

Celebrating Children's Rights

My AYAD assignment, as the Partnerships and Fundraising Officer with Non Government Organisation, Bahay Tuluyan, gave me the opportunity to manage aspects of the Children's Rights Festival in Manila. Bahay Tuluyan is committed to promoting, respecting and protecting children's rights and works mainly with street children, providing them with social services including food, medicine and shelter. 'Bahay' means house and 'tuluyan' is a place that provides temporary shelter, like an inn. The word 'tuluyan' originated from the root word 'tuloy' which means welcome.

The Children's Rights Festival aims to celebrate the equal role of all children and to improve children's knowledge about their rights, as well as to draw public attention to the pressing issues facing marginalised children in the Philippines.

Working in a new environment where I didn't speak the language or know a lot about Filipino culture was challenging - I struggled to visualise how Bahay Tuluyan had the resources to manage such a large event; quickly

I realised the innovation and the passion of the staff overcame whatever resources they lacked!

The festival ran on the 21st anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which coincides with Universal Children's Day. Around 2,500 children attended the festival, with 60 NGO partners, 600 volunteers and a number of corporate and media sponsors all contributing to the event's success.

The festival launch was exhilarating. Children took to the streets of Manila from five different points in the city all leading to the festival site and shouted out their rights in advocacy walks. Throughout the day children explored the festival booths or watched performances at the concert stage where various NGOs held performances relating to children's rights. The booths at the festival were divided into five different worlds, formed around the rights from the UNCRC: civil and political rights; family and alternative care; education, culture and leisure; health, nutrition and welfare; and special protection. One NGO ran a puppet show for children about their right to belong to a family.

Another booth focused on a child's right to an identity, including making identity cards for children, many of whom do not have a birth certificate or any form of identification.

We were successful in creating awareness about the festival through features in several newspapers and television programs and securing a range of corporate and media sponsors. While the event was successful, most fulfilling was hearing the laughter of the children on the festival day as they enjoyed the games, storytelling, face painting, drawing competitions and even cooking lessons offered at the festival. Bahay Tuluyan emphasises teaching children about their rights through games and activities rather than formal education methods. The highlight of the festival was the presentation of a book written by children from all over the Philippines about their rights. It was presented to Corazon Soliman, the Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary, and Vanessa Tobin, UNICEF country representative. My favourite entry was a message and drawing from one boy saying, "I want to become a scientist someday and I will invent a medicine for the poor. The medicine will be for free. I wish President

The entrance to the Health Nutrition and Welfare World at the festival



A performance on the stage at the festival by a group of children about their rights



Emil and colleagues

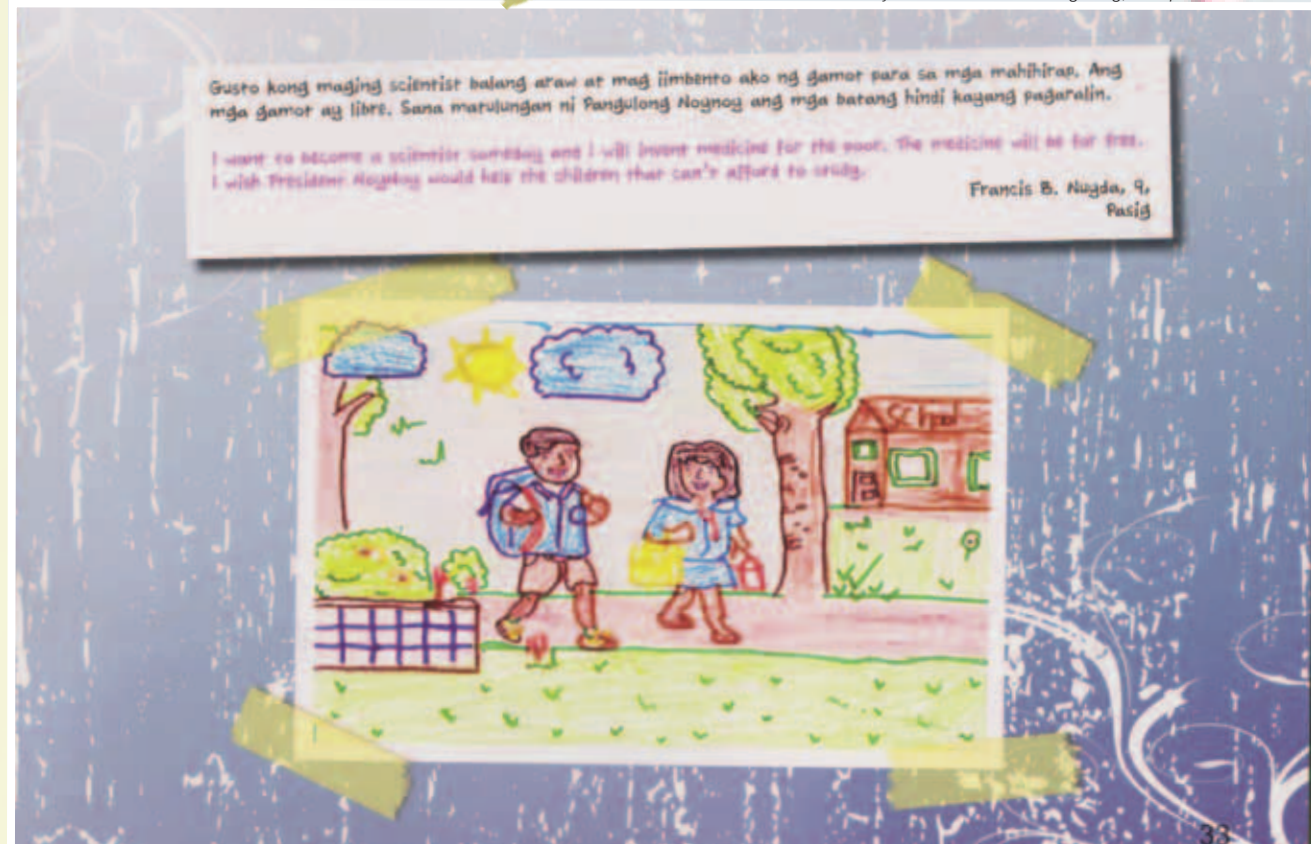


An entry from the book *Munting Tinig, Karapatan Nais Marining*

NoyNoy would help the children that can't afford to study".

After receiving the book, Secretary Solimon gave a response from President Aquino, reaffirming his commitment to children's rights in the Philippines. The book summed up the festival for me; an advocacy tool created by children campaigning for their rights in a personal and creative way.

At the end of the festival, children were given show bags containing essential items such as soap, lice shampoo and toothbrushes. I expected the children to be exhausted by the end of the day, but several asked if we could have a festival the next day as well! Despite the initial challenges of working for the festival, being part of managing an event that helped shape a brighter future for Filipino children made me appreciate further the reasoning for undertaking an AYAD position. I'm looking forward to more challenges and more successes in the year ahead.



Gusto kong maging scientist balang araw at mag iimbento ako ng gamot para sa mga mahihirap. Ang mga gamot ay libre. Sana marulungan ni Pangulong NoyNoy ang mga barang hindi kayang pagaralin.

I want to become a scientist someday and I will invent medicine for the poor. The medicine will be for free. I wish President NoyNoy would help the children that can't afford to study.

Francis B. Nuga, 9,
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