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Final evaluation report executive summary

Support program for the sustainable
socio-family and socio-professional
integration of street children.

Open Day Centre (ODC)

Bacolod City, Negros, Philippines.

ETM/KDW – Virianie Foundation Inc.

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1 General findings and responses to evaluation questions

1.1. Relevance

The target beneficiaries are:

- Children on the street (working, with home)
- Children of the street (abused and runaway children)
- Children in the street (orphans, abandoned children)
- Children in conflict with the law (CICL)
- Most vulnerable children (at risk...)

Interviews carried out with children and youth show that they appreciate the empathy, respect and support they receive from the ODC in a social context that is reluctant to understand and address their difficulties and that treats them as if they themselves were responsible for their painful situation.

The program seeks to provide adequate responses to an acute social problem recognized as a priority by the public authorities of Bacolod city and the representatives of the neighbourhoods (Barangay) of this city. It is on those bases that the program can be considered to have a high degree of relevance.

1.2 Effectiveness

1.2.1 Result 1: A day centre for street and vulnerable children is created in Bacolod.

Indicator 1: infrastructures

A relatively large day centre has been fitted out in a building located in the centre of Bacolod City. This building was purchased and renovated with the program funds to cater for the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

The centre includes the following premises, equipment and services: classroom, kitchen, laundry, meeting room, offices, sanitary facilities: showers and toilets, multi-purpose hall, reception hall, dormitory for temporary urgent needs with 8 beds (4 boys, 4 girls), storage room.

There are leaks in the roof at several places. Some flashings and fascia planks are in bad condition. Repairs should be carried out to avoid further damage. The use of roof as hanging gardens should be avoided as it damages the roof.

Indicator 2: competent and functional staff

Competences and organization of the team

The team consists of an operational unit (social work, street work, education, health care, etc.) and a support unit (finance, administration, logistics, etc.). As far as the evaluator can tell, the team members were competent and committed to their work

Composition of the team

The composition of the team has changed a lot over the 5 years of the programme. Useful changes were made following the interim evaluation. These changes seem to have been carried out very quickly, which has somewhat destabilized the team in place. (For more details, see below under the heading: what problems had the programme to cope with?)

The team was never fully complete as various functions remained vacant. It has undergone a significant turnover, the latest manifestation of which is the extreme reduction of the team at time

of the evaluation. In-depth reflection should be carried out to retain the workers who will implement the second phase of the programme.

Capitalization of know-how

Workers have a job description associated with their contract and ODC has an operation manual. However, it appears that this document is not sufficient to guide workers precisely in their activities. It would therefore be appropriate to analyse previous practices and experiences in education, vocational training, and social work (internal or external) in order to identify those that are successful and those that are not. On this basis, detailed operational guides should then be developed. These detailed operational guides would make it possible to capitalize on what has been learnt, to pass it on easily to new team members and to avoid the loss of know-how when a worker leaves.

Indicator 3: the centre is functional and environmentally sustainable

COVID pandemic

The degree of functionality of the centre has varied according to the COVID epidemic and the measures taken by the Philippine government in this area. Most of the activities had to be externalized as it was not possible to gather children and youths in the centre for social support, educational or recreational activities or to provide them with concrete support such as food, shelter, health, and hygiene care. Most of the activities had to be carried out on the field in the streets, families, and communities (Barangay).

Staff turnover and vacation

The staff turnover and the vacation of certain functions (mainly health service and independent living programme coordinator) has certainly reduced the effectiveness of the programme. Special attention should be given to these issues.

Environment

The centre does not cause any obvious damage to the environment.

1.2.2 Result 2: Street children and vulnerable young people of Bacolod have access to primary rights through the different services set up by the Centre.

All the indicators have been reached

- Indicator 1: 891 beneficiaries received internal support.
- Indicator 2: 585 beneficiaries received medical, psychological, administrative, and legal support
- Indicator 3: 361 beneficiaries received specialized support (addiction, sexual health...)

The COVID 19 pandemic and the particularly rigorous measures taken by the Philippine authorities had strong effects on the implementation of the programme.

From March 2020 to July 2020.

This period was characterised by a total lock down, severe mobility restrictions, closure of the ODC and minimal activities only in case of emergency.

From July 2020 to October 2020.

Gathering and physical contact activities were strictly forbidden. Nevertheless, reopening of the centre was possible again with scheduled visits and a lot of precautions (mask wearing, disinfection of the hands...) and regulations (social distancing...). Limited operations took place outside the centre: home visits, field work and street work, tutorial classes in the barangays, and, as already

mentioned above, 25 children were brought back to their families to prevent children from staying on the street, which was forbidden at this time.

The “Household project” funded by the Belgian ambassador and his colleagues provided material support, including food, to children and their families who were deprived of income by being forced to stay at home.

From October 2020 to March 2022

Restrictions became more permissive but the constant daily changes in the rules and erratic evolving regulations have been a major obstacle to the implementation of activities. In addition, some ODC’s staff were reluctant to restart activities at their normal rhythm because they feared to contract the virus. Individualized approach outside the centre was maintained and gathering in small groups (8-10) were allowed in the ODC. On-the-job training restarted.

Schools have been closed since the beginning of the epidemic. There was no face-to-face teaching from March 2020 to the time of the evaluation, April 2022. The Philippine state has implemented a modular and remote learning system. Printed modules are distributed to students who are expected to study them at home. Tutorial teaching was implemented by the teacher of ODC in the Social Development Centre, the buildings of the Barangays or private houses to support children and youth in the understanding and study of the modules.

The pandemic had also effects on the health care since the fear of being tested positive for COVID 19 and of the resulting stigma and quarantine requirement have led a part of the population to refuse medical consultations and care, even in case of illness. In addition, a remote consultation system called “on line doctor”, based on a picture of the patient and telephone conversations, has been set up to treat patients without contact with doctors.

From April 2022

Considering the favourable evolution of the epidemic, the government sets new rules that are more flexible than before, but maintains restrictions, notably for travel between cities or provinces. All these new rules together define a situation called "New Normal" by the country's authorities.

1.2.3 Result 3: 400 vulnerable children are referred and follow an education or training program for their socio-professional reintegration.

All the indicators have been reached

- Indicator 1: 487 beneficiaries have been given education
- Indicator 2: 268 beneficiaries have improved their educational and individual development
- Indicator 3: 202 beneficiaries have completed their technical or vocational training
- Indicator 4: success rate of trained youth = 78 %

Alternative learning system (ALS)

ODC is recognized as an ALS operator and organizes this internally but also in the SDC. ODC's support for beneficiaries passing the final ALS test appears to be particularly effective as they have a 100 % success rate. This excellent result must be tempered, however, because it refers exclusively to young people who presented the exams, without taking into account those who started the ALS programme but dropped out along the way and did not pass the exams.

Educational support

The centre organises several types of internal and external education services. Tutorial classes support young people who are in high school or involved in the Alternative Learning System

managed by the state. A Basic Literacy programme exists for those who have not the required level to attend high school or Alternative Learning System.

Teaching during the pandemic

Schools are closed because of the pandemic, only teachers are present. For the same reason, ALS teachers no longer come to teach at the ODC. The education is provided through modules developed by the Department of Education for the students. The teacher coordinator of ODC organized tutorial-modular classes on the field (in the Barangays and SDC) to help children and youths to understand the content of the modules (modular lessons).

Independent living programme (ILP)

If family reunification is not possible, efforts are made to enable young people to lead a dignified and autonomous life with their own source of income and own housing.

The ILP is intended to give vulnerable young people or those coming from the street or SDC the needed skills for their social integration: social skills, professional skills, literacy... It seems that 11 youths have succeeded to become autonomous and have an independent life. This is both a lot in terms of personal successes and not much if one considers that the programme has been running for 5 years.

The programme had about two successes per year. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the autonomy process carried out by ODC and the methods that have been used. The effects of the pandemic and the fact that the position of coordinator of the independent living programme was never occupied must be considered to explain this situation. However, A comprehensive analysis of the reunification process should be carried out to improve its efficacy.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Partnerships have been developed with vocational training centres to enable young people with the required level of education to acquire professional skills (cooking, restaurant service, room service in hotels, housekeeping, massage, electricity, welding...). These trainings are promoted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) supported by the Philippine government, which provides scholarships and other support (including loans) to financially disadvantaged students. Access to these courses is, however, conditioned by success in high school or in the alternative learning system (ALS).

Children and young people with family and social breakdowns who have been living on the streets for long periods of time and have not followed a normal schooling trajectory are unlikely to benefit from the TESDA system because of the access restrictions it imposes. It therefore seems necessary to develop a vocational training which is specifically designed for this particular group.

1.2.4 Result 4: Collaboration and complementarity between local actors working for the rights of children are strengthened

All the indicators have been reached

- Indicator 1: 49 exchange sessions with partners
- Indicator 2: satisfaction rate of partners: 88,75 %

The ODC has established partnerships with various private and public organizations and has good relations with the Philippine authorities, notably the Head of Department of Social Services and Development (DSSD) of Bacolod City, the Captain of Barangay 18, the Head of the Social Development Centre (SDC), the City Health Centre of Bacolod (CHCB). Partnership does also exist with organizations likely to house beneficiaries for long periods: Missionaries of Charity and Kid's Delight and Kalipay for

example. ODC also has partnerships with quite effective vocational training centres: Visayan Maritime Academy (VMA) and ATONIA e.g.

1.2.5 Specific objective

The evaluator has no reason to contest the data presented in the ODC's 2021 activity report. However, for both the specific objective and the four results, the indicators are mostly quantitative and, for many of them, do not provide information on the content and quality of the services and care provided to beneficiaries. However, the meetings that took place during the evaluation with the beneficiaries (children, youths, and their families), the programme partners (health care centres, vocational training centres, shelters, etc.) and the Bacolod City public authorities show that the qualitative aspects of care were duly included in the activities of the centre.

It would be useful to complement the quantitative indicators with more qualitative ones. Furthermore, the indicators should not measure the activities carried out by the project but rather the effects of these activities on the beneficiaries and the positive changes produced in their life conditions.

In addition to the qualitative aspects, it is also recommended to apply the SMART criteria to the indicators of a possible future programme. The indicators have to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bounded.

1.3 Efficiency

The program management seems to have been quite efficient. Staff members had contracts with a job description and a code of conduct. There is an accounting manual. Expenses are made either by cash after bank withdrawal or by cheques. There is a physical petty cash box and a book that records the advances given to staff. A cash book is encoded on an excel file. Application documents must be completed by the applicant and validated by the management staff for each expense.

1.4 Sustainability

The program has established useful relationships with local authorities, private partners and various stakeholders active in the childhood sector. Despite this continuity factor, sustainability remains uncertain since funding from ETM / Belgian Government stays the only one that ODC has, excepted a few minor local gifts, most often in kind.

The resignation of most of the team members is also an unfavourable factor for the sustainability of the programme, which has lost the knowledge acquired by these workers both in the field of social action and in the administration and finance sector.

1.5 Impact

The meetings that took place during the final evaluation with children, young people and their families, with ODC's partners and with representatives of the public authorities show that ODC's interventions in the period 2017-2021 have had positive effects and make it possible to confirm, at the end of the 5 years of the programme, most of the impacts already identified during the intermediate evaluation carried out in January 2020.

The program has a proven positive impact on:

- Children and young people who participate in ODC activities (leisure activities, information sessions about STD's, sexual abuse, drug addictions ...)
- Children and young people who benefit from the services provided by ODC (health care, personal hygiene, dental care, distribution of clothing, food, etc.)

- Children and young people who are involved in educational activities (basic literacy level, tutorial classes for elementary school and high school, Alternative Learning System) organized by ODC
- Poor families and their children (mediation and family reintegration)
- Young people invested in the Independent Living Program, although this must be amplified (TVET, temporary accommodation)
- Children in conflict with the law (CICL) in care at SDC and RRCY (after care program)
- Respect for children's rights in the social environment in which the centre is located (although there is, strictly speaking, no awareness raising of the population)

2 Conclusions

The main conclusion of the mid-term evaluation remains valid at the end of the 5-year programme. The data collected show that the indicators of the results and specific objective are mostly achieved. The consultation of the available documents (project file, reports, indicator monitoring tool, etc.), the data collected during individual or group interviews as well as the visits made during the evaluation process make it possible to give a globally positive opinion on the operation of the program.

The program offers a wide range of services well adapted to the care of children and young people in extremely vulnerable situations. The social services of the Open Day Centre (ODC) provide administrative and legal support, meet basic needs of children, promote family reunification and prepare young people for an independent living. The health services are concerned with physical and mental health issues, addictions and reproductive health. In the educational field, ODC organises literacy activities and tutorial classes. The centre is also involved in the alternative learning system (ALS) implemented by the Philippine government. Partnerships with training centres have been established to enable young people to undertake vocational training in different crafts (e.g. cooking, electricity, welding).

From March 2020, the COVID 19 epidemic and the particularly drastic and evolving measures taken by the Philippine government to control the spread of the disease had a significant impact on the implementation of the programme. The mobility restrictions have made street work more complex and limited it to emergency situations. The gathering prohibition obviously reduced the frequentation of the centre. The arrival of the beneficiaries in the centre was subjected to strict schedules and rules (limited attendance, hand washing, mask wearing, social distancing). The centre's activities continued with adjustments and reduced rhythm. Teaching activities, for instance took place on the field, meeting students in their environment to help them to follow the modular education introduced by the state to compensate the closure of schools since March 2020.

A major problem of the programme was the high turnover of the staff and the incompleteness of the team. The latest manifestation of this difficulty is the presence of a team reduced to 4 individuals financed from ETM's own funds at the time of the evaluation. Most of the staff having resigned without waiting for the arrival of funding from the DGD, which is quite understandable. Although very difficult to solve given the lack of competent social workers and the widespread instability of the staff, this issue must be addressed to ensure the continuity of the programme's actions and to preserve the acquired knowledge.

The other challenge concerns the sustainability of the program because the ODC has no funds of its own and does not benefit from significant local support. In other words, the center depends at present totally and exclusively on Belgian funding to ensure its survival.

The relatively small number of young people who have been brought into independent living and family reunification show that an in-depth investigation must be carried out on the ODC's practices in

these areas in order to improve their effectiveness and to specify their modalities in a practical guidebook.

Although some ODC beneficiaries are already involved in vocational training, some others do not have access to such training because they do not have the required certificates or diplomas. It would be useful, if the financial means are available, to organize specifically for them vocational training that does not require any prerequisites.

3 Recommendations

All the recommendations come directly from the findings made during the evaluation. In order to gain readability, the recommendations are grouped by topic. Some of the recommendations made at the mid-term evaluation are still valid at the end of the programme. Where this is the case, the recommendations are maintained as they were.

3.1 General Recommendations

- Focus on the results of activities rather than on the activities themselves. What matters is not what you do or the means you use (if they are efficient and ethically acceptable) but the positive changes you produce in the social sphere.
- To this purpose, introduce qualitative monitoring indicators and improve content and meaning of quantitative indicators.
- Ensure capitalization of useful experience for the future of ODC and its sustainability.

3.2 Recommendations about the infrastructures of the ODC

- Repair the roof of the Centre
- Stop growing crops in the hanging garden on the roof of the centre as it damages it.

3.3 Recommendations about human resources

- The current team of 4 people is totally insufficient to carry out the centre's activities. Therefore, new staff must be recruited quickly. With the departure of almost all the social workers, most of the knowledge and skills acquired are lost. New workers will have to be trained. Unfortunately, this means restarting from the beginning.
- Analyse the causes of staff turnover and ensure staff stability.
- If it is not possible to hire a health officer, train ODC staff to identify the most common health problems, to provide basic care and to refer beneficiaries to the appropriate health care facilities.
- Consider the interest of integrating a psychologist in the ODC team to cope with addiction or mental health issues.
- If it is not possible to hire a psychologist, give the ODC team the basic knowledge to deal with addiction and mental health problems.

3.4 Recommendations for improving social work

- Improve and detail the management flow chart which describes the procedures that must be followed for taking care of beneficiaries (capitalization of useful experience for the future of ODC and its sustainability)
- Identify the most successful practices, determine interventions accordingly and include them in a practical operational guidebook for social workers (in the broad sense of the term),

- Develop a practical operational guidebook for each type of social intervention: street work, reunification, health care, independent living, literacy, etc.
- Precisely define the process of street working
- Improve and detail the procedures that must be followed for taking care of beneficiaries.
- Document the family reintegration and socio-professional integration processes for children and young people in order to capitalize (retain, preserve) the knowledge acquired and the most appropriate practices.
- Collectively produce a detailed socio-anthropological analysis of the causes of family breakdown and street living in order to refine the intervention methods.
- Submit the methods applied by the ODC social team to critical and collective reflection in order to refine the intervention methods.

3.5 Recommendations related to family reunification process.

- Intensify actions leading to sustainable family reunification
- Precisely define the mediation process leading to children family reintegration.
- Precisely define the follow-up process for children reintegrated into their families.
- Ensure regular follow-up of children reintegrated into their families.
- Provide support for poor families who agree to reintegrate a child (school fees, school supplies, transportation fares, income-generating activities)
- Define and record the criteria for successful family reunification.

3.6 Recommendations related to the Independent Living Program

- As soon as possible:
 - o Recruit and hire rapidly an ILP coordinator.
 - o Identify the causes of ILP failure and define how to make the process more effective.
 - o Precisely define the steps of the process leading to an autonomous and dignified life for young people
 - o Define the criteria for a successful independent living
 - o Remain realistic and not give false hopes of school and social success to the young people who participate in ILP and ALS
- Over the long term and according to the means available:
 - o Create a larger transitional accommodation centre (shelter) to allow a transition between life on the street and a dignified and socially integrated existence.
 - o Another temporary solution could be to rent rooms or supervised flats available for youths in transition to independent and dignified living.
 - o Develop non-formal TVET for youngsters involved in ILP (Because it seems very unlikely that all beneficiaries will succeed in the ALS and access TESDA vocational trainings)
 - o Complement the apprenticeship with a minimum training on calculation, writing and reading as well as on the acquisition of essential professional knowledge and basic notions related to the management of a micro-enterprise.
 - o Hire competent trainers for each training course and provide them with training programs (curricula) validated at least by the ODC and if possible, by the Ministry in charge of vocational training.

3.7 Recommendations related to the educational services

- The teacher working in the ODC Staff is active in different educational levels. It seems to be a lot. Basic literacy teaching, for instance, needs specific skills totally different from those of secondary

level education. As far as possible, it would be useful to separate the levels of education and entrust them to different persons specialized in each level.

- The school support work (tutorial classes) carried out in the field during the pandemic and up to the time of the evaluation seems to be appreciated by the children and their families and therefore deserves to be continued.

3.8 Recommendations related to health services

- Strengthen and expand partnerships with specialised institutions that can deal with drug addiction and other physical and mental health problems of ODC beneficiaries.
- Reinforce ODC's staff capacities to address and manage drug addictions and mental health problems.
- Reinforce ODC's staff capacities to address basic health care.

3.9 Recommendations about gender

- Ensures gender parity in the ODC's socio-educational team in order to strengthen the team's effectiveness in social work with female and male beneficiaries.
- Maintain gender parity among beneficiaries while considering the fact that the phenomenon of street children is more male than female and that girls are victims of specific difficulties, including prostitution and coerced or incestuous sexual relations within the extended family.

3.10 Recommendations about child rights and community involvement

- Because of the rejection of street children by the population and although efforts are already being made by the ODC in this direction, the relevance and effectiveness of the program would be enhanced with the organization of awareness campaigns about the situation of street children and other children in situation of extreme vulnerability.
- Try to arouse the interest of neighbours and bring them to provide active support to the centre
- Carry out awareness-raising activities for the population to reduce the widespread homophobia.
- Train social workers to better understand and accept homosexuality and convince them to adopt less stigmatising and discriminatory behaviour towards homosexual people.

3.11 Recommendations related to sustainability

- Diversify sources of funding (local contributions, funding from other international donors, etc.)
- Ensure forward-looking financial management using existing accounting and management tools
- Capitalize in written documents the experiences and knowledge accumulated as well as appropriate practices in the field of caring for children with family and social breakdown.