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My AYAD assignment, as the Partnerships and Fundraising Officer with Bahay Tuluyan, gave me the opportunity to manage aspects of Bahay Tuluyan's social enterprises, relaunch their website and manage the marketing and communications of several of their events including International Street Children's Day and the Children's Rights Festival.

While I enjoyed the challenges of working on the marketing and communications of Bahay Tuluyan, the biggest thrill I got was working directly with local children in Malate, Manila at small community events. Interacting with these children and also playing basketball regularly with youth facilitators of Bahay Tuluyan's mobile unit program gave me a real insight into Filipino culture. I loved being able to play basketball without actually being in a competition! The players were more interested in developing each other's skills and having fun than keeping score on who was winning. My lack of coordination and sporting skills were quickly forgiven at each game and I was always given two or three free shots to score some points. The sense of community and friendliness is reflected in so many aspects of Filipino society and these experiences with the local community made it easier to adjust to the lifestyle and culture of the country.

The most exciting experience I had volunteering with Bahay Tuluyan was managing the Children's Rights Festival. It was my first project at Bahay Tuluyan and 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 2,000 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. I was 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.

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. Ultimately my whole experience in volunteering with Bahay Tuluyan has been a satisfying one and I would encourage others to work in short term or long term assignments with the organization.

