



Bahay Tuluyan Newsletter

December 2006

**Change the world.
Love children.**

Christmas greetings from the Philippines!

There has been much news in the several months since the last newsletter, some good, some bad.

In September the Philippines and particularly the areas where BT works were battered by Typhoon Milenyo which caused more than 200 deaths and much destruction. Although Bahay Tuluyan was spared, many of our neighbors have been affected. An antidote to this hardship was the triumph of the Philippines' boxing champion, Manny Pacquiao in his recent defense of his world featherweight title which united the country around their TV sets and brought much national pride.

Bahay Tuluyan continues to battle to protect and defend children, with some success, some failures, lots of laughs and tears along the way.

Merry Christmas & happy reading!

Catherine Scerri

The Great Fence Challenge

Put together 11,000 concrete blocks, 200 sacks of cement, 200 metres of unfenced property, 100 volunteers, 5 hours and 3 dozen eggs what do you get? Fortunately, more than some blisters and sunburn.

For Bahay Tuluyan this combination proved to be a winning one with close



Volunteers hard at work

to 200 meters of 8 foot high fence being con-

structed during 5 hours at our recent Fence Challenge.

In response to an urgent

need for a fence to secure Bahay Tuluyan's center in Victoria, Laguna, Glenda McNaught of Melbourne generously donated \$3,500 to buy materials for the fence. Eager to start building, Bahay Tuluyan made a call to local

schools, hospitals, businesses and groups to come and help in construction.

The response was overwhelming as volunteers showed up for the big event on 12 August, ready to get their hands dirty. With a great deal of teamwork, on the job training and lots of laughter a good percentage of the

fence was constructed before the event ended at lunchtime. A donation of Jollibee (Filipino fast food)



Passing concrete blocks

from a local doctor buoyed the celebrations as everybody sat back to admire their work.

The fence is nearly half constructed. A recent donation through the Australian Embassy has secured enough materials to start the next phase. The 2nd Great Fence Challenge

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RESCUE OR ARREST?

What is the difference between rescue and arrest? What happens when a 'rescuer' and a 'victim' don't see eye to eye about a rescue? If a 'victim' is taken, against his/her will and with legal authority, from a



dangerous situation, is this rescue or arrest?

Under the law for Special Protection for Children in the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has the authority to take into custody children that it considers are in "Circumstances which gravely threaten or endanger the survival and normal development of children" this includes living in the streets without the care of a parent or guardian.

On paper, this seems to be a

reasonable power to be given to an agency devoted to social welfare. Why is it then that when the rumors of a 'Rescue' (an operation run under the authority of this law) hit the street in Manila, children shake with fear, tremble and run for their lives?

Rescues take place fairly frequently in Manila. They generally involve a group of social workers and other 'rescue staff' driving around Manila and picking up children. Often ar-

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Farewell to a Friend

When I started writing this newsletter, I had planned to include an article about Ondoy, a 12 year old child who came to Bahay Tuluyan with his mother in June 2006 from the southern Philippines.

Ondoy was hoping to be able to have an operation in Manila to fix the holes in his heart. Ondoy had suffered from this illness since he was born; he had not been able to have surgery due to his family's poverty. After Ondoy's arrival at Bahay Tuluyan we worked with him and his mother to try and get him into surgery.

Some students from Our Lady of Nativity Primary School, Essendon (Melbourne) generously got behind the case and raised money to help this happen. Ondoy was blown away by the support shown to him and was looking forward to being well.

When I started writing this article, I was hoping to be able to report the success of the operation and Ondoy's quick recovery. However things don't always go as planned.

In the 5 months that Ondoy and his mother were in Manila, they experienced the cold reality of poverty as they encountered obstacle after obstacle in trying to access appropriate



Ondoy & his favorite pastime—drawing

treatment for Ondoy. As we were not able to pay for private medical care, Ondoy was treated as an indigent patient in the public health system.

Despite the fact that the Philippine Heart Center was specifically established as a specialist center for poor Filipinos, Ondoy, as an outpatient faced countless hardships in trying to access the system and complete the requirements necessary for his operation to proceed. Although his attending doctor said that he should be operated on immediately, once the doctor discovered that he would not be paying in cash but through sponsorship, the date for his operation was delayed.



Ondoy & Catherine Scerri

On 20 November, Ondoy went for a check up at another public hospital and he was admitted due to his deteriorating health condition. He passed away on 22 November without ever having his operation. He is survived by his 4 siblings, his parents and grandparents.

It has been an extremely sad time for Ondoy's family and for all of us at Bahay Tuluyan as we have said goodbye to our friend. Knowing that there are so many other children in his situation dying every day because they can't access medicine and technology which people living in developed countries take for granted, makes it even harder to deal with. Every child has the right to adequate health care and in this case the deprivation of such a right cost Ondoy his life.

We can only hope that Ondoy's death will serve as a reminder of the great need for us to stand up for the children who are oppressed and killed by poverty every day around the world.

Thank! you very much
the support and donation
and. God Bless you all

Love from  Ondoy?

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States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.

States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

Article 24(1) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Great Fence Challenge will take place on 16 December 2006. Oh and the eggs? They were made as an offering to St Clare, seeking her cooperation in holding off the rain. Worked perfectly, after a week of heavy rain, the sky cleared the day before and the rain didn't start again until everyone had gone home.

Parents learning about children's rights

For nearly 20 years Bahay Tuluyan has been providing alternative education to children, teaching them about their rights, their responsibilities and protection for children. It has seen this as a way of strengthening and empowering the community as a whole and creating a safer and happier place for children to live.

It is therefore surprising that only now Bahay Tuluyan has started extending this education to parents. In November Bahay Tuluyan held its first children's rights training for parents. Parents of children involved in Bahay Tuluyan's programs were invited to attend the 4 day seminar. During this seminar they explored the meaning of 'rights', the characteristics of children

and childhood, the issues facing children and special protection mecha-



Parents participating in workshop

nisms. It was a very meaningful and thoughtful exchange, with many parents commenting that this is the first opportunity that they have had to reflect on some of these concepts. For the final days of the workshop, the children joined their parents and spent time together in a positive and supportive environment. In a final ceremony, the children presented their parents with graduation certificates. For some families, where the parent had not made it past grade 3 in formal schooling, this was a momentous and tearful occasion. The whole event was considered to be very successful and it is hoped that further funding can be secured to extend the program.

RESCUE OR ARREST?

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driving around Manila and picking up children. Often areas to be targeted are pre-determined and sometimes quotas of how many children will be 'rescued' are set. Children who are identified as victims (and who haven't been able to run fast enough) are taken into custody by the DSWD, often against their will. Their destination is normally RAC, a DSWD shelter located in Manila.

In one of Bahay Tuluyan's more recent experiences of a 'Rescue', a 10 year old child was taken into RAC from the street, away from his mother and against his will. Upon being notified that he was being held in custody there the staff from Bahay Tuluyan visited the center, at which point he had been held in custody for nearly a week. At first query, it was difficult for the RAC staff to be able to give a clear answer about whether the child was even being held there. Eventually however he was located and ran to the BT staff in tears. He

had been locked in a room with many other boys, some much older than him. He had no bed and complained about the food that was served. He reported that the children were only given soap to use when visitors were expected. He was clearly traumatized and desperate to be free. In processing his papers for 'release', the staff of RAC were gathering the most basic biodata such as his name, birth-date and the names of his parents - this critical information being collected only 1 week after he, a 10 year old child, had been detained in custody for being a 'victim'. Needless to say he had not been provided with any therapeutic, educational or economic intervention during his stay.

The story of this child is not unique. In fact, he was lucky because there was somebody who was able and willing to come and have him released. The plaintive looks from those remaining behind, detained in crowded cells, as the child from Bahay Tuluyan departed, testify to his good fortune.

The reality of 'Rescues' as they currently take

Rescue - to free or deliver from confinement, violence, danger, or evil.
Arrest - to seize (a person) by legal authority or warrant; take into custody.

The reality of 'Rescues' as they currently take place in the Philippines are that they are oppressive, discriminatory and traumatic. They create fear in children and a distrust of authorities.

A well intentioned law has become a weapon of oppression and is working against the children that it should be serving. For in my opinion, as long as a child is taken, against his or her will and detained arbitrarily and in inhumane conditions, this is not a 'rescue' but an arrest, with dubious legal authority.

Catherine Scerri



Should these children be imprisoned?

CHILDREN UNITING FOR ADVOCACY

Bahay Tuluyan believes strongly in the role of children in the struggle for development and change. Accordingly it encourages children to become involved in advocacy activities and to express their views. It was therefore great news when, at the beginning of November 2006, Bahay Tuluyan's Youth Advocacy Group was formed – PILAK. PILAK, (meaning 'silver' in Tagalog) stands for 'Pinag Isang Lakas Ng Kabataan' or 'United Strength of Youth'. PILAK is comprised of approximately 20 young people who are graduates of Bahay Tuluyan's Alternative Education programs. The focus of its campaign for 2007 is on the forced rescue of street children by government agencies (see Rescue or Arrest?). The children / young people identified this as an issue affecting many children in their area, including some of the members of PILAK. They will be meeting early in 2007 to plan and develop their campaign.



Some children of Bahay Tuluyan participating in Alternative Education training

new housing FOR CHILDREN

Bahay Tuluyan is currently housing 80 children in its three centers. In its center in Laguna, the children are housed in an old building which was established by a Japanese NGO. The facilities are quite poor and not conducive for therapeutic care.

Accordingly, in 2004 Bahay Tuluyan had an appeal, through it Justcycle event in Australia, to raise money for new houses for the children. The response was fantastic with a great number of generous donations and enthusiastic fundraising efforts. Now finally these efforts are seeing fruition. The construction of 2 houses for children is nearly complete. With the completion of fencing around the center (see The Great Fence Challenge), 20 children will be able to move into the new housing. This is causing much excitement at Bahay Tuluyan and will be a great step forward for these children, some of whom have never lived in a real house before. We hope that the children

will be able to move into their houses early in 2007, in celebration of Bahay Tuluyan's 20th anniversary.



New houses for children – almost finished

Stop the Political Killings

There have been more than 700 documented cases of political killings in the Philippines during the term of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo which began in 2001. Many of those killed are people who have spoken against the government or stood up against human rights abuses.

This is a frightening situation that has fortunately drawn a great deal of international attention recently. Please become informed about this issue and add your voice to those who demand an end to the killings – campaigns are growing in various places around the world.

**HELP
WANTED**

Bahay Tuluyan desperately needs help establishing a database for the cases of the children in its care. If you, or someone you know, has the skill and time to help us to develop this, we would be extremely grateful!

Change the world.
Love children.

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children

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Bahay Tuluyan is a Filipino non government organization working with children in need of special protection.

Established in 1987, Bahay Tuluyan's vision is of a world where all children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. It bases all of its work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Bahay Tuluyan believes in the inherent capability of children to help themselves and promotes child participation in all areas of its work.

Bahay Tuluyan's main areas of work are in providing social services for children including shelter, and in Alternative Education, using a child-to-child approach. The organization is also involved in research, training and advocacy.

For more information, please visit our website—
www.bahay-tuluyan.org