

CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION CENTER PROJECT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1985, Children's Rehabilitation Center has been providing its clients with psycho social services to help them cope with traumatic experiences. It follows a certain process of therapy which includes three phases and these are: release-diagnostic phase, meaning construction and the last phase which is the cognitive mastery phase.

The release-diagnostic phase encourages the child to verbalize his/her thoughts and feelings towards his/her experience while the meaning construction phase allows the child to understand the context in which their traumatic experiences occurred. The third phase – cognitive mastery -- encourages him/her to develop positive coping mechanisms based on this understanding.

These phases of the psycho-social framework were used to provide psychosocial aid to children victims of displacement due to militarization, enforced disappearance, extra-judicial killings and political detention. The psychosocial activities conducted to children used art and incorporated theater skills to create an outlet for the children to easily express themselves creatively and use it as a positive coping mechanism.

The project has two components:

- a. Provision of immediate psychosocial aid to children victims of displacement due to militarization from Southern Tagalog. (Release-Diagnostic activities)
- b. Summer Workshop Activity (meaning construction activities)

IMMEDIATE PSYCHO SOCIAL AID TO INTERNAL REFUGEES FROM SOUTHERN TAGALOG

This year, CRC reached out to the internal refugees from Quezon who were forced to leave their homes due to intensified militarization. Since November of last year, internal refugees from Southern Tagalog specifically from the town of General Nakar and General Luna were victimized by military harassments and intimidation. Families of peasants and Agtas (indigenous people) had to endure being forcibly displaced from their homes and livelihood to survive the threats against their lives. Most of these individuals were forcibly being recruited into

becoming CAFGUs; were harassed and forced to admit that they are rebels; or their loved ones are suspected of being rebels, among others.

The sad part is the children suffer most from harassments done by the military. All the school-aged children were forced to stop schooling when they moved from one place to another until they found refuge in the sanctuary. The children got sickly due to constant stress and the new environment.

As a response to the increasing number of internally displaced families, CRC initially provided play activities to the children since they arrived in Manila last December. We were able to provide food and relief support for the families, as well as toys and other gifts, especially for the children during the Christmas season, with the help of individual supporters. But as it became clear that the prospects for their immediate return became dim, CRC planned its psycho-social intervention while the children are in the sanctuary. The main objective was to help in processing the experiences of the individuals particularly the children through psycho social interventions in the form of children’s activity.

The psychosocial release and diagnosis activities held at the sanctuary were participated in by 21 children. The activities focused on allowing the children to verbalize their thoughts and feelings regarding their situation. CRC used its ‘art as therapy’ activities to make it more enjoyable for the children.

ACTUAL THERAPY WORKSHOPS

| Date of Activity | Activity | # of children |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------|
| February 14, 2008 | Psychosocial release and diagnosis activity | 21 |
| February 20,2008 | Psychosocial release and diagnosis activity | 21 |
| February 21, 2008 | Psychosocial release and diagnosis activity | 21 |
| February 28, 2008 | Discussion on national situation and corruption | 21 |
| March 6, 2008 | Creative Arts as Therapy Workshop | 21 |
| April 3, 2008 | Creative Arts as Therapy Workshop | 21 |
| April 10, 2008 | Creative Arts as Therapy Workshop | 21 |
| April 16, 2008 | Creative Arts as Therapy Workshop | 21 |
| April 29, 2008 | Closing Activity | 21 |

CRC was able to conduct nine activities to the internally displaced children of Southern Tagalog for three months. The activities mainly focused on allowing the child to ventilate his/her emotions regarding his/her situation and remember particular events which caused him/her unpleasantness.

A. Psychosocial Activities

I. The Activity

The therapy workshops aimed to provide immediate psychosocial aid to the children victims of displacement due to militarization also known as the internal refugees.

The objectives of the activity are:

1. To gather data/background information regarding the child and his/her family.
2. To know the present condition of the children victims and their families.
3. To know the negative effects of displacement on the children and their coping mechanism towards the incident.

II. The Facilitators

The activity was facilitated by CRC and PAECCD (Parents' Alternative for Early Child Care and Development) PAECCD activities were facilitated by pre-school/day care teachers for pre school aged children while CRC conducted activities for children 8 years old and above.

The two foreign volunteers of CRC from Australia and The Netherlands also assisted in facilitating activities and in the photo-documentation of the activities.

III. The Participants

The participants of the workshop were the internal refugees from Southern Tagalog who were displaced from their homes due to militarization. An average of 21 children attended the children's activity.

Most of the children came from Laguna, Cavite and Quezon. Their parents are usually organizers or active members of organizations who advocates peasant's/worker's rights. The parents or relatives of these children were accused as members of the rebel group because of their advocacy and nature of work. They had to flee home in order to avoid harassments and further threat from military offensives deployed in their communities.

IV. Time and Place of the Activity

There were nine therapy workshops provided to the internal refugee children at the sanctuary from February to March 2008.

V. The Outcome

The psychosocial activities enabled the facilitators to establish rapport with the children. Activities like "family tree", "My most unforgettable experience" and "community mapping" were conducted to the children. They were able to share their personal experiences to the group and express their thoughts and feelings mostly through the visual arts activities.

Based on the result of the release/diagnosis workshop activities, at their young age, these children could hardly do things that kids normally do like playing outside freely and attend classes at school after because of their situation. The children strongly expressed their desire to go back to their place and live a normal life. They also verbalized their angst towards the military people who accused their parents of being rebels. Most of them developed fear from weapons and the military-looking people such as males with crew cut hair/army haircut. They became extremely wary of the people they interact with especially those whose faces were unfamiliar to them. This also meant that going to new places was very uncomfortable for them.

These children easily adjusted to their new environment with the help of the children whom they made friends with inside the sanctuary. They laugh, play and even fight with each other during activities just like other kids do. The group sharing during activities helped them a lot to understand each other's experiences and realize that they have the same experiences.

There was also a discussion regarding the national situation of the country particularly the corruption issue that emerged early February of this year. The facilitator allowed the children to identify and realize the effects of corruption on them. The discussion prepared them for the activities held the following months. They were able to attend various events such as those initiated by Children Act Now, the Children speak out Against Corruption, the Children's Kadang-kadang March and the Easter Truth Hunt.

Despite the ongoing activities on the corruption issue, the internal refugee children continued to have therapy workshops using art activities at the sanctuary. It allowed CRC to sustain the therapy activities given to them from the beginning.

In the beginning of April, the organization handling the internal refugees from Quezon could no longer sustain the sanctuary due to financial difficulties. Thus, the families are slowly being deployed to communities at the start of April. As part of their culminating activity, CRC brought the children to the Children's Museum (Museo Pambata) and the National Museum. The children enjoyed their trips as they toured the museums. They became curious about the things they

saw on the museum and enjoyed manipulating the toys and other interactive exhibits in the museums. However, they enjoyed most playing at the playground outside the museum. It was very evident how the children missed open spaces for playing after being cramped in a sanctuary for several months.

After the museum visit, the children went back to the sanctuary for their last activity with CRC. The activity highlighted their feelings towards their departure from the sanctuary and their plans after the departure. All of them expressed their sadness over their departure since they do not know what will happen to them after. They could not help but be sad especially at the thought of being separated from their friends at the sanctuary.

However, most of them also wished to start a new life and eventually attend school again in their new community while some wished to stay at the sanctuary since they were still afraid of what will happen to their family and thought of being possibly harassed again by the military.

As part of CRC's therapy, the facilitators explained to the children that the different organizations who helped them within the past few months would still continue to monitor them and that their departure from the sanctuary would be just a start of a new life ahead of them.

At the end of the activity, the children positively took the challenge of starting a new life again with their family.

VI. What were the constraints?

The place where the activities were conducted is the main constraint of the activity. At first, there were too many distractions on the activity room due to the number of people who goes in and out of the activity room. It cannot be helped because the participants were not the only ones who stay in the sanctuary but there are also other people living there.

The activities were limited indoors because there was very little space to do outdoor activities. Bringing the children outdoors for activities would entail much logistical and financial problems so the activities were intentionally designed for indoors. However, outdoor activities and tours were intermittently planned to enable the children to play freely at least once a month.

SUMMER WORKSHOP

The summer workshop provided the children a venue where they can have a deeper understanding of their situation and the issues confronting them on a basic level. It intended to deepen the awareness of the children on social issues in relation to the political, economic and socio cultural situation of the country. The activities incorporated in this workshop were meaning construction activities which focused on identifying the child's coping mechanism and allowing the child to realize the root cause of his/her experience and understand its occurrence.

The participants of the summer workshop were the internal refugees who underwent psychosocial activities focusing on release-diagnosis. The summer workshop was implemented for seven days from May 18, 2008 to May 24, 2008. Nineteen children attended the summer workshop held at Gabriela Silang Folk School, Antipolo City, a project of the Gabriela Women's Partylist and the City of Antipolo. The activity was mainly funded by the Philippine Advocacy through Arts and Culture.

PREPARATORY STAGE

Center Based Workshop

The target participants of the workshop attended a center based activity on May 14, 2008 in preparation for the upcoming summer workshop. Their discussion focused on national issues and how it will affect them.

Junior Facilitator's Orientation

A separate workshop was also conducted to the children who were able to attend the year 2007 summer workshop. These children were mainly children of Desaparecidos and Moro detainees in Bicutan. The workshop aimed to equip them with knowledge and skills as junior facilitators. During the orientation, specific tasks and roles were given to them after the module for the summer workshop was discussed. They acted as the "*Ates*" and "*kuyas*" (older sisters and brothers) of the family teams formed during the workshop.

Module Discussion

As for the main facilitators of the workshop, a module discussion was conducted to review the contents of the module and how it will be implemented to the

participants. It also served as a review if the module was still appropriate to the participants of the workshop.

ACTUAL WORKSHOP

The participants of the summer workshop arrived at the venue on the afternoon of May 18, 2008 giving them time to settle their things on the assigned rooms. A brief orientation of the place was given to the children in order to familiarize them with the facilities and the activity areas. The objective of the summer workshop was discussed with the children including the rules to be followed for the seven day workshop in order to observe safety and discipline.

During the first day, the children played different games for their rapport building activity. It helped a lot in making them feel more comfortable with each other since all of them will be staying under one roof for a week.

A video presentation was also shown to the children explaining the programs and services that CRC provides to its clients. Most of them can relate to the video presentation because they were able to experience some of the activities being provided by CRC.

As an introduction activity, the children were grouped in pairs for the life sharing activity. They were able to share their personal experiences with one another and know each other's background. Although some of them were a bit hesitant at first in sharing personal experiences, the facilitator gave them freedom and enough time to say what is just comfortable for them to share. As a result, all of them were able to talk about personal things which enabled them to develop a feeling of trust and sense of belongingness with one another.

The children participated in various activities such as charades (that focused on the classes in the society) where the children were asked to differentiate rich from the poor by identifying the material things they use. It was also during the first day when the children had a discussion on the situation of the farmers and workers in the Philippines. They played the peasant's life board game (an original board game created by CRC) in which they were given different situations by the game facilitator depending on the card situation they choose after rolling the dice. These were the situations experienced by farmers in real life. In this activity, the junior facilitators were assigned with roles such as land owners, private guards and bank officer to make the situation realistic. Most of the participants were peasant children who witnessed the harassments done by land owners to their parents, experienced being accused as members of the rebel group by the military and experienced the unfair sharing of the land's harvest between the peasant/tenants and the landlords. They were the ones who seriously reacted with the given situation.

An activity called the worker's life was also implemented during the first day wherein the children are placed inside a dark room with all the windows closed. Cardboards for box making and glues were placed on the two long tables. The facilitators made sure that the children will feel uncomfortable inside the room to stimulate a factory-like atmosphere where workers usually do their job. The facilitators and junior facilitators acted as a factory owner, supervisor, private guard and admin personnel who are the main perpetrators of abuse among the factory workers.

Some of the children looked surprised with the sudden change of attitude shown by the facilitators since they are already portraying their specific roles in the activity. Most of them reacted negatively about the tasks being asked of them and felt maltreated especially when the facilitators who acted as factory supervisors disapproved of their finished products. Some of the girls even walked out of the activity when the second session was about to begin. Thus, group processing came in after the activity. The processing allowed each child to express his/her emotions towards the activity. Most reactions were negative particularly on the facilitators who acted as supervisors. On the other hand, the facilitators had a chance to explain that it was all part of the activity and nothing personal during the group processing. The facilitators made sure that all participants understood that the worker's activity only implies the real situation of the workers and how they are being exploited and maltreated by their supervisors.

The second day of the summer workshop was intended as an exposure trip to the peasant's community in Montalban, Rizal. The exposure trip was facilitated by AMIHAN and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP). In relation to the peasant's life board game, the children had an actual interaction with farmers through the exposure trip.

The children listened attentively to the local farmers as they narrate their life long struggle to preserve and protect the land they cultivate from big corporations and influential families who are claiming the area. Even then, the community people were still fighting for their land rights against its different claimants.

After the community orientation, the children were divided into three groups. Each group toured the harvest area of the local farmers and participated in harvesting crops such as rice, yam bean (singkamas), watercress, santol and other root crops. They were able to interview the local farmers on how they cope with everyday life and the issues confronting them.

The third day was intended for the children's exposure on the worker's life. They had their exposure at Philec, a Filipino owned company and is part of the Lopez group of companies that manufactures products like power transformer and distribution transformer. It is located at Tikling, Taytay, Rizal. The exposure was facilitated by the local union under the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) Rizal Chapter. The children were given a brief orientation by the union leader in Philec who also discussed the hardships and struggle of the workers to obtain their benefits. They waited for a long time before the management heard their pleas. Through hard work and perseverance, they were able to get what they want.

After the orientation, they were able to tour inside Philec to see the daily routine of the workers. Unfortunately, cameras are not allowed inside the working area. Vitamins and snacks were given to the children by the management. As a gesture of gratitude, the internally displaced children sang some of their well known songs to the management of Philec. Their song narrates the hardships they underwent due to militarization.

On the fourth day, the children were able to express their thoughts, feelings and insights regarding the two day interaction with the farmers and workers. The children shared the stories they heard from the people they interacted with. Mostly, the stories are on the workers and peasants struggle to defend their rights especially for fair wage, benefits for the workers and equal distribution of harvest between landlords and tenants. According to an internal refugee kid, the land is heavily concentrated in the hands of a few landlords while a great number of peasants are landless. The sad part is, most of the farmers do not own the land they till and they are even exploited by greedy landlords who do nothing but sit and make money out of someone's hard work. The workers on the other hand, work longer than their usual working hours but are not properly compensated.

They even have to wait for years to get their benefits from the company just like what happened in Philec. A discussion regarding the country's political situation affecting primarily the farmers and workers were given to the children. With this, the children were able to articulate their views and ideas on the real situation of the country. They can now relate their experiences with the country's political situation since the discussion focused on how individuals are affected with the country's political situation. One of them shared that her father and brother was abducted because of political beliefs. Until now, their family is hoping that her brother and father are still alive. The internally displaced children verbalized that the military could not take hold of their real enemies that is why they harass innocent civilians like them instead.

The children had a solidarity night during the last night of the summer workshop. It was a night for the children to show off their talents and bid each other goodbye. The children actively participated on the event by presenting the short play that they created during the previous days. On the other hand, the internally displaced children from Quezon performed a song number about their experiences as victims of militarization.

The last day of the summer workshop focused on the contribution of the children to their society amidst the worsening poverty, increasing human rights violations and depressing political situation of the country. According to them, their response to the country's situation is to participate in protest actions particularly on issues affecting them as peasant's and worker's children. They also aspire to become advocates of child rights in their own community by forming a theater group that will show the real situation of the masses. All of these are shown in their short plays where they aggressively demonstrate their wish to stop violence and human rights violations.

The workshop ended successfully because the children are really interested to learn. They enjoyed being independent for a while and wished to extend their stay at the folk school since all of them made new friends at the workshop. Nevertheless, their summer workshop experience was something they would always cherish and look back at CRC.

Problems encountered

Since the venue of the workshop was only visited once, it was never foreseen by the facilitators that the surrounding area will become a major problem for the vehicle. The rain kept pouring down heavily during the one week summer workshop causing the land soil to become softer than it was before. There was an instance where CRC's vehicle got stuck because of the muddy road especially on the day of the exposure trip. Luckily, an alternative vehicle was rented to continue the exposure trip and we were able to retrieve our main vehicle.

Conclusions and recommendations

The summer workshop allowed the children to understand the country's political, economic and socio-cultural situation. It helped them realize and identify the root cause of their unpleasant experiences and have a deeper understanding on the kind of society they have at present. Moreover, it became a therapy for the children since they were able to express themselves more openly to a bigger group and verbalize their opinions on certain discussions of the workshop. Most of all, they were able to identify their contributions to the society as a child. Not

only did they establish new friendships during the workshop but they also formed a support group as well. The concluded summer workshop is greatly recommended in facilitating the healing process of children victims.

ORPHAN SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Orphan Support Program of the Children's Rehabilitation Center started in 1994 to provide support to children-victims of human rights violations whose parent/s is/are killed or missing or unable to perform their parental roles and obligations due to detention or imminent threat to life.

Support is given in the form of educational assistance or scholarships, nutritional assistance especially for malnourished children, and medical assistance for children who needs regular medication for chronic illnesses. Assistance for hospitalization is also given on a case to case basis.

This year, with the help from our friends in PATAC, orphan support program provided nutritional, educational assistance and educational materials to CRC clients. For the first six months a total of six (6) children were provided with nutritional assistance. Aside from this, they were also given educational support and materials this includes school expenses and school supplies. The next six months four (4) children were added as beneficiaries and were provided with nutritional assistance. A total of ten (10) children were supported for the whole year. Aside from this, we also provided educational materials to children in different communities in Manila and our other clients in the regions.

The beneficiaries age ranges from 4- 17 years old and are from Southern Tagalog (Quezon and Rizal), Bicol, and Manila. All of them are attending school and mostly in grade school, two of which are in a special school and undergoing therapy. A regular communications with them keep us in touch on their condition and activities that they are busy with. Last October, Manila based beneficiaries participated our center based weekend activities in line with the celebration of children's month.