seeds of Empowerment

Ten Mangyan farmers, seven men, and three women, committed 1000 square meters of their land to plant hybrid tanglad seedlings, totaling 10,000 square meters or one hectare. Despite initial challenges, such as heavy rains affecting the survival rate, the farmers displayed resilience. They planted new shoots and established nurseries, learning valuable lessons in the process.

The project included the acquisition and installation of a processing machine, along with training seven Mangyan partners to operate it independently. The machine, capable of processing 300 kilograms of tanglad per cycle, became the heart of the project. Notably, these partners managed to process a total of 1000 kilograms of tanglad during the project’s duration, yielding approximately 300 milliliters of oil and 240 liters of hydrosol.



Sustainability Strategies

Looking ahead, the project has laid the foundation for sustainability. Key strategies include community ownership and empowerment, capacity building, technology transfer, access to resources, environmental stewardship, household-centered approaches, value addition, market development, institutional support, and advocacy for investments in indigenous agriculture.



A Future and A Hope

As the pilot phase concludes, the project’s achievements offer a glimpse into the potential of Mangyan families in Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro. The transformative journey from tanglad planting to processing and the emergence of a resilient, empowered community signal a promising future. Ms. Armi A. Martinez, ED, hopes to build upon these achievements with a full-fledged 3-5 year project proposal, multiplying and sustaining the gains of this pilot project. Empowering Mangyan families through tanglad planting is more than a project; it is a testament to the potential of sustainable change through collaboration and empowerment.

(Based on the End-of-Project Report written by Ms. Armi Martinez, Executive Director of SAO PH)





BCPC Journey: Pushing For Child Protection In The Community

According to Angela Duckworth, grit entails dedicating yourself to something you care about so deeply that you remain steadfast and passionate about it—doing what you love and staying in love with it.

These words resonate strongly with our partners in the municipalities of Concepcion, Lemery, and San Dionisio in the province of Iloilo, where we are implementing the Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN) project. Read on as some of our project partners, who exemplify grit as front liners and advocates for the protection of children in their communities, share about their journey:

Challenges Faced in Implementing CAPIN

As a child protection advocate, Ronalen encountered numerous challenges during the project's implementation. She recalled that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated issues such as child abuse, poverty, limited access to information, and restricted face-to-face advocacy. Undeterred, she resumed her efforts, disseminating information and educating her constituents, visiting each sitio and group once face-to-face activities were allowed.



(Analyn P. Bronzal, serving as Barangay secretary, Barangay Capinang, San Dionisio)



(Ronalen C. Longno of Barangay Lo-ong, Concepcion, Iloilo, serving as barangay kagawad (local leader) and also the desk officer of the Barangay Violence Against Women and their Children (BVAWC) since 2018. She was recognized as VAWC Champion in child protection implementation in 2022.)

For Analyn, gathering children, especially the youth, for programs or activities proved to be a considerable challenge. She admitted that it was disheartening and disappointing at times. However, she later shared that she overcame this discouragement by persevering, alongside other Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) members, in inviting and gathering the youth.

Rod, an advocate of child protection, faced difficulties in balancing his responsibilities between school and the barangay. Initially, he also encountered a lack of support when gathering or initiating activities for children and youth. Nonetheless, Rod pushed through these obstacles.

Significant Learnings from Implementing CAPIN

Through her experience with CAPIN, Analyn learned how to handle and refer cases involving children, especially those that are complex and challenging.

Ronalen shared, “I learned a lot from CAPIN’s program on how to protect and intervene in cases of child abuse. It strengthened my resolve to never allow anyone to harm the children (my constituents) in the Barangay.”

Rod Kent realized that being an advocate doesn’t require a specific position or title. Regardless of age or physical appearance, anyone can take action to protect children from abuse. It only demands determination, courage, and unwavering dedication to inspire others.

What Keeps Them Going

Analyn explained, “What motivates me to continue being an advocate of child protection in my community, despite the challenges I face, is my desire to help shield children from harm. I want the children to learn about their rights and equip them with healthy ways to protect themselves.”

According to Ronalen, “I persist in what I’ve started because I want the children to grow up in a peaceful, abuse-free community. I entrust everything to the Lord to guide me in this endeavor.”

Rod Kent declared with conviction, “I was once a child, and the fears I experienced back then vanished as I felt the security and love from my elders. This motivates me to provide the same for today’s new generation. Despite all the challenges I have faced and will face, I will stand strong and do my best in the barangay as an advocate for child protection.”



(Rod Kent P. Torrico, youth president/representative in Barangay Nagsulang in Lemery)



SAO expresses profound gratitude for these resilient partners whose passion and persistence play a vital role in ensuring that children in their communities are nurtured, valued, and protected.

Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN) is in its 4th year of implementation in partnership with the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation

(By Rogina Chua, Project Staff)

Enhancement of Children’s Code

To ensure the safety and protection of children in our partner municipalities through the CAPIN project, an understanding of how local legislation works in creating a Children’s Code and developing a plan to complete it are necessary. To address such need, a writeshop on improving local Children’s Code was held from March 27-29, 2023, at Days Hotel in Iloilo City.

When asked about the significance of the activity, as well as their key takeaways, various stakeholders who attended the event shared their insights.

“Enhancing the Local Code for Children is crucial for ensuring the protection of our children. During our review of existing local codes, we realized that many important laws had not been adopted through ordinances. With the modernization brought by technology, such as social media, we’ve seen cases of silent abuse experienced by

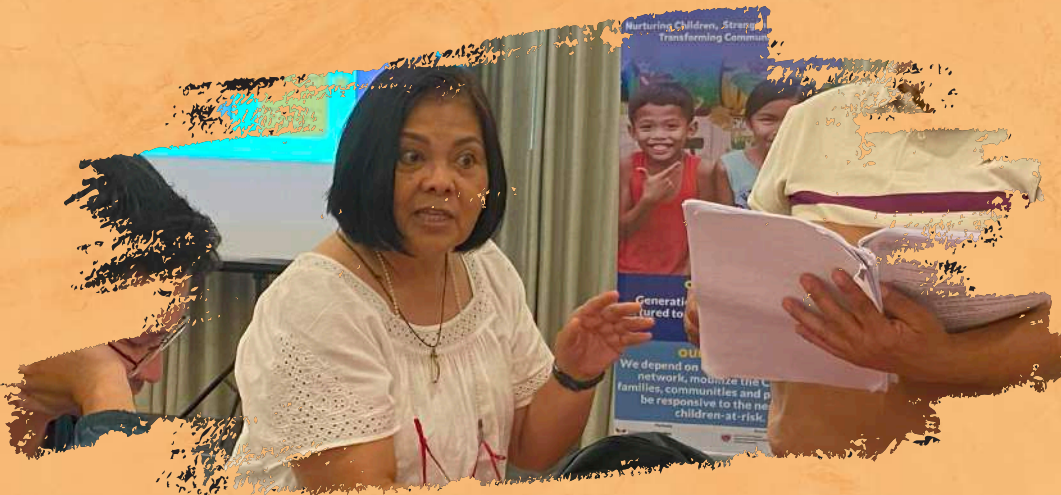
children. The Local Code is like a Bible for managing children’s rights. Through this training, we were able to compare our local code with those of other cities and municipalities. It became clear that our local code, currently in draft form, should be modified to align more closely with the fundamental rights of children, including protection, survival, development, and participation rights.” emphasized Police Senior Master Sergeant Rubinie Paciente from the municipality of Lemery.



Sangguniang Bayan member, Cherrylyn Jacomina from the municipality of San Dionisio stressed the importance of the Local Code for Children. She explained, “This code is highly important as it pertains to the collaboration between the local government unit and communities in implementing approved sub-projects. What I’ve learned is the importance of continuous implementation of the enhancements made to the Local Code for Children. As a Sangguniang Bayan member, I’m committed to using my authority to assist, lead, and support economic governance efforts.”



Liza Sobrevega, a Guidance Designate, underscored the critical role of enhancing the Local Code for Children (LCC) as a solid foundation for safeguarding children’s rights. She shared about the importance of having specific rules in place, particularly to address current situations that are not covered in the existing local code. Liza also pointed out that several laws related to children’s rights at the national level remain inadequately enforced. She stressed the need to improve these laws



and consistently implement programs with unwavering dedication to protect children's rights. Liza expressed deep concern about the heightened vulnerability of today's children to various forms of abuse, primarily due to absentee parents who are struggling to meet their financial needs. She called attention to the distressing prevalence of sexual abuse among children, highlighting the unfortunate reality that their voices often go unheard. In conclusion, Liza called upon all agencies to take proactive steps to strengthen the Local Code of Children, recognizing that children are the hope of the nation.

Mr. Rene Sobremonte, municipal planning and development officer of Concepcion affirmed that the activity is very relevant at this time because it gives the municipalities an opportunity to consolidate all the policies and laws related to children to be integrated with the updated children's code. He shared that updating the code provides a practical tool for determining priorities, especially in terms of programs and services. Additionally, it aids in allocating budgets to these prioritized items. This, he noted, is a crucial aspect of effective governance and ensuring the well-being of children in their communities.

Child protection should be timely and relevant. Enhancing the Children's Code is a sign of commitment to recognize, uphold, and advocate children's rights and promote their welfare and development.

(by Mary Joy Relente, Project Staff)



Of Passion and Purpose

One of the key components of the Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN) Project involves establishing a functional Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) by enhancing the skills and capabilities of stakeholders to effectively manage cases related to children. Since the inception of CAPIN in 2018, various training sessions and workshops have been conducted to work towards this objective.



Miss Jennefer Rameneses, a registered Social Worker, who also serves as the Gender and Development (GAD) focal person and oversees special cases involving children at the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office in the Municipality of San Dionisio, shared her insights and experiences as a member of the MDT.

When asked if the CAPIN project has been helpful and how it has impacted her work, she stated, "CAPIN has helped me tremendously in handling cases. Through the workshops I attended and actively participated in, the flow and mode of our referral systems have greatly improved. Coordinating with other stakeholders has become much easier." She emphasized the importance of unity among the members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and highlighted the significance of effective communication and a shared understanding in achieving their goal of creating a child-friendly community.

"One of my significant learnings has been the system for referrals and the principles of confidentiality. Clearly defined roles within the Multi-Disciplinary Team have also been instrumental in my work. However, it

can be challenging to consistently follow the referral system and prioritize the delivery of social services."

She openly acknowledged that the work can be exhausting and draining at times, especially when faced with cases where survivors and their families do not support legal actions. Achieving justice can often seem distant, and dealing with clients who are uncooperative or unable to see that their best interests are being considered can be frustrating. Being a social worker and a frontline service provider comes with its unique set of challenges.

When asked about her motivation



and why she continues to persevere in her role, she expressed, “My passion for the purpose and values in delivering these services, along with my commitment to creating a better community for our children, keeps me going.” She firmly believes that as a social worker, she can and will continue to do her best for the benefit of the children and the community.

In closing, she shared a powerful message, saying, “Mapapagod, magpapahinga, pero di susuko (we may get tired and need rest, but we will never give up)”.

When one finds their purpose and passion, it becomes an unquenchable fire that fuels the desire to make a lasting difference.” Kudos to Miss Jennefer for her dedication!

(by Rogina Chua, Project Staff)



An Exemplar of Grit

“I believe my life’s mission, while here on earth, is to protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation,” declared Mrs. Mary Depalobos, a passionate child protection advocate. Known as “Lelet” to her friends and fellow citizens in the municipality of Concepcion, Iloilo, Mrs. Depalobos has served as the head of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office for 29 years, accumulating 36 years of experience as a dedicated social worker.

Since 2018, when the Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN) commenced its operations, Miss Lelet has been an active partner in the program. Reflecting on her most significant learning as a CAPIN partner, she candidly shared, “My most significant learning since I began my journey as a CAPIN Program partner is that collaboration, cooperation, and resource-sharing across different sectors, along with the support from the executive and legislative bodies, can make a substantial difference in implementing any program for the welfare of children.”

Being an advocate for child protection has been far from effortless. Her journey has been marked by challenges and difficulties, such as the delicate balance between work and family, where urgent family matters often clashed with pressing professional responsibilities. The constant hurdle of inadequate funds for program implementation in the municipality added to her challenges. However, driven by passion and perseverance, she remains undeterred, affirming, “Advocating for child protection is my duty both as a mother and a social worker, despite the challenges.” With her wealth of experience, she has learned to confront problems head-on and seek external resources when needed, with prayer as her source of strength during challenging times.

Colleagues describe Miss Lelet as understanding, down-to-earth, and kind. She is known for her exceptional organizational skills, evident in both her professional and personal life.

When asked to share words of inspiration for younger service providers and child protection advocates, she offered valuable insights from her journey: “In my career as a social worker, I have learned and experienced a great deal. I have learned to extend my patience, to put aside my pride for the sake of those in need. Listening, observing, and evaluating situations before making



decisions have been crucial. I have experienced the joy and fulfillment of providing services to our clients, as well as the heartache when others cannot access what they are entitled to. I have been separated from my family when they needed me the most. With over 35 years in service, as your elder sister in this profession, I urge each of you to love your work, love your clients, and treat them equally, for without them, we would not be in the position to serve. Be kind to everyone but also uphold discipline. Adapt and appreciate the contributions that have led to program success. Maintain honesty and always seek guidance from God to do what is right.”

Mrs. Depalobos, or Miss Lelet, is undeniably a role model of unwavering determination. She exemplifies passion and perseverance toward her goal despite overwhelming obstacles and distractions. SAO is profoundly grateful for dedicated advocates and partners like Miss Lelet, who work tirelessly to improve the lives of children and their communities.

(by Rogina Chua, Project Staff)



“ I believe my life’s mission, while here on earth, is to protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.”



Strengthening Civil Society: The Journey of Banate's CSOs in Championing Children's Rights

In the last seven years, the municipality of Banate has seen big changes in how it governs and develops its community. Building from past project gains up until the present Project CHAMP, SAO PH has started a new era of collaboration between the local government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Today, we look at how this partnership has grown, the difficulties encountered, and the progress made in supporting the rights and well-being of children in the community.



The Birth of a Vision

The seeds of change were sown when SAO embarked on the BCCR project. The goal was not only to bolster the community's resilience to coastal hazards but also to foster a stronger network of CSOs advocating for the most vulnerable members of society - the children. Despite several attempts to unite accredited CSOs into a federated organization, obstacles kept surfacing, threatening to impede progress.

Champ: The Turning Point

Enter Project Champ, an expression of the collective vision of a federated CSO. With commitment and determination, Project Champ breathed new life into the idea of a united CSO front. In late October last year, it brought together 33 accredited CSOs, making a significant moment in Banate's history. With support from the Local Government Unit, especially SB Member Mario E. Bactung, the federation officially became the "Banate Federation of Civil Society Organizations for Rural Development" (BFCSO-RD).



The Road Traveled

Since its inception, BFCSO-RDI has been actively engaged in various advocacy efforts, showing their strong dedication to improving the community. Here are some of their significant projects:

- Environmental Program: BFCSO-RDI works to protect the environment through tree planting, clean-up drives, and awareness campaigns.
- Participative Local Governance: They hold key positions in the Local Government Unit's boards, allowing them to influence policies in favor of the marginalized.
- Project Champ Network: They use the Project Champ network to share knowledge, coordinate activities, and gather resources for community initiatives.

The True Measure of Grit

The establishment of BFCSO-RD stands as a powerful testament to the tenacity and perseverance of all those involved. The difficulties faced along the way only served to strengthen their resolve. Their journey underscores their grit and reflects their commitment to the welfare of the most vulnerable sectors of the community, particularly children.

In only seven years, Banate has changed how it engages with the community. SAO's Project CHAMP and the subsequent birth of BFCSO-RD played a crucial role in this change. This partnership between the local government and CSOs has led to significant progress in advocating for children's rights and well-being. As BFCSO-RD keeps growing, Banate sets an example of what's possible when determination and commitment join forces to create a better future for everyone.

(by Gaudencio Boko Jr., Project Staff)



People as the True Resource: Savings Group Formation

It is often said that a community's greatest asset is its people. Their active involvement is vital for successful projects. They're not just recipients; they're essential partners, committed to the well-being of every community member.

While many projects are time-bound, the advocacy for community well-being must transcend the duration of any single initiative. The commitment to lasting positive change should persist as long as there are individuals willing to champion the cause. The challenge then lies in finding ways to sustain this advocacy beyond the project's lifespan.

To sustain community advocacy, consider people as organic resources. They grow stronger over time. Create community groups to tap into their potential.

In line with this vision, several strategies have been adopted in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (DRRM-CCA) agendas. One significant strategy is the creation of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). These organizations are not only vehicles for community empowerment but also a means to create a lasting impact.

As of now, three community-based savings groups have been organized, marking a significant step in community empowerment. These groups are not limited to mere savings; they are instrumental in building a resilient and self-sufficient community. Their activities include capital buildup endeavors that aim to capacitate

individuals to manage their resources effectively.

These community groups run micro-businesses, gaining income, skills, and knowledge. Some of the groups' earnings support their causes, thus fostering positive change.

The journey towards community empowerment and sustainable advocacy starts with a profound belief in the potential of people. In the Municipality of Banate, Iloilo the prime stakeholders are not just observers; they are active participants, shaping the future of their community. The formation of community-based groups, the development of micro-enterprises, and the commitment to advocate for the most vulnerable exemplify the community's resilience and determination.

In the end, it is clear that when we invest in people as the true resources of a community, the possibilities for positive change are limitless. As long as there are individuals willing to embrace the advocacy for a better tomorrow, the flame of progress will continue to burn bright, lighting the path towards a more inclusive and resilient community.

(by Gaudencio Boko Jr., Project Staff)



Empowering Communities: CHAMP's Vital Role in Disaster Preparedness

Natural disasters are an all-too-frequent threat to the lives and well-being of communities around the world. The worst-case scenario is when people are caught off-guard, unprepared, and ill-equipped to face the devastating consequences of these disasters. In many instances, community leaders and constituents find themselves reacting to disasters such as tropical cyclones and flooding, which are frequently experienced. Unfortunately, these reactions often come too late, leaving them in precarious situations with limited options for escape or mitigation.

Each year, Project CHAMP's flagship initiative focuses on training community leaders and functionaries in the critical aspects of Evacuation Management through a comprehensive simulation exercise. This powerful activity serves as a lifeline for communities, equipping them with essential disaster preparedness skills and the ability to efficiently manage evacuation camps during times of crisis.

The training program plays a pivotal role in ensuring that community leaders are well-prepared to lead their constituents in the face of disaster. By honing their skills, these leaders become adept at disaster preparedness, effectively overseeing evacuation processes, and supervising evacuation camps. The goal is to minimize panic, streamline evacuation procedures, and provide efficient services to evacuees during critical moments.

One of the most impactful aspects of this annual event is the involvement of the broader community in the simulation exercise. Community members actively participate in these drills, allowing them to become intimately familiar with the procedures and protocols associated with evacuations. This hands-on experience equips them with vital knowledge about when to evacuate, how to respond to early warning signals, and what essentials to bring when evacuating.

One key outcome of Project CHAMP's Evacuation Management training is that it fosters a culture of preparedness within the community. Instead of relying on reactive measures, communities become proactive, working collaboratively with their leaders to safeguard their lives and assets. This transformation empowers communities to become self-reliant, confident, and capable of taking swift action when disaster looms.

The impact of Project CHAMP's annual training on Evacuation Management is apparent. It builds resilience, ensures better coordination among community leaders and constituents, and saves lives in the face of adversity. By educating community





support offered by this initiative. As the world grapples with an increasingly uncertain climate, Project CHAMP champions the power of education, preparedness, and collective action in the fight against disaster-related threats.

members on the importance of early warning systems and evacuation protocols, Project CHAMP equips individuals with the tools they need to protect themselves and their loved ones during crises.

In the grander scheme of disaster management, Project CHAMP works on what can be achieved when communities come together, prioritize preparedness, and invest in their own resilience. Through training, simulation exercises, and a commitment to shared safety, Project CHAMP and the communities it serves are changing the narrative of disaster response, proving that preparedness is the most effective form of protection.

With every year that passes, more lives are safeguarded, and more communities become resilient, thanks to the invaluable training and

(by Gaudencio Boko Jr., Project Staff)



Building Future Leaders in Banate Through Batang Listo

Nestled in the heart of Banate, a quaint yet vibrant town in the Philippines, an ongoing initiative thrives—one that nurtures and develops its young citizens. Share an Opportunity Philippines (SAO), through its Project CHAMP, has been steadfastly working to empower children and youth since its inception. A significant milestone in this ongoing journey is the establishment of “Batang Listo” in 2022.

Batang Listo, which translates to “Smart Kids,” comprises a dedicated group of young people hailing from diverse barangays within Banate, including Zona Sur, Alacaygan, Belen, Carmelo, and Libertad. These young individuals undergo comprehensive training and guidance to equip them for future leadership roles. Their training encompasses a wide spectrum of essential skills, disaster preparedness and management, leadership development, and the nurturing of a strong sense of spirituality.

At present, Batang Listo proudly boasts an active membership of 30 individuals, with each member enthusiastically participating in a variety of activities organized by Project CHAMP. A notable evidence of their commitment and leadership is their recent successful organization of a three-day resiliency-building camp at the covered gym of Barangay Zona Sur, drawing nearly 300 enthusiastic youth.

Moreover, the positive impact of Batang Listo transcends the initial five barangays targeted by Project CHAMP. The movement has evolved into a growing network of youth organizations. In the current year, Project CHAMP’s efforts have successfully brought students from Banate National High School and Dela Paz National High School into the Batang Listo fold, expanding the initiative’s reach. This achievement underscores Project CHAMP’s vision to actively engage and empower more young civic leaders within Banate, with the active participation and collaboration of the Sangguniang Kabataan.

The emergence of Batang Listo is a glimmer of hope for Banate’s future. These young minds are being carefully honed to assume leadership roles and guide their communities toward resilience, preparedness, and positive transformation. SAO through this project, with the help of God who flourishes the dedicated efforts of all stakeholders, affirms that by equipping young individuals with essential life skills, nurturing their leadership qualities, and fostering their spiritual growth, they are planting the seeds for a brighter and more empowered Banate.

As this dynamic movement continues to gather momentum, SAO hopes that the ripple effect initiated by Batang Listo will extend far beyond Banate, touching and inspiring communities near and far.

(by Janbeth Alindog, Project Staff)



PAGTUO Garden: Nurturing Resilience Amidst Economic Struggles and Calamities

Amidst rising inflation rates and the unpredictable nature of disasters, daily wage earners and families in various communities face the daunting task of providing enough food for their tables. Feeding their families adequately, especially during crises, has become an increasingly difficult goal.

Project CHAMP understands that a key component of mitigating the adverse effects of inflation and unexpected calamities is the ability to adapt quickly to inevitable changes. With this understanding, the project introduced the initiative “PAGTUO Garden,” which translates to “Cultivate Our Own Vegetables” in Hiligaynon. Deeply rooted in the local culture, this offers hope to communities by addressing the pressing issue of food security.

The central idea behind PAGTUO Garden is to promote backyard gardening within the community. Community members are encouraged to use any available containers that can hold soil to grow fast-growing vegetables like pechay, mustard, eggplants, and more. The project has also introduced hydroponics-style gardening, providing flexibility and sustainability to meet the diverse needs of the community.

One of the remarkable aspects of PAGTUO gardening is its efficiency. Unlike traditional gardening methods that often take weeks or months to yield results, this approach allows community members to harvest fresh, nutritious vegetables in a matter of days. This swift turnaround not only ensures a consistent food supply but also empowers participants.

However, the impact of PAGTUO Garden goes beyond the immediate satisfaction of having homegrown produce. By cultivating their own vegetables, community members are simultaneously nurturing resilience and self-reliance. Tending these gardens instills a sense of ownership and pride, as participants witness the fruits of their labor transforming into sustenance for their families.

Furthermore, PAGTUO Garden has a tangible economic impact. By harvesting fresh produce from their small gardens, community members can significantly reduce their reliance on expensive store-bought vegetables, saving valuable resources for other essentials.

In times of calamities, PAGTUO Garden emerges as a crucial lifeline. When disaster strikes, the ability to provide for one’s family becomes even more critical. With their backyard gardens, community members can maintain a steady supply of fresh vegetables, ensuring that even amidst adversity, they can offer nourishment to their loved ones.

Project CHAMP’s PAGTUO Garden is more than just a garden; it’s a transformative initiative that empowers communities to become more self-reliant, resilient, and adaptable in the face of adversity. As they sow the seeds of change in their own backyards, community members are redefining what it means to face the challenges of inflation and calamities with strength and hope. Through their small gardens, they are cultivating not only vegetables but also a future that is more secure and promising. PAGTUO Garden is a demonstration of the resilience and resourcefulness of communities, proving that even in the most challenging times, a sustainable solution can grow from the soil beneath our feet.

(by Gaudencio Boko Jr., Project Staff)



Championing Change: Empowering Youth and Communities in Banate

Banate, a charming coastal town, is famous for its reliance on fishing and aquatic resources. However, beneath its serene surface, Banate faces not just environmental challenges like flooding but also critical issues concerning its youth. Thankfully, there are organizations and individuals who are working together to address such growing concerns.

Leading the charge for transformation is Mrs. Glory Jean Bacayo, the dedicated Municipal Social Development Welfare Officer (MSDWO) since 2016, with a mission to shape a better future for Banate's youth.

"I wanted to address the issues affecting our youth today," explains Mrs. Bacayo. She emphasized the need to combat illegal drugs, reduce teenage pregnancy rates, and instill resilience among the town's youth. This commitment has led her to collaborate with Project CHAMP, a program focused on empowering the community against disasters and various challenges through training and workshops.

For over two and a half years, Project CHAMP has been a driving force in Banate, with Mrs. Bacayo as a fervent supporter. "Project CHAMP is doing excellent work," she commends. "I appreciate SAO's dedication to youth welfare. I see positive changes in the youth they train as leaders and in their character development. The skills they acquire make them more productive."

Mrs. Bacayo's support for Project CHAMP goes beyond words; she actively participates in SAO's activities to reinforce her commitment. She even chose Batang Listo, a group nurtured by Project CHAMP, as the child representatives for the Local Council for Children in the municipality due to their potential as positive role models.

The collaboration between the local government and Project CHAMP has yielded remarkable results, especially in the growth, skills, and knowledge of the youth involved. The approach doesn't limit itself to specific areas but aims to unite youth from schools and churches, creating a united front against the issues they face.

"We aim to unite youth organizations to address problems more effectively," explains Mrs. Bacayo. The goal is to encourage collaboration among organizations like the Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP), Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), and other youth groups to achieve a more impactful collective effort.

The partnership goes beyond youth initiatives. Mrs. Bacayo is passionate about the Family Welfare program, working to

combat the rising rate of children in conflict with the law. By educating parents about effective parenthood and providing counseling, she aims to tackle the root causes of these issues. An ordinance addressing parenting concerns is already in progress, with Project CHAMP's valuable input.

Mrs. Bacayo acknowledges Project CHAMP's commitment to championing the implementation of ordinances and working closely with the local government. This collaboration has led to mutual learning and even inspired elements of Project CHAMP's programs to be incorporated into their own initiatives.

While recognizing existing challenges, Mrs. Bacayo's determination to drive change remains unwavering. She collaborates with SAO staff to develop and implement programs that can create a lasting impact. She expresses deep gratitude towards SAO Philippines and Project CHAMP, seeing them as instrumental in empowering individuals and fostering holistic human development.

As Banate continues its journey toward progress and change, Mrs. Glory Jean Bacayo is an inspiration. She is a tireless advocate for youth and a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, dedication, and a shared purpose.

(By Janbeth Alindog, Project Staff)

"I appreciate SAO's dedication to youth welfare. I see positive changes in the youth they train as leaders and in their character development. The skills they acquire make them more productive."

Charting CHAMP's Journey Together

Every individual in the community plays an integral role in the development and decision-making processes. Community development is built on the principle of equal responsibility and participation in development projects. Regardless of their role in evaluation, participation, provision, or direction, members at all levels should contribute significantly.

Project CHAMP is currently in its two and a half years of project implementation in the Municipality of Banate, Province of Iloilo. It closely collaborates with five partner Barangays: Belen, Alacaygan, Zona Sur, Carmelo, and Libertad, with the goal of building child-focused resilient communities.

From June 28-29, 2023, Project CHAMP hosted a Stakeholders' Participatory Assessment and Reflection Workshop (SPAR). The event gathered 50 participants representing various project stakeholders, including:

- 12 members from the Batang Listo Group (a youth advocacy group organized by SAO PH)
- 17 members from the partnering Community-Based Organization
 - 5 delegates from the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP)
 - 5 representatives from the Senior Citizen's group
 - 11 representatives from the Local Government Unit

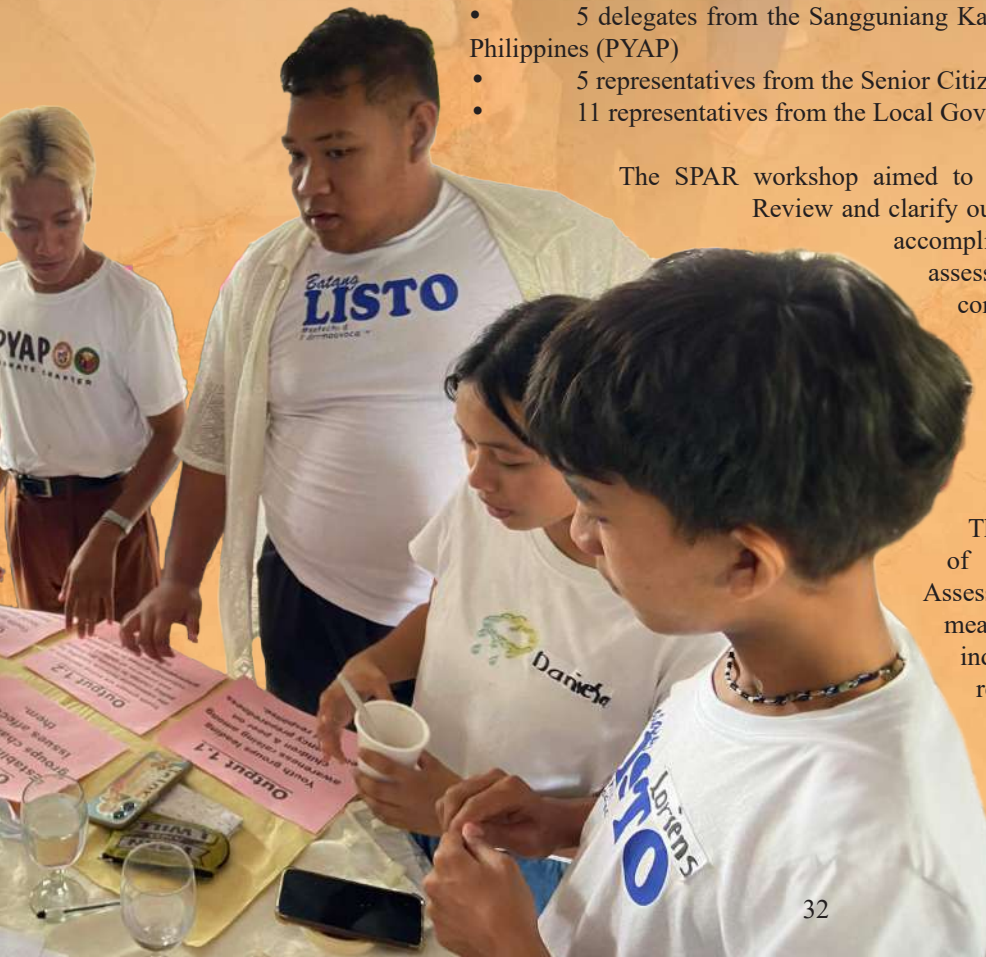
The SPAR workshop aimed to (a) engage stakeholders in the CHAMP Project Review and clarify outcome areas, (b) celebrate small wins from annual accomplishments, (c) develop a participatory progress assessment tool, (d) share personal experiences, identify common themes, and reflect on values, (e) identify hindering and facilitating factors in project implementation at various levels, (f) identify gaps and document lessons learned in project implementation, and (g) list and prioritize action points for project implementation.

The two-day activity was highlighted by the crafting of the Community-based Participatory Progress Assessment Tool, which will serve as a scorecard to measure the project's progress against specified indicators. This tool will enable stakeholders to reflect and identify action points for effective project implementation. It will be used during the Stakeholders' Forum every six months. Additionally, participants identified and listed indicators for a child-focused community and indicators for a resilient community.

"I'm happy to be a part of this activity. I see it as a brainstorming session where age doesn't matter. Everyone contributed valuable ideas and opinions, and we supported each other. We shared a mutual understanding and a sense of collaboration," expressed one of the Senior Citizen participants.

Furthermore, this activity served as a starting point for promoting the principle of community ownership and engagement. These community stakeholders will play a crucial role in monitoring Project CHAMP's progress over time, further deepening their long-term commitment to its sustainability.

(by Juniper A. Bibiolata, Program Manager)





SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES

A Youth Leader on the Rise

Opportunities often come when least expected, and they favor those who seize them. This rings true for Jelor Christian Bacayo, an 18-year-old grade 12 student who unexpectedly found himself becoming an active youth participant in SAO Philippines' Project CHAMP in Banate, Iloilo.

When Jelor learned about Project CHAMP's trainer's training event in Estancia, Iloilo, scheduled to take place on June 1 and 2, 2022, his excitement was evident. He admitted, "I didn't know much about what Share An Opportunity Philippines (SAO PH) was prior to this." Driven by enthusiasm for the opportunity and the chance to visit a new place, he eagerly signed up to participate in the training.

This event marked Jelor's first encounter with SAO. The two-day training was transformative for him. Jelor joined the ranks of Batang Listo members, young leaders trained to educate their peers on disaster preparedness, whether it's during or after a storm, earthquake, fire, or flood.

Following his participation in multiple training sessions and workshops, Jelor underwent significant personal growth. "I've gained valuable knowledge from SAO's leadership training," he reflected. "I now feel well-equipped to face life's storms and challenges."

Recognizing his demonstrated leadership potential throughout the program, Jelor was appointed president of Batang Listo.

Public service runs in Jelor's blood, with both his parents being public servants. His mother served as the Municipal Social Welfare Development Officer in Banate, Iloilo, while his father is a retired government employee. Active in school, Jelor was elected as the class representative in their school's student council. When asked if he plans to pursue higher positions like Sangguniang Kabataan, he replied, "I've considered it, especially since my older sister currently holds the position of SK President in our barangay. Perhaps in the near future. Who knows? I'd love to serve my constituents."

Transitioning from a regular student to a prospective public servant, Jelor is determined to create positive change in his community. He has observed several local issues, including ongoing problems with mismanaged garbage collection and a perceived lack of involvement by barangay officials in some government programs. As the president of Batang Listo, Jelor believes youth should have an active voice and role in barangay council meetings to share their perspectives, highlight issues needing attention, and contribute ideas to find solutions.

"I feel happy and inspired to be part of SAO Philippines," Jelor remarked. "The organization has equipped me with essential skills, particularly in the area of leadership. I can envision myself as a leader serving our country in the next ten years." He proudly shares his experiences with SAO with his friends and peers.



Knowledge is Key to Effective Disaster Preparedness

Public service is a challenging calling that requires compassion and dedication, especially when it comes to helping the community in times of disaster.

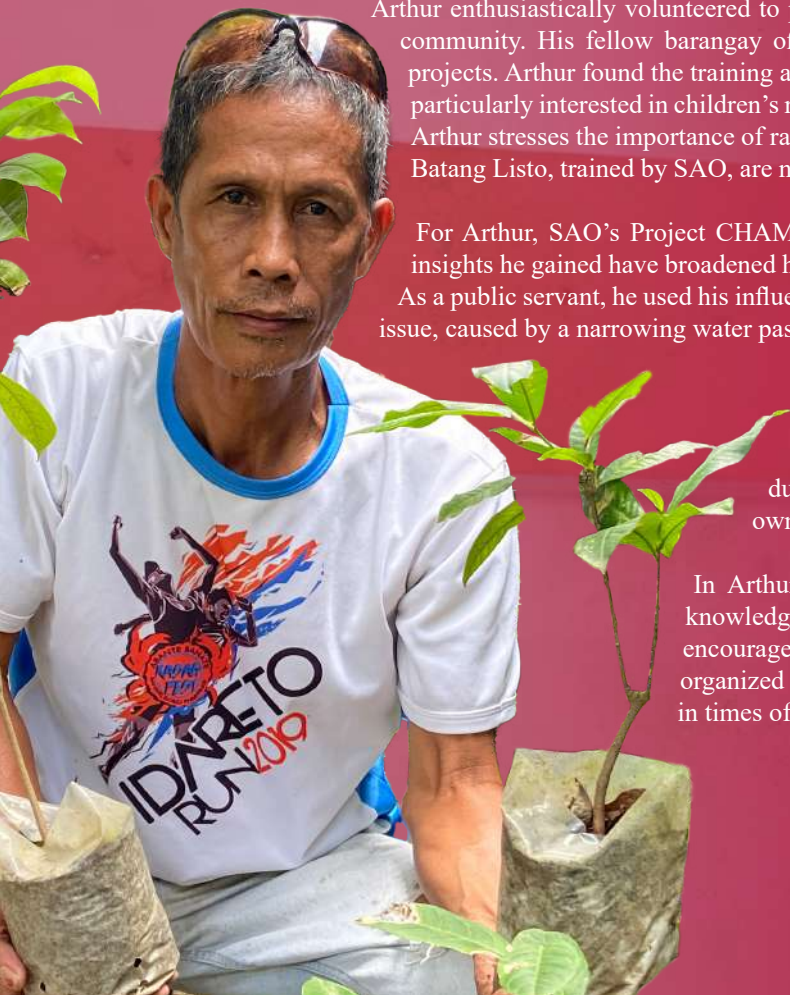
Barangay Libertad in the municipality of Banate is no stranger to floods, serving as a catch basin for rainwater from the mountains. Arthur Cordova, a 58-year-old Barangay Kagawad (Councilor), knows this well. He has been actively serving his constituents and spreading information about disaster preparedness and management. Arthur vividly remembers the devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, which left many people homeless and without livelihoods. He emphasizes the importance of being prepared at all times, having learned this lesson firsthand.

Arthur enthusiastically volunteered to participate in Project CHAMP, aligning with SAO's initiatives in his community. His fellow barangay officials and the Barangay Chairman are equally supportive of these projects. Arthur found the training and workshops provided by Project CHAMP highly beneficial. He was particularly interested in children's rights, as he chairs the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children. Arthur stresses the importance of raising awareness about children's rights, noting that young members of Batang Listo, trained by SAO, are now equipped to influence other youth in their community and schools.

For Arthur, SAO's Project CHAMP has been transformative for Barangay Libertad. The training and insights he gained have broadened his understanding of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). As a public servant, he used his influence to request the municipal engineer's office to address their flooding issue, caused by a narrowing water passage due to nipa trees and silt.

Arthur is committed to sharing the knowledge he acquires from Project CHAMP's workshops with his community. He and his team visit every village in the barangay to reinforce what they have learned during the training sessions. Arthur also takes the initiative to educate his own children, empowering them with valuable knowledge for their future.

In Arthur's view, providing the community with accurate information and knowledge is essential for effective disaster preparedness. This is why he encourages everyone to participate in the training, workshops, and activities organized by Project CHAMP, recognizing that being well-informed is crucial in times of calamity.



From Crisis to Strength

The Story of John Eric Salvo, an Empowered Volunteer

On November 13, 2013, at 9:30 in the morning, young Jeck faced the most terrifying moment of his life. "I thought it was the end of the world," he recounted.

Super Typhoon Yolanda made landfall in the Philippines, striking the province of Iloilo. This powerful storm wreaked havoc on Barangay Belen in the town of Banate, Iloilo, an agricultural coastal area in Western Visayas. Roofs were torn off, trees uprooted, rice fields turned into vast water bodies, and streets submerged in neck-deep floods. With wind speeds reaching 315 km/h, it was the strongest typhoon to ever hit the country, leaving destruction in its wake.

Despite his fear and sense of hopelessness, Jeck gathered his strength and helped his neighbors to safety. Now, at 27 years old, John Eric Salvo, affectionately known as Jeck, is on the path to becoming a teacher from Barangay Belen. His passion for teaching has led him to provide tutorials for young students while he prepares for the licensure exam in September.

Meanwhile, SAO Philippines has been active in Banate for over seven years, conducting disaster risk reduction and management training in five barangays, including Barangay Belen. The community was educated about the importance of disaster preparedness before calamities struck. SAO also collaborated with the local government unit on projects such as installing concrete barriers along the coastline of Brgy. Talocgangan, Banate, and planting mangroves in other vulnerable barangays that were severely affected by the storm surge during Typhoon Yolanda.

When Jeck learned about SAO's projects through community partners, he eagerly joined the organization. In August 2020, he officially became one of SAO's volunteers.

Jeck is highly active in the community, particularly in facilitating activities involving youth. He currently serves as the Sangguniang Kabataan chairman of their barangay. His initiatives include providing educational assistance to youth, organizing tree planting activities, facilitating sociocultural and sporting events, and conducting



training sessions to empower youth leaders in the community. He actively participates in SAO activities and serves as the point of contact in his barangay. “I realized the significance of SAO’s training, and I believe it’s time for me to contribute,” Jeck emphasized.

One concern Jeck has observed among today’s youth is their addiction to social media, which often overshadows awareness of real-world issues like climate change. As a leader, he believes that youth should play a crucial role in environmental conservation and advocates for increased tree planting to combat global warming. Jeck also stresses the importance of providing disaster preparedness training for youth and children to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to handle dangerous situations.

“During typhoons or calamities, children are the most vulnerable. They should be trained from an early age to ensure their safety. I’m grateful that SAO Philippines conducts training, especially for youth, as it empowers them and helps them realize their value in the community,” Jeck stated.

His plan is to further involve young people in humanitarian efforts and raise awareness through social media, emphasizing the impact of human behavior on the environment. Jeck believes that SAO has made a significant impact on him, proving that volunteerism is driven by passion and goals rather than one’s position in the community.

According to Jeck, everyone should engage in emergency training and disaster preparedness to withstand storms and calamities. He is determined to ramp up these activities in every community to raise awareness of the broader impact of human activities on the world. “I never want to relive that nightmare in 2013!” he emphasized.



SAO Strengthened My Advocacy

Typhoon Frank in June 2008 left a lasting impact on Loredel. She recalled how the floodwaters were neck-deep, sweeping away their belongings and leaving only vital documents.

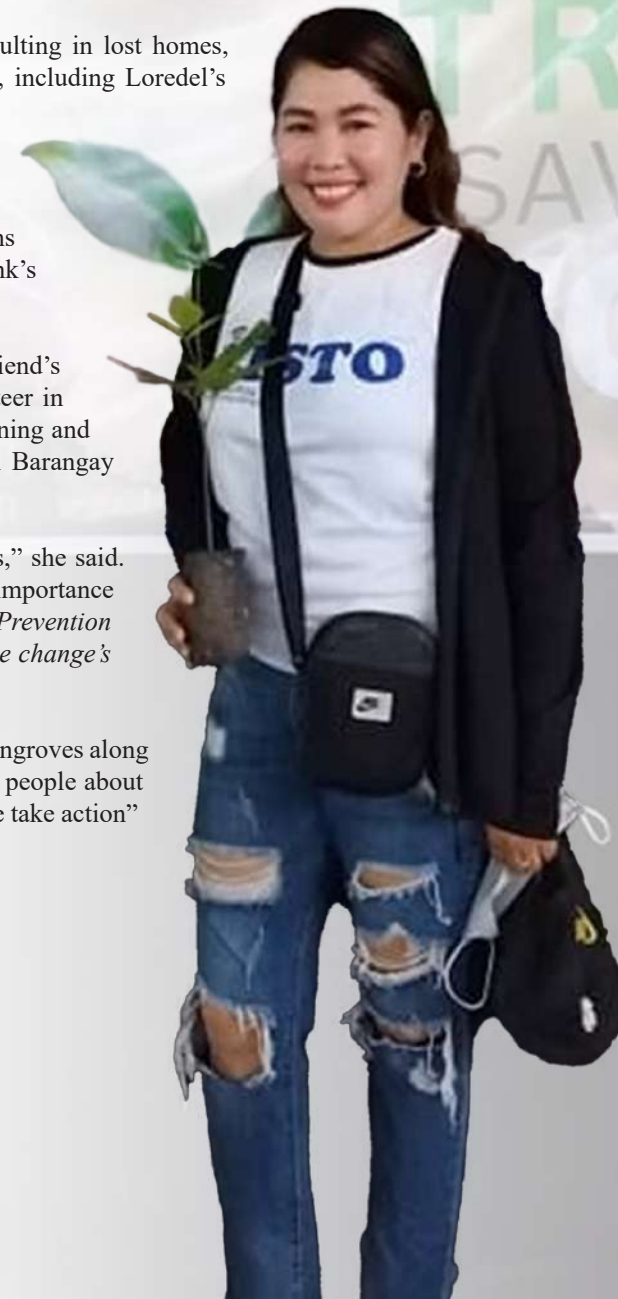
Typhoon Frank caused widespread devastation in Iloilo, particularly in Banate, resulting in lost homes, shattered livelihoods, and tragic loss of life. This affected the Ilonggo community, including Loredel’s family.

Loredel Caalem, 42, serves as a Kagawad in Brgy. Alacaygan, Banate, Iloilo. For eight years she has been advocating for environmental care. Her community faced recurring issues of improper waste disposal, leading to clogged drainage systems and flooding during heavy rains. Determined to prevent a repeat of Typhoon Frank’s devastation, Loredel initiated clean-up drives with her colleagues.

SAO Philippines began engaging with Brgy. Alacaygan in 2020. Loredel through a friend’s recommendation was introduced to the organization. She officially became a volunteer in October 2021, actively participating in SAO’s activities. Loredel believes SAO’s training and workshops are highly relevant today. Her first exposure was an evacuation drill in Barangay Libertad, solidifying her conviction about joining SAO.

“I’ve gained valuable knowledge from SAO, applying it to my community programs,” she said. SAO significantly strengthened her environmental advocacy. Loredel recognized the importance of proactive preparedness even before disasters come to save lives. She stressed, *“Prevention is key. We can make a difference in protecting our environment and mitigating climate change’s effects.”*

In her continuing advocacy, Loredel emphasizes the need to plant trees, particularly mangroves along Banate’s coastline to prevent storm surges during monsoons or typhoons. “Educating people about environmental protection is crucial. We shouldn’t wait for dire consequences before we take action” she concluded.



SAO, Truly A Blessing!

Oting vividly recalls the harrowing events of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. “During the height of the typhoon, my family sought refuge in our church, thinking it was safe because it was made of concrete. But to our shock, the church collapsed due to the heavy rain and strong winds!” she recounted. “I was terrified,” she added, reflecting on the traumatic experience she endured at the tender age of 12.

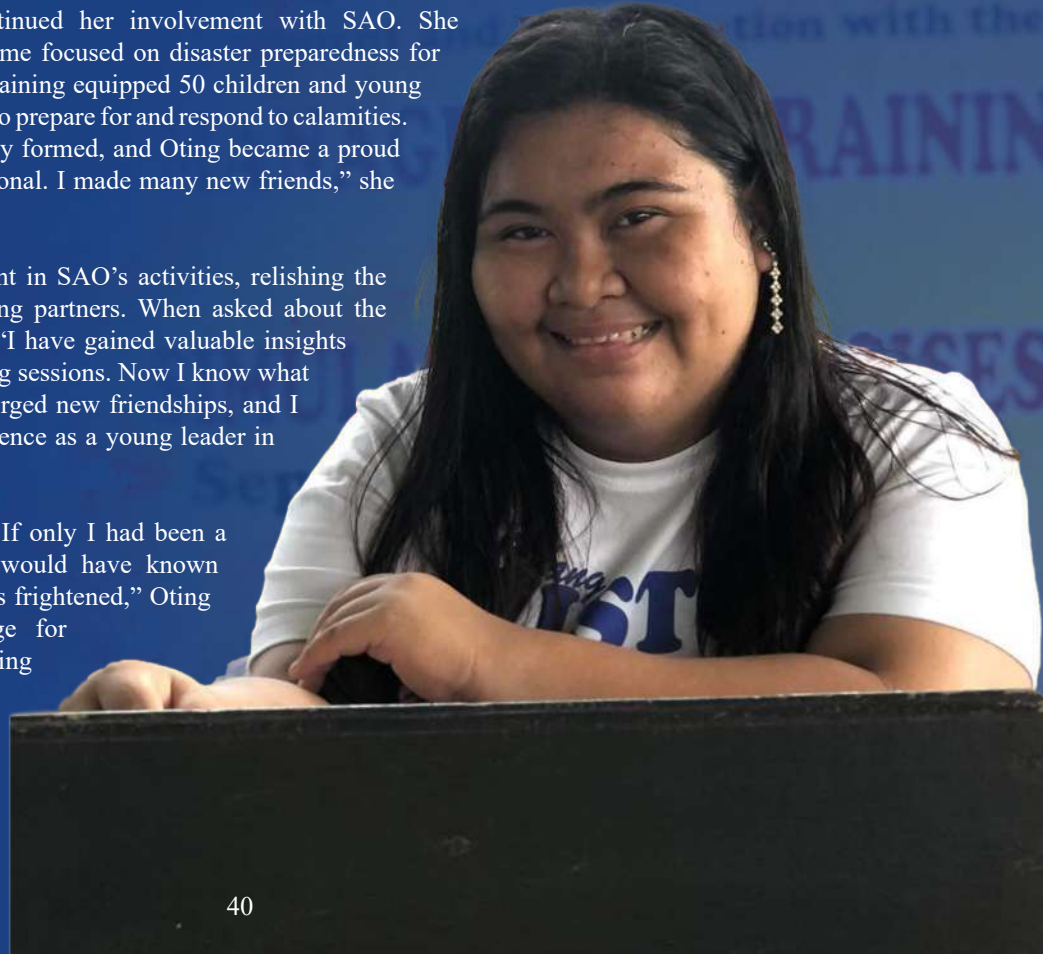
Oting, whose full name is Jufelmer Marie J. Cutanda, is now a 21-year-old emerging leader from Barangay Zona Sur in Banate, Iloilo. She is pursuing a degree in Religious Education, currently in her second year. Raised in a humble Christian family, she developed a strong connection with God from an early age.

Her introduction to SAO Philippines came through a friend, a fellow Batang Listo, who invited her to a youth leadership training held at the CRCI Beach Resort in Banate, Iloilo last April. Initially hesitant, Oting, who also served as the Sangguniang Kabataan Treasurer in her barangay, felt compelled to attend. “I was reserved initially, but the workshop opened my eyes. I learned that as a youth, I can lead and have a voice to influence,” she explained. The workshop brought together youth leaders from various barangays.

Following her first workshop, Oting continued her involvement with SAO. She participated in another SAO training, this time focused on disaster preparedness for youth, held in Estancia, Iloilo in July. The training equipped 50 children and young people with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for and respond to calamities. During this event, Batang Listo was officially formed, and Oting became a proud member. “It was both enjoyable and educational. I made many new friends,” she fondly recalled.

Oting has since become an active participant in SAO’s activities, relishing the opportunity to engage with her fellow young partners. When asked about the impact of SAO on her life, she responded, “I have gained valuable insights from attending SAO’s workshops and training sessions. Now I know what to do when a typhoon approaches. I have forged new friendships, and I have been empowered. I have gained confidence as a young leader in our community.”

“SAO has been a true blessing in my life! If only I had been a Batang Listo during Typhoon Yolanda, I would have known how to respond, and I wouldn’t have been as frightened,” Oting remarked. She has an important message for her fellow young people: “Seize any training opportunity, especially in leadership, that comes your way. There’s no better time to improve yourself than the present moment!”



Finding Treasure in Mangrove Nursery

Among the most financially challenged segments of society are the members of fishing communities who brave the high seas to ensure our tables are supplied with fish. Yet, ironically, they often struggle to make ends meet.

Meet Jeanne Bayson, a 48-year-old mother of five who relies on the sea’s bounty for her livelihood. Together with her husband, she toils as a fisher to provide for their family, with her husband fishing and her selling the catch in the market. However, there are times, particularly during the off-season from March to June when fish become scarcer due to rising temperatures, that Jeanne must seek alternative income sources. She sells eggs to neighbors and tends to her mini “sari-sari” store (a small grocery store) to supplement their income. “I opened a mini grocery store to have another source of income,” she shared.

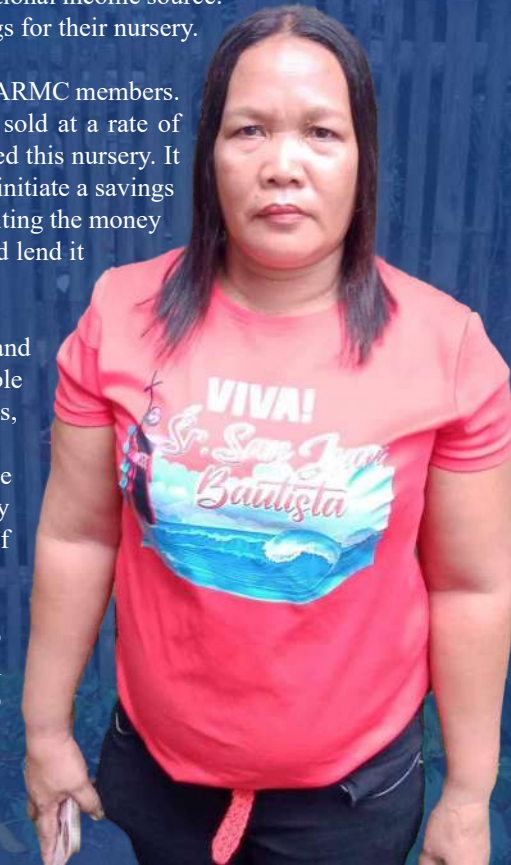
Jeanne is an active member of the Barangay Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (BFARMC) in Banate, Iloilo, responsible for overseeing the management of fisheries and aquatic resources in their barangay. The council educates local fisherfolk on caring for the sea, cultivating oysters and green shells, and the importance of planting mangroves along the shoreline. Mangroves serve not only as breeding grounds for fish but also as protection against potential storm surges.

It was through BFARMC that Jeanne learned about SAO’s Project CHAMP when they collaborated. The project aimed to educate people about the advantages of nurturing mangroves and establish a seedling nursery as an additional income source. Barangay Belen, Jeanne’s residence, is rich in mangroves, making it feasible to collect seedlings for their nursery.

In March 2022, Barangay Belen established its inaugural mangrove nursery, managed by 18 BFARMC members. They successfully collected and nurtured 5,000 seedlings, of which 2,000 had already been sold at a rate of P7.00 each, or occasionally higher depending on demand. “We are delighted to have established this nursery. It provides us with another income source,” Jeanne exclaimed. The nursery also enabled them to initiate a savings fund, where council members can borrow money, returning it with interest. “Rather than depositing the money in a bank with low annual interest rates for savings, we decided to keep it within the group and lend it to members in need,” she explained.

Despite challenges along the way, such as inactive members in maintaining the nursery, Jeanne and seven other dedicated members persevered, seeing the potential of mangrove sales as a profitable venture. “We don’t require significant capital for this. We started with just P3,000.00 for materials, and the mangrove seedlings are readily available in our backyard,” she noted. Jeanne expressed her gratitude to SAO for introducing them to the possibility of earning income from selling mangroves. “While I earn more from selling fish in the market, having the nursery has provided me and my community with an additional income source,” she affirmed. “Now, if we need money, it’s readily available through our group’s loan facility,” she added.

Currently, they have around 3,000 seedlings in the nursery and are planning to expand it to accommodate even more seedlings in the near future. Their goal is to sell more seedlings and boost their savings fund. Sometimes, treasures are right around the corner—you just need to open your eyes to find them.



Barangay Kagawad Finally Opens His Dream Business

With the rising cost of commodities driven by inflation in the country, many Filipinos are exploring new ways to earn more, such as launching their own businesses, to alleviate the challenges of everyday survival.

Paul del Carmen, a 28-year-old serving as Barangay kagawad in Alaycaygan, Banate has been an active volunteer of SAO's Project CHAMP since the organization initiated its project in the area last year. Paul acknowledges the hardships of life, especially when he has to contribute to his family's needs. His salary as kagawad is barely enough to cover his personal expenses. Thus, he decided to explore the possibility of starting a small business to supplement his income.

In the interim, SAO's Project CHAMP volunteers and staff formed a savings group where members contribute 100 pesos per week into a common fund. The group was formed in response to concerns about the high-interest rates imposed by lending companies. Many members had borrowed money to support livelihoods or pay tuition. This led SAO to provide training on rapid savings mobilization methods, culminating in the savings group's launch in September 2022. Members make weekly contributions, with the accumulated funds securely deposited in a bank account.

Over the last two months, the savings group has started offering loans to its members, and Paul became the first to seize this opportunity. With a minimal interest rate, he borrowed a sum to launch his catering business. Paul's love for cooking fueled his choice of the food business.

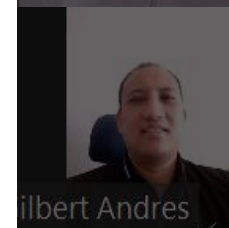
"I aspired to start catering because, first, I have a passion for cooking, and second, I noticed a lack of options for home-cooked food in our neighborhood. My goal is to help my neighbors, especially the children, gain access to affordable food," he emphasized.

Paul expresses his gratitude for being able to kickstart his business with the support of SAO's savings group. He initially considered applying for a loan from a lending company but was deterred by the high-interest rates. "I was ecstatic when the group allowed me to borrow funds," he remarked. He envisions expanding his business into a full-fledged eatery in the future, but for now, he's focused on stabilizing his venture, acknowledging the challenges of consistent daily sales.

Paul remains determined that his business will thrive, all thanks to the savings group that opened the doors to realizing his entrepreneurial dream.



Organizational Highlights



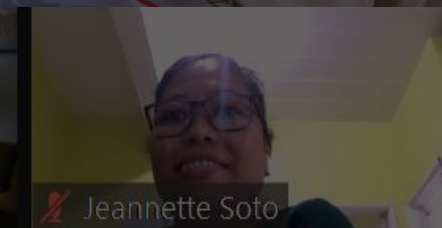
Gilbert Andres



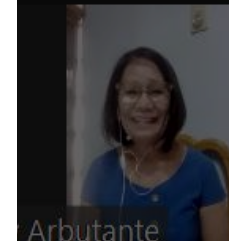
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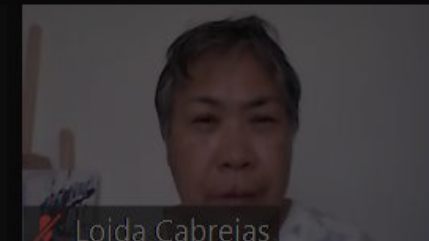
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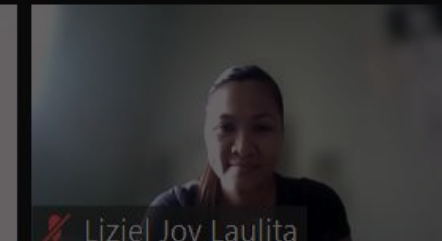
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Liziel Joy Laulita

National Staff Retreat

The National Staff Retreat is one of the most awaited organizational activities of SAO Phils. This year, it was held at Sitio Lemblisong, Brgy. Tupi, South Cotabato, from May 16 to 19, 2023, with the theme “ABLAZE,” based on the text found in Romans 12:11-12.

The staff retreat was facilitated by Ms. Armi A. Martinez, ED. The staff engaged in spiritual reflections about God as a consuming fire, and being “set on fire and empowered.” There were also inputs on staff development given by Mr. Juniper Bibiolata, Program Manager. Mr. Gaudencio Boko shared insights about Family Emergency Plans and Disaster Risk Management, while Ms. Abby Reanzares facilitated paper quill making.

The staff enjoyed the sightseeing, food, and the weather. It was refreshing for everyone to witness and experience the wonderful works of the Lord in that place.

During the retreat, the staff had the opportunity to visit some of the best places in Mindanao, including Lake Sebu, where they could see the seven waterfalls and experience the T’boli culture. They also visited the Lang Dulay Weaving Center, where T’nalak fabric is woven. Additionally, the staff had the chance to explore the General Santos Fish Port and were amazed by the Tuna harvest.

This staff retreat also allowed all staff members to visit and pray for the SAO Mango Farm in Mindanao.

The staff retreat concluded with participants sharing their reflections, confessions, and the release of forgiveness. Everyone felt ABLAZE and encouraged to keep the fire burning!



Staff In Focus: Eza Pacardo, Savoring New Things

I’m Eza A. Pacardo, a Community Development Worker at Share-An Opportunity Philippines Inc. It’s a privilege to visit new places, and this was my first time in South Cotabato and General Santos, though not my first time in Mindanao. Traveling presents challenges like adapting to new cultures, languages, and climates, but I’m grateful for colleagues who helped me navigate these challenges.

Now in my second year with SAO, I was excited about our staff retreat in Mindanao last 16-20, 2023. Our group of five from Iloilo had a lively conversation at the airport. We were so engrossed in our discussion that we lost track of time and before we knew it, we heard our names being called to board the aircraft, which made us laugh.

When we arrived at General Santos Airport, we headed to Sitio Lemblisong, Brgy. Kablon, Tupi, South Cotabato. Even at night, we were enchanted by the breathtaking scenery, the cool breeze, a delicious dinner, and the warm hospitality of Sir Jun’s family, our hosts. After settling in, we enjoyed a peaceful night’s rest.

Our daily routine included group devotionals, breakfast, and meetings covering topics like staying passionate about our work and faith, creating arts and crafts, and financial budgeting and reporting. After each session, Sir Jun took us on tours of various tourist spots, including Lake Sebu, the General Santos Fishport Complex, SAO Farm, the T’boli Tribe, and the place where Lang Dulay, the acclaimed weaving national artist, lived. These tour experiences became cherished memories.

On our final evening, we indulged in freshly prepared tuna dishes courtesy of Sir Jun’s wife. As we savored sashimi, my unintentional mispronunciation of it as “shishami” sent our group into fits of laughter. In a light-hearted moment, I was declared the winner for daring to try something new for the first time.

I’m deeply grateful for being a part of this team. My journey with SAO has been filled with valuable experiences – from the trials and testings to the small victories and even what initially appeared as setbacks. I truly relish new experiences and the lessons they bring.

The recent staff retreat was not only an opportunity to explore new destinations and savor diverse cuisines, but it also rekindled my passion and motivation. It reignited my desire to persevere in work that glorifies God, share the knowledge I’ve acquired, and wholeheartedly serve our living God. I am forever committed to this purpose.

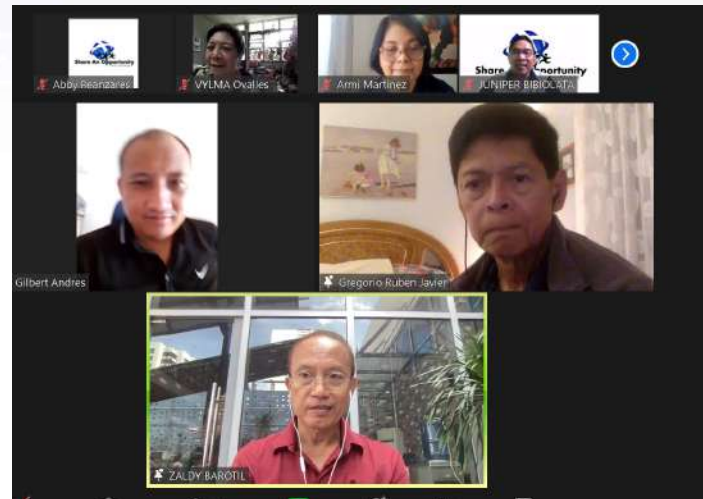
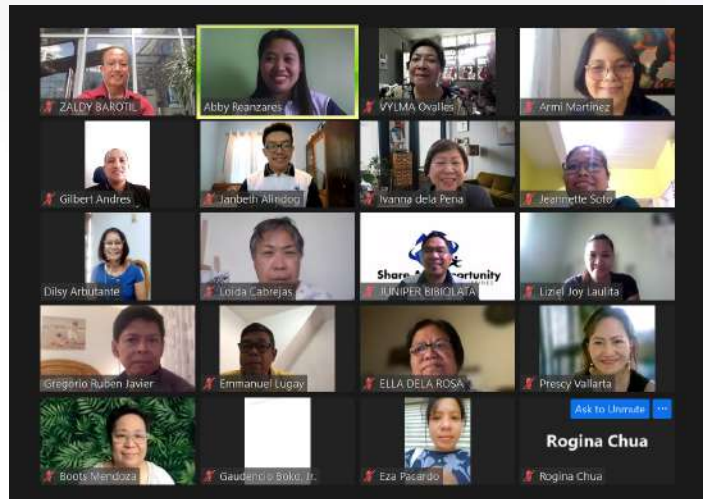


General Assembly 2022

Share an Opportunity Philippines held its Annual General Assembly meeting virtually via Zoom on December 3, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 10:15 AM by Ms. Dilsy Arbutante, Corporate Secretary, with 18 members present and 4 members represented by proxy, constituting a quorum of 21 out of 25 total members.

After an opening worship and devotion led by Ptr. Roderick Jacinto centering on the Advent theme of anticipation, the Chairman presented the Board's accomplishments for 2022. This was followed by the Program, Finance, and Executive Director reports, which included plans and budgets for 2023.

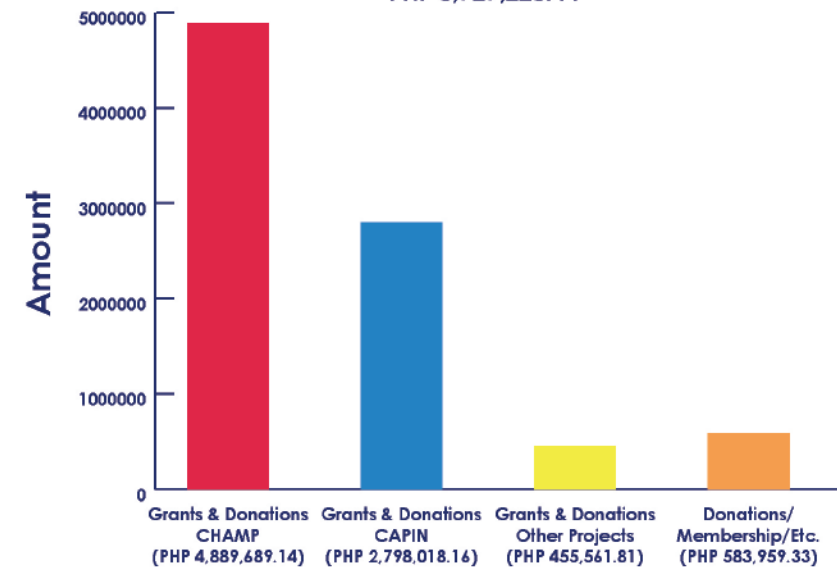
Certificates of appreciation were then presented to outgoing Board members Ptr. Adonis Adlaon and Ptr. Roderick Jacinto, thanking them for their service. The General Assembly also welcomed 7 new members and 3 newly elected Board members: Atty. Gilbert T. Andres, Ms. Primrose Sotocinal, and Mr. Gregorio Ruben Javier. The meeting adjourned at 12:28 PM.



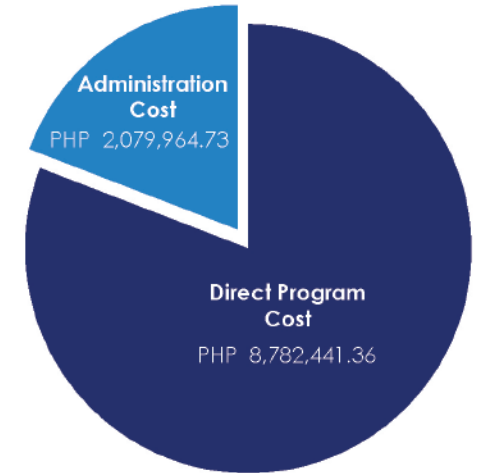
Financial Update

RECEIPTS

PHP 8,727,228.44

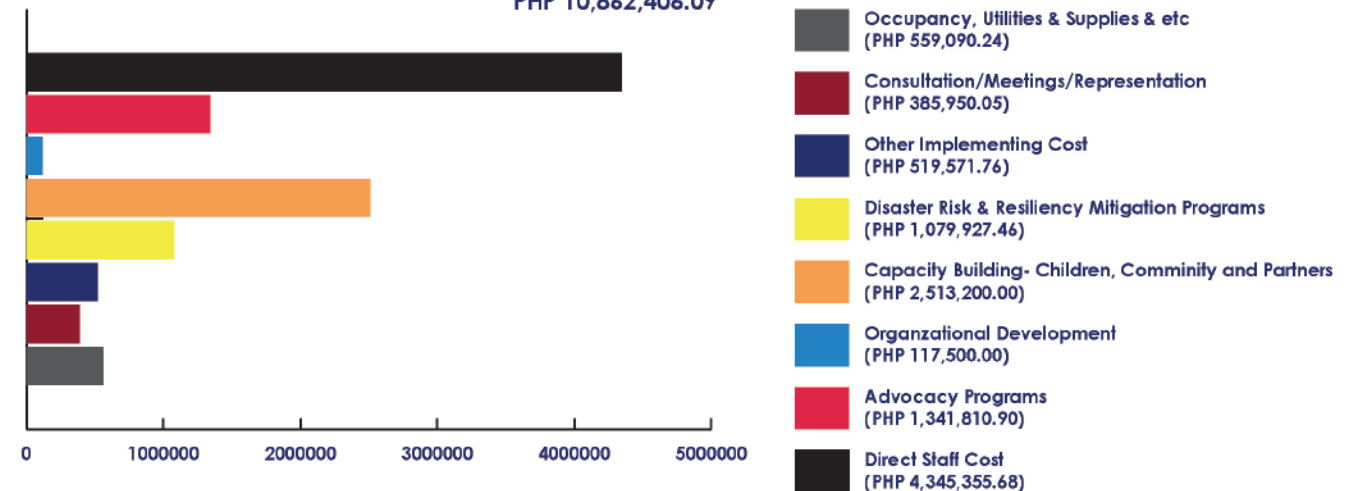


COST ALLOCATION



EXPENSES

PHP 10,862,406.09



*All figures in 2023 are based on the report submitted by the Finance Officer.

Looking Forward

The past, present, and future belong to our Creator - God. SAO moves forward one stepping stone at a time trusting that God's will and work in and through SAO will prevail.

SAO'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PLAN (2022-2027)

Safe & Resilient Children & Youth

Goal (EO FY2027)

- To have child-mindful, resilience building projects in 5 areas.

Target

- 5 communities
- 1000 families
- 1250 children & youth

Key Activities

- Program evaluation and development
- Proposal making & grant seeking
- Networking & collaboration
- Staff hiring & training

Cutting-edge Transformational Program

Goal (EO FY2027)

- A research-based cutting-edge transformational (CeT) program would have been designed and piloted.

Target

- 1 community
- 50 families
- 300 children & youth

Key Activities

- Conduct of research
- Program development
- Proposal making & grant seeking
- Pilot-test
- Mobilization

Transformative Partner and Public Engagement

Goal (EO FY2027)

- Various resource mobilization streams such as crowd funding, public offering, farm development, partnership with like-minded organizations would have been established.

Target

- 5 project partnerships
- 1000 donors
- 50 General Assembly members
- 5 institutional donors
- 10M annual income

Key Activities

- Proposal making & grants seeking
- Annual fund campaign
- Maintained website & social media platforms
- Regular e-Newsletter
- Conduct of CBO Learning Exchange

Responsive Governance

Goal (EO FY2027)

- SAO PH Board committees are functional and productive, effectively working with management.

Target

- 3 functional committees

Key Activities

- Review of the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and By Laws and other policies
- Renewal of relevant registrations, licenses and accreditations
- Board Development
- SAO Polomolok Farm Development
- Review of Sustainability Plan
- Learning Visits

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand ”
- Proverbs 19:2 (ESV)

Lifelong Learning Organization

Goal (EO FY2027)

- SAO PH would have installed mechanisms for continuous learning

Target

- SAO Training Institute 100% of new staff completed SAO Core Course

Key Activities

- Core Course manual development and implementation
- Conduct of National Staff Retreat/ Conference
- MEAL/Data Recording & management

BOARD OF TRUTEES



ZALDY V. BAROTIL

President and Chairman of the Board.

Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering. Master in Development Management.

Zaldy is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Transforming Asia Pacific Inc., a Christian and Filipino research and consulting firm based in Cavite. He also manages the Wholeness Family Medical Center. Zaldy was Regional Director of the Medical Ambassadors International in Central Asia and also served as the International Program Director and Executive Director of the Asian School of Development and Cross-Cultural Studies (ASDECS) from 2004 to 2013.



RAY ELEVAZO

Vice Chairman of the Board.

Civil Servant and a Reserve Officer.

Ray is the Executive Director of Cooperative Development Authority. He is a Public Administration Practitioner and has a long experience in implementing the cooperative development and regulatory program of the government. His knowledge, skills, aptitude and attitude were honed along this line and recently enhanced by strategic development and security mindset.



DILSY ARBUTANTE

Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Registered Social Worker.

Masters in Social Work.

Masters in International Development.

Dilsy is passionate about community organizing, community mobilization, and community empowerment. She has a vast child focused NGO experience and expertise in governance and project/program development & evaluation. She's previously engaged with International program management and quality assurance experience in various types of inclusive community development programming with NGOs and civil societies in Asia, Pacific (including Mongolia), Africa, Middle East and Europe. She was Country Director for leadership and management in the Pacific (covering Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Island and Fiji) with World Vision International and in the Philippines with Norwegian Mission Alliance Philippines, Inc. She has experience in working with program management, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation including bilateral and multilateral funded projects in Asia including Mongolia, Pacific, Africa, Middle East, and Europe.



ESTRELLA CATILOGO DELA ROSA

Member of the Board

Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. Associate in Arts degree in Accounting

Ms. Estrella Catilogo dela Rosa holds a B.S. in Mathematics degree from the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM) and an Associate in Arts degree in Accounting from a prestigious learning institution in Los Angeles City, California, USA. She became a missionary in Porac, Pampanga from 1986 to 1990 doing literacy, health, and livelihood programs for Aetas. She became a part of the Share An Opportunity (SAO) Philippines, when it was still called the Support an Orphan, under its Sponsorship Program. Her desire to serve others did not wane even after she left for the United States. Today, the missionary in her compelled her to continue serving her fellow human beings as treasurer of the Southeast Area Neighborhood Development Council of Los Angeles.



ATTY. GILBERT T. ANDRES

Member of the Board

Juris Doctor in Law

Atty. Gilbert T. Andres He holds the Juris Doctor in Law and he specializes in International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, Public International Law, Private International Law, Media Law, Public Interest Law, Constitutional Law, Internet Freedom, Criminal Law, Corporate Law, Civil Law, Property Law, Contract Law. He conducts human rights trainings and legal remedies to identified- low income communities as part of the Center for International Law, Inc. (CenterLaw Philippines). He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Onesimo Bulilit Foundation, Inc. Now, he is the Executive Director, Asia Lead Coordinator, and International law fellow of Center for International Law Philippines Inc. (Center Law), a partner of Butuyan & Rayel Law Offices, Faculty Member of Private International Law of College of Law, Lyceum of the Philippines, and a visiting Professor in Human Rights and Special Issues on International Law in College of Law, Siliman University. He hopes to competently address any legal issues or needs of SAO Ph and contribution his gift of teaching and speaking to the ministry of SAO Phils.



MS. PRIMROSE P. SOTOCINAL

Member of the Board

Master of Science in Nursing

Ms. Primrose P. Sotocinal holds a Master of Science in Nursing from Trinity Western University Langley, British Columbia Canada. She has a wide experience in doing the community development work. She was a Community Health Development Specialist of SAO Phils., Women's Emergency Shelter Manager of Hope Mission and a Capacity Building of First Nations communities. She was an instructor/lecturer from 1985-2007, Staff Nurse Neonatal ICU from 2004-2006, Manager and Community Health Nurse Women's Emergency Shelter, 2017, a Nurse Consultant Tuberculosis/Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance and Assessment Branch - Alberta Health Government of Alberta from 2007-2010, Clinical Development Nurse from 2010-2016, STBBI Prevention Nurse Sexually Transmitted Blood Borne Infections (STBBI) Program Communicable Disease Control First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) from 2016 until Feb 2022, right now she is the Acting STBBI program Coordinator of First Nation Inuit Health Branch, Government of Canada.



GREGORIO RUBEN JAVIER

Member of the Board

Mr. Gregorio Ruben S. Javier actively engages in the ministry of the word by conducting both campus and home bible studies. As a church member, he is involved in management work such as planning and organizing. He also has experience in manufacturing operations, product research and development, as well as supply chain oversight. As a board member, he hopes to provide guidance, useful feedback, and recommendations on projects and prospects of SAO PH.

THE MANAGEMENT TEAM



Armi A. Martinez
Executive Director



Loida Cabrejas
Finance Manager



Juniper Bibiolata
Program Manager



Abegail Reanzares
Admin Generalist

PROJECT STAFF



Regina Chua
Project CAPIN Staff
Community Development Worker



Mary Joy Relente
Project CAPIN Staff
Community Development Worker



Janbeth Alindog
Project CHAMP Staff
Community Development Worker



Gaudencio Boko Jr.
Project CHAMP Staff
Community Development Worker



Eza Pacardo
Project CHAMP Staff
Community Development Worker

ACCREDITATION



Department Of Social Welfare
and Development

AFFILIATIONS



Micah Global



Philippine Children's
Ministries Network



Alliance of Christian
Development Agencies

PARTNERS



Mission Alliance



Consuelo Foundation



Telus International



Australian Embassy

Vision Statement

Generations of Filipino children nurtured to their God-given potential for nation building.

Mission Statement

We depend on God in engaging children, families and communities of partners for transformation.



Share An Opportunity
PHILIPPINES

Contact Us

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ShareAnOpportunityPH>

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