



**Greetings from the Philippines!**

After a very long delay (my last newsletter never quite made it to press – technical hitches), I finally have a chance to send another newsletter from Bahay Tuluyan. A lot has happened in the 5 months since the last newsletter. The Philippines has survived a presidential election, with the former president being reinstated with a slim majority. The dramas that went with the election kept the media busy for months. It is now the rainy season and the recent pullout of Philippine troops from Iraq and Australia's reaction has put Australia on the front pages of the papers for a few days.

At Bahay Tuluyan, we have been very busy. The children commenced the new school year in June after 2 months of summer holidays. The number of children in our centers has increased substantially indicating that the new president still has a lot of work to do in terms of protecting children.

On the Australian front, June marked the official commencement of Bahay Tuluyan Philippines Australia Inc, the Australian partner organisation of Bahay Tuluyan. The members of BTPA are busy working alongside the YMCA to prepare for Justcycle 2004, an advocacy campaign in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, aimed at drawing attention to the issues facing children. Two children from Bahay Tuluyan, Louie (15) and Daisy (11) and our Executive Director, Lily, are busy preparing to attend this event.

Enjoy!

Catherine Scerri

**On the road again... Justcycle  
 2004**

When Daisy Duazo, age 11, ran away from home at age 8, she wanted to be free from the abuse inflicted on her by her relatives. She was hoping to find her mother so she could go to school. The idea that a few years later she would be packing her bags for Australia would have seemed crazy. Similarly a chance to fly in a plane must have seemed remote when Louie Velasco spent his days wandering the streets looking for food to eat. Now 15 and in Grade 6, Louie proudly talks about graduating next year and how he wants to be a basketball player like Michael Jordan. He is very excited about his upcoming trip to Australia and wants to know if it will be snowing.

In September 2004, Louie and Daisy will be in Australia to participate in Justcycle 2004, an event aimed at raising awareness about children's rights and the issues facing children like Louie and Daisy. The event, being organised by Bahay Tuluyan Philippines Australia Inc and YMCA, will bring together school children from Victoria who will ride from Rosebud to Essendon to draw attention to the crisis facing children around the world. With 40% of Filipino children below the poverty line and 1 in 3 subject to abuse, the issue of increasing disparity of wealth between developed and developing countries is of critical importance to Australia, if only, cynically, for our sense of national security.

Besides a 5 day bike ride, Justcycle will involve speaking tours in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. All proceeds from the event will go towards building a new shelter for children in the Philippines. For further information about the details of the event and how to get involved, please contact Anne Hibbert on 0419 347 990.



Louie, 15 and Daisy, 11, are coming to Australia in September to talk about children's rights

**Girly returns to Australia**

*When she was 6 years old, Girly Bagus lived in a pushcart with her family. Today she is studying to be a teacher. Recognised for her outstanding leadership skills and willingness to help her community, Girly was selected as one of 11 Filipino youth delegates for the International Youth Parliament held in Sydney in July.*

*This was Girly's second trip to Australia after representing Bahay Tuluyan in the inaugural Justcycle event in April 2003. Girly has returned to the Philippines from Sydney very inspired and enthusiastic to set up a learning center in her local urban poor community. She aims to be able to increase children's motivation to study by giving them a place to study, as well as tutorial assistance and access to books, computers and educational aids.*



Girly on her bike during Justcycle 2003



The Bahay Tuluyan Day Care center which is assisted by Australians

## 'Ben' - the story of a trafficked child

Recently, a child was referred to Bahay Tuluyan by a local government unit. Ben, 12 years old, had been found wandering the streets in a nearby town. As Ben spoke a different dialect, it became apparent to staff that he was from a southern region of the Philippines.

After some time, Ben revealed to us that one day his mother sent him to buy something and he was grabbed by four men who put him in a jeep and then a boat and ultimately brought him to Manila. We are not sure of where Ben was taken from there or what happened to him before he ended up on the streets where he was found.

Ben's behaviour tends to indicate that he has been physically and/or sexually abused and possibly prostituted. At one moment aggressive, street smart and violent and the next apologetic, smiling and singing, it is clear that he is trying to adjust to being in an environment where he can feel safe and protected.

The story of Ben is not an uncommon one. Some of our partner NGOs working exclusively with trafficked children reveal that they rescue 15-30 trafficked children from the port areas weekly. Children who are trafficked are often trained to work as dancers or prostitutes. Others become domestic helpers or work in factories. Nearly all of them, if not forcibly removed, like Ben, are lured by recruiters with false promises of money. All are paid very little or nothing and most are ill-treated, abused or work in dangerous conditions.

Bahay Tuluyan is looking at ways that we can help Ben find his family and also help other children who are the victims of child trafficking. In the meantime, Ben continues to keep life interesting as he learns to cope with the pain he is obviously experiencing and the affection he can't help but show.



Above: 'Ben', a 12 year old child who was found on the streets after having been trafficked from another part of the Philippines



Above: One of the new buildings

Below: Some children during training about the environment in the new conference center

## Bahay Tuluyan's new center

In a General Assembly of the children of Bahay Tuluyan several years ago, the children articulated their dream for a center for children where they can live and learn in a safe environment, away from the harsh, overcrowded and dangerous environment in Manila.

With some generous support from Swedish funders, this dream is close to being realized with the completion of Bahay Tuluyan's San Antonio Children's Center. This brand new center, constructed by BT in the past 12 months, currently houses 25 boys, with the capacity to house up to 50. In addition it has an organic farm and conference center facilities where we can provide training for the children and the community as well as generate income.

The center, 3 hours south of Manila, is located in a small village and surrounded by lush tropical forest. When they are not at school, the children swim in the river and help in the running of the organic farm. This environmental haven is a long way from the noise and pollution from Manila and life here provides a stark contrast to life on the street. For the children who live here, it is a place where they can grow, heal and develop... and the realization of a dream.



Some Junior Assistants 'helping out' in the office



### Contact details

If you would like to know more, please contact me at [cathscerri@hotmail.com](mailto:cathscerri@hotmail.com) or at Bahay Tuluyan-Kibo Children's Center, Barangay Masapang, Victoria, Laguna, Philippines or on 0011 63 917 827 6889.

For more information about bahay tuluyan, visit [www.bahaytuluyan.org](http://www.bahaytuluyan.org)