

A Social Protection and Integration Strategy for Children of OFWs: A Case Study on the Psycho-Social Support Program of BUNGA* Foundation, Inc.

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There is limited literature on how government and non-government agencies conduct psycho-social support programs and how effective these are in helping children left behind by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). This paper addresses the gap by analyzing the ANAK program of BUNGA Foundation Inc. It makes use of auto-ethnography since it draws from the author's phenomenological experience as part of said Foundation for five years and as one who, from birth until graduation from high school, was an OFW child. Additional data gathering methods included desk review of documents, participant observation, and informal interviews with key informants.

The study describes the components of the ANAK program of BUNGA, some of its gains from the perspective of the children themselves, and deviations from the design. It found the program to have had positive effects on the children, particularly in helping them regain familiarity and intimacy with their parent(s) and positively manage psychosocial and emotional strains. However, the ANAK program needs improvement in terms of operationalizing the children's right to participation, and its involvement of teachers and parents left behind and other caregivers. Teachers and parents/caregivers represent basic pillars in ensuring a holistic approach to care drain, and program effectiveness and sustainability. Recommendations are given, specially on how children's right to participation can be fulfilled by reinforcing the organizing component of the ANAK program. A framework for organising OFW children is part of the recommendations.

This paper is important for those who are looking for innovative strategies on how to design and implement a psycho-social support program for OFW children.

*For ethical considerations, the real name of the NGO is substituted with BUNGA.

Introduction

In the Philippines, about 10% of the total estimated population of 90 million works abroad (CFO, 2007), combining their productive labor with the needs and resources of receiving countries to benefit themselves and their families. Because of this, the country is largely regarded in the world as a sending country of migrant workers, and its government a model in the management of international labor migration (Patricia Santo Tomas in International Organization for Migration, 2005).

On the other hand, the social costs of labor migration, particularly on children left behind, are a cause for great concern. It is believed that as children of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), they are forced to endure the absence of one or both parents. This has led to psycho-emotional and psycho-social risks and vulnerabilities. According to Parreñas (2002; 2005), the left-behind children of OFWs suffer from what she calls care drain. Care drain is characterized by:

1. Unfamiliarity and loss of intimacy between the left-behind child and the OFW parent(s) due to extended years of separation (2002).
2. The struggle to experience quality care of the children of OFWs due to lack of responsibility for care work by the left-behind male parent or care giver (2002).
3. The burden of accepting gender role reversals due to the migration of the mother because a woman who works abroad is perceived by her children "as oppositional to the interest of the family and acceptable only if done in desperation" (2005, p. 66).

Other researches on the effects of parents' migration on children left behind suggest that their experiences cannot be neatly categorized as either positive or negative. Nevertheless, recommendations almost always indicate the

need to help children strengthen or improve their coping skills to be able to sustain quality communication, intimacy, and affection vis-à-vis their parent/s abroad over extended periods of geographical separation (Edillon, 2008; Ang 2008; Baggio, 2008; ECMI, SMC & OWWA, 2004; Parreñas, 2002; Asis, Huang, & Yeoh, 2004; Anonuevo, 2002). Some government agencies such as the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Philippine National Red Cross, Atikha, Inc., UGAT Foundation, Inc., etc. have responded by developing programs that address the social protection and integration of families left behind by OFWs. Many of them address the care drain experienced by OFW children through psycho-social support programs.

There has not been much research done on the design and implementation of psycho-social support programs and their effectiveness. This study is a contribution to the limited literature. It focuses on the psycho-social support program of BUNGA Foundation, Inc. It describes the program, and assesses it using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Because the author has been working with said NGO for the last five years, the study used auto-ethnography. It contains a synthesis of the author's personal reflections as one of the consultants, resource persons, and facilitators of the program for a two-year period starting late 2008.

Other methods of data gathering were the review of program documents, participant observation, and informal interviews with key informants, i.e. the program director, three (3) program consultants, and four (4) program mentors or *gabay*.

Effects of Labor Migration on OFW Children: A Review of Literature

The popular Philippine movie entitled *ANAK* that was shown in the year 2000 depicts a stereotypical image of what happens to the family when the mother leaves for overseas work, and the tensions she and her children experience

when she returns for good. The returnee discovers her children have become materialistic, ungrateful, and delinquent due to the lack of parental care and guidance. How closely does this movie reflect reality? Does it represent the situation of all OFW families?

Different researches on how the absence of one or both parents working abroad affects children left behind reveal that OFW children left behind do not necessarily become *delinquent* nor are their families necessarily *broken* as portrayed by Philippine media. Their experiences cannot be neatly categorized as either positive or negative. The children are able to make sense of the challenges and opportunities presented by their parents' migration, and to grow and learn from the experience (Ang, 2008; Scalabrini Migration Center, et. al., 2005; Parreñas, 2002; Battistella & Conaco, 1996). Asis (2000) also did not find any empirical evidence to prove that children of migrant workers are more likely to engage in juvenile delinquency than children of non-migrants. The presence of strong social support systems from other family members and relatives is said to facilitate social adjustments by children left behind (Scalabrini Migration Center 2003).

Nevertheless, children of migrants feel lonely, angry, unloved, numb, afraid, different from the other children, and worried compared to all groups of children, including non-OFW children (Battistella and Conaco, 1996). Compared to children of non-OFWs, they are more vulnerable to psycho-social strains due to the physical and geographical separation from their parents, especially mothers (Edillon, 2008; Aldaba & Opiniano, 2008; Baggio, 2008; Ang, 2008; Scalabrini Migration Center, et. al., 2005). Children at ages 13–16 years old appear to be worse off since adult attention and money given to them lessen and they handle bigger responsibilities in the household, e.g. caring for their younger siblings (Edillon, 2008).

The Battistella & Conaco study (1996) reveals that children with absent mothers show poorer social adjustment and experience impeded psychological development. One study asserts that "*children of migrant fathers*

are more likely to say that their father left the Philippines to provide for the family, whereas children of migrant mothers more commonly claim that their mothers left to escape poverty” (Parreñas, 2006). Thus, in cases where women emigrate, leaving husband and child/ren behind, the shift in the father’s role, from main provider to nurturer, has an adverse impact on children (Pingol, 2001). Children reportedly become confused, and resentful. They struggle with the lack of male responsibility for care work (Scalabrini Migration Center, et. al., 2005; Parreñas, 2002; Go & Postrado, 1986 in Opiniano, 2008), feeling neglected and abandoned. Fathers pass on the care work to other women in the family, more often to the eldest daughter (Asia, 2000). This immense responsibility, in turn, adversely impacts on the daughter’s school performance (Parreñas, 2006).

On a positive note, the absence of the mother is supposedly a strong incentive for children to remain in school and study hard (Ang, 2008). Children tend to join academic organisations and extra-curricular activities, and receive awards, both academic and otherwise (Edillon, 2008). However, most of them do not feel that they have active participation in family decision-making. Their participation in community and civic organizations outside school is lower compared to children of non-OFWs (Edillon, 2008).

Extended years of separation result in unfamiliarity among family members (Edillon, 2008; Scalabrini Migration Center, et. al., 2005; Asis, Yeoh, & Huang, 2004; Parreñas, 2002). Children suffer from the loss of family intimacy. But, advances in information and communication technology, a different level of intimacy which also strengthens the linkage and nurturing is being established among migrant families. This is what Tanalega underscores in his book, *Global Parenting* (2002). Parenting becomes a long distance love affair. The absence of either or both parents is bridged by different technological devices (e.g. mobile phones, emails, video cams), thereby making their presence felt by their children. Nonetheless, this “techy” parenting is still not able to replace the emotional bond forged by daily face-to-face interactions. Overseas parents miss out on the critical milestones of the growing up years of their children and on their value formation.

Material benefits from remittances have created dependence on the part of families left behind and have made children themselves consider international migration to pursue their own dreams of a better future (Aldaba & Opiniano, 2008; Baggio, 2008; Ang, 2008; Scalabrini Migration Center, et. al., 2005). These data are reinforced by Añonuevo's study (2002) which shows that children aspire to work abroad like their parents. Although they intend to obtain a college diploma, the children are already conscious of the fact that a college education is not necessary to earning a high salary abroad.

The foregoing review of literature presents both positive and negative effects of parents' migration on children left behind. It also underscores the importance of strong support from other family members in order to mitigate the negative effects of absent parents and help the children achieve their full human potential. Other social systems such as schools and communities can also be an sources of support and nurturance of OFW children.

The BUNGA Foundation Experience: Addressing the Care Drain Phenomenon

The BUNGA Foundation, Inc. conducts its ministry with the disadvantaged sectors of society through psychological interventions and family system approaches. One of its programs for OFW children is Anak ng Nangingibang bansa, Aruga at Kaagapay (Care and Support for the Children of OFWs). It is implemented in partner Catholic secondary schools in Cavite and in some parts of Manila with a significant number of enrollees whose parents are abroad. The target beneficiaries are those between the ages of 13 to 16 years. Figure 1 shows the design of ANAK.

ANAK has four phases. Phase 1 involves the conduct of three seminars: GABAY Seminar, ANAK and KAISA. GABAY (Guide) Seminar is for volunteer school teachers, specifically the home room advisers. It is an eight-hour seminar on basic counseling to enable the teachers to help the OFW children address migration-related problems. It is conducted a week before the next seminar, i.e., ANAK.

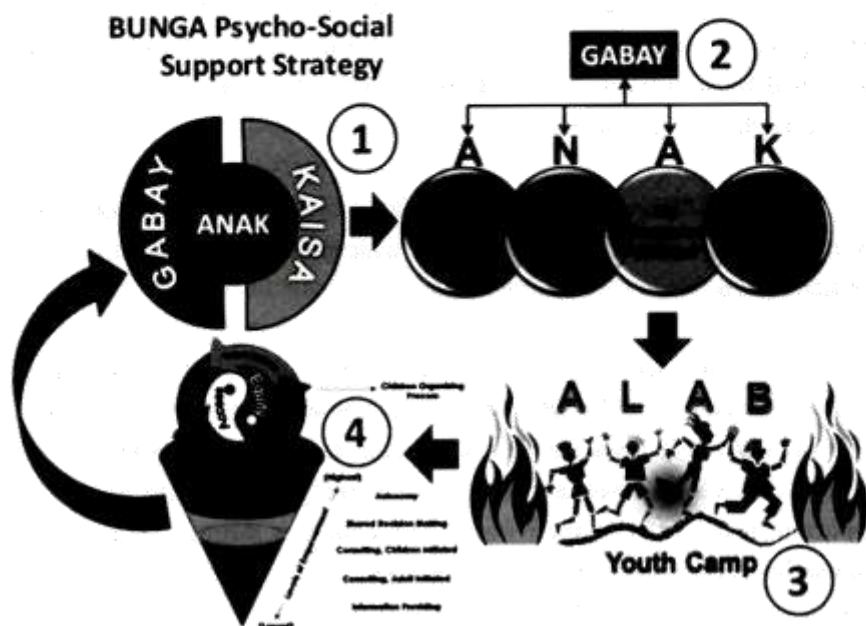
The ANAK Seminar is for OFW children. It is a one day seminar (6 to 8 hours) on the realities of migration. The participants are given the opportunity to ventilate personal issues and concerns regarding their overseas parents through small group counseling sessions. The small group counseling sessions are facilitated by well-trained counsellors of BUNGA and teachers who have undergone the GABAY seminar.

The ANAK Seminar is one of the first projects of the Foundation since its establishment fifteen years ago. It has undergone testing and refinements through the years.

The third seminar –KAISA – is for the parents left behind and/or the care providers of the OFW children. It is conducted simultaneously with but separately from the ANAK seminar. Like ANAK, the realities of migration are discussed and the parent/care providers are given the opportunity to ventilate their issues and concerns through small group counselling sessions. The counselling sessions are facilitated by trained counselors of BUNGA. Towards the end, the participants of the ANAK and KAISA seminars come together in a session meant to help both parties reinforce love and support to one another in living with the realities of migration.

Phase II of the program involves support modules for the OFW children to further help them deal with their personal issues and concerns at home and at school. The modules are packaged into four child-friendly journals which they are encouraged to read and answer at the pace of one journal per week. The journals address issues on being a child of an OFW, their treasures within and without, and their personal vision and mission for the future. Assigned volunteer teachers who have attended the GABAY Seminar help facilitate and monitor the children. BUNGA keeps copies of the accomplished journal for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Figure 1. ANAK's Psycho-Social Support Program Flow Chart



Phase III involves the conduct of the ALAB Youth Camp. OFW children from the different partner Catholic schools who are able to complete their journals are actively encouraged to attend and participate in the camp. ALAB stands for Antigin ang Landas at tuklasin and Alab ng Buhay mo! (Ignite your Destiny and Discover the Flame in You!) This is a three-day youth camp where the children learn leadership and teambuilding skills, develop camaraderie, strengthen their spirituality, and reinforce their personal vision and mission.

Phase IV pertains to school-based or community-based children's organizing. After attending the ALAB youth camp, the children are encouraged to form a local club in their respective schools or community for two main purposes: through their organized and collective efforts, they can address their

personal issues and concerns, and help other children of OFWs in the process; and they can encourage other OFW children in their school or community to participate in and benefit from the ANAK Program.

BUNGA assists OFW children who are willing to form a local school or community club since it has a standing memorandum of agreement with parents and school authorities.

In the actual implementation of the ANAK program, some of the components have not been followed. Firstly, the GABAY Seminar eventually involved project-based counselors, not the targeted school teacher. The participation of school teachers could not be sustained due to its voluntary nature. It was difficult to obligate them since there was no monetary benefit involved. Moreover, training permanent sets of counselors was a more economically sound option for BUNGA compared to spending on the training of a new set of counselors per school and giving them allowances or stipends as school-based care givers.

Secondly, the *Kaisa* seminar has yet to be implemented. It was very difficult to get the involvement and commitment of the parents left behind and/or the care givers to attend the seminar. They were preoccupied and the schools claimed they had no authority to require them to attend the seminar.

Thirdly, children's organizing has not been carried out as designed. School - based children organizing was started in one school. But the organizer of BUNGA Foundation quit in the middle of the process due to personal reasons. Subsequently, according to the program director, the management of BUNGA Foundation lost interest in school - based organizing. The reasons cited for this were the lack of technical know-how to sustain the endeavor, and the difficulty in hiring an organizer who lives in Cavite. However, recent developments in the Foundation have led to a shift to community-based organizing of OFW children who attended the ANAK seminar and ALAB youth camp. Four mentors from the trained project staff have been hired for this purpose.

Based on the foregoing, BUNGA Foundation decided to channel more of its resources to other aspects of the program where they are more adept, i.e. the continuous refinement of the implementation of the ANAK seminar, ANAK modules, and the ALAB youth camp.

Children Speak on the Benefits from the Program

- **ANAK Seminar**

"ANAK helped me see the reality of our situation. This prevented me from becoming rebellious. In that seminar my awareness and my heart were totally opened. I completely understood all the answers to the questions that were given to me. I continued to be determined in facing life instead of holding resentment against my father. He did not want to be separated from us and I know that if given the chance, he would not give up the opportunity to be with us in our formative years. I totally came to understand why he had to go instead of continuing to work here in the Philippines. He made those choices because of his love for us."

– Flor, 28 (not her real name)

"ANAK helped me understand my father in his work abroad. I felt lighter. I can already understand myself and I was able to find kindred souls who shared the same experience. I realized that I wasn't alone and that there were many others who were undergoing what I was facing. I felt happy not only because I was able to express what was deep inside me but also because I was able to share with others what I felt and had learned in the workshop. Right now, I have become a volunteer counselor in the ANAK Seminars."

– Melanie, 34 (not her real name)

The ANAK seminar was powerful enough to help participants become aware of their situation, accept it, and take the step towards reconciliation with their OFW parents. This is important since, prior to attending the seminar, most participants often expressed feelings of loss and guilt due to the absence of one or both parents. They felt neglected which in turn produced anger and hatred towards themselves and their overseas parents. As one of the participants puts it:

“Ang Tatay ko po ay nagtatrabaho bilang isang construction worker sa Saudi Arabia. Bilang anak ng isang OFW, marami din akong mga nararanasan na hindi magandang nangyari sa sarili ko. Marami akong hindi naiintindihan at mahirap sa akin na maunawaan ang pagkalayo ng aking ama. Nakadama ako ng galit sa aking ama dahil sa kanyang pagkalayo, malayo ang loob ko sa kanya at minsan naiinggit din ako sa aking mga kaibigan na kumpleto ang pamilya. Galit ako sa aking ama dahil minsan lang kami magkasama at hindi ko masyadong naramdaman o nararanasan na naging malapit kami sa isa’t isa.”

(My father is a construction worker in Saudi Arabia. As a child of an OFW, I experience many things which I do not understand. I find it difficult to understand why my father is far away. I have felt anger because my father is far away. I am emotionally distant. Sometimes, I envy my friends with complete families. I am angry with my father because we only had few moments together and I could not feel or experience any intimacy with him.)

– Juliet, 16 (not her real name)

- **ANAK Modules**

There is no detailed documentation of this component since the journals become the property of the participants. Initially, the teachers who attended the GABAY seminar followed up the children’s accomplishment of the journal

once a week for a period of one month. But, since teachers were no longer trained to become *para*-counsellors, the hired project-based counsellors, called mentors, are now the ones who monitor the progress of the children with their journals. Lately, the Foundation has incorporated the modules as part of the community organizing strategy in two select communities in Cavite.

Based on the recent evaluation with the four (4) mentors, incorporating the journals as part of a community organizing strategy has effectively helped the children form loose associations. The children get to see each other on a weekly basis and have become peers who support one another not only with OFW parent concerns but on other personal issues as well such as friendship, school, and love life.

- **ALAB Youth Camp**

The ALAB youth camp, according to the participants, is the most exciting and enjoyable phase of the ANAK program. They have great fun and learning for three days and two nights. Guided post-camp evaluations have yielded the following results:

- a. Most important learnings:

“Forgiveness of those who’ve hurt me!” – Lovely, 13 yrs old

“One should not give up in challenges and not to cheat.” – Gerd, 14 yrs old.

“Everyone is a winner and that my being born in this world is not a mistake.” – Belle, 15 yrs old.

“Tiwala sa sarili (*trust in oneself*), always do your best, magkaroon ng (*have*) positive self-image at higit sa lahat ay yung mag-try ka nang mag-try (*and most of all that you keep on trying*) and don’t lose hope.” – Angel, 16 yrs. old

b. Learnings about self

“Mas mabuting anak na ako ngayon at natuto akong magtiwala sa sarili na kakayanin ko ang lahat at si Kuya Ben (the camp facilitator) ang nagturo sa akin kung pano maging ganyan. (I have learned to become a better daughter and learned to trust in myself that I can endure everything. Brother Ben (the camp facilitator) was the one who taught me that.)” – Lyka, 13 yrs. old

“Natuklasan ko na kaya ko palang magdesisyon at manindigan dito. (I discovered that I can make decisions and that I can stand for it.)” – Princess, 14 yrs old.

“Malakas pala ako at kaya kong magtiwala sa sarili ko. (I realized that I am strong and I can trust myself.)” – Yza, 15 yrs. old

“Dati di ako marunong makisalamuha at umintindi sa ibang tao pero ngayon ay kaya ko na at lahat ng nakasakit sa akin napatawad ko na. (Before, I don't know how to socialize and relate with other people but now I already know and I have already forgiven all those who have hurt me.)” – Daniel, 16 yrs old.

c. Five things they are determined to do to attain their life goals

- ✓ *Hindi na ako makikipag-away sa mga kapatid ko at magiging responsable na ako. (I will not quarrel with my siblings and I shall be a responsible person.)*
- ✓ *Ako ay magiging masipag na sa bahay at ititigil ko narin ang pagmumura. (I'll be hard-working at home and I'll stop cursing.)*

- ✓ *Ako ay magiging madasalin at bukas ang loob sa Panginoon. Sasabihin ko sa kanya ang lahat na nangyayari sa akin. (I will be more prayerful and open to God. I'll tell Him all that's happening to me.)*
- ✓ *Mag-aaral na ako ng maigi (I will study hard.)*
- ✓ *Hindi ko na ikukumpara ang aking sarili sa iba at hindi ko narin titingnan ng mababa ang aking sarili. (I will not compare myself to others; I will not demean myself.)*

– Grace, 13 yrs old.

The ALAB youth camp helped participants to trust and forgive themselves, to persevere and not lose hope. The participants also learned to socialize and relate well with others, and deepen their connection with God. These are very important in coping with the absence of their overseas parent(s).

A Critique of the BUNGA Foundation's ANAK Program based on the Framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) incorporates four categories of children's rights (Edillon, 2008; Ansell, 2005; Van Bueren, 1998; Candelaria, 1997):

- 1) **Right to Survival** – the right to life, good health and nutrition;
- 2) **Right to Development** – the right to education, play, care, and nurturance to develop completely;
- 3) **Right to Protection** – every child has the right to protection against neglect, exploitation, and all forms of abuse;
- 4) **Right to Participation** – the right to privacy, freedom of expression, right to opinion, freedom of association, and practice religion of choice.

Although children are recognized complete human individuals, with identities distinct from their parents, they are not considered able to exercise said rights themselves. Hence, the rights are translated into duties and responsibilities toward children by the family and the state as primary duty bearers and by the community, school, and civil society groups as secondary duty bearers (Ansell, 2005).

Using the framework of the CRC, BUNGA Foundation is a secondary duty bearer in addressing the protection and development rights of OFW children. The right to survival falls outside BUNGA's purview as it is the responsibility of OFW families. Through the ANAK program (specifically the ANAK seminar, ANAK modules, and ALAB Youth Camp), BUNGA is able to address issues of neglect experienced by the OFW children. In this way, children develop psychosocially and emotionally amidst the problems they face and in turn, learn the skills to effectively engage migration-related issues and concerns in various contexts- families, schools, and the communities.

However, BUNGA needs to improve on providing an enabling environment to the exercise of the right to participation. The ANAK seminar, ANAK modules, and ALAB Youth Camp are, without doubt, helpful stepping stones to social protection and integration. But, all of them are externally initiated interventions that require no proactive participation from the children in the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases. The opportunity for participation is found in school-based or community-based organizing. Through organising, the children can participate directly in their own development and chart the course of their future. Participation is a prerequisite to empowerment.

Teachers and parents left behind as well as care providers are indispensable partners of BUNGA Foundation Inc. in ensuring the fulfilment of the rights of OFW children. They interact daily with the children, and play a critical role as guardians and significant influences in the children's value

formation, and psycho-emotional and social development. Thus, the shift in target participants of the GABAY seminar and the non-implementation of the KAISA seminar seriously impede the creation of an enabling environment for the protection and promotion of OFW children's rights. Moreover, left-behind parents and other caregivers also have their own issues and concerns in relation to migration. The KAISA seminar is highly relevant to their own situation. It can help them become better parents/caregivers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the problems faced by the children of OFWs is the psychosocial and emotional strain as an outcome of care drain. The ANAK program of BUNGA Foundation is a commendable social protection and integration strategy aimed at helping OFW children regain familiarity and intimacy with their parent(s) and positively manage any existing psychosocial and emotional strain due to the physical and geographical separation from their parent(s). However, the ANAK program of BUNGA has not been fully implemented as designed. Its KAISA seminar has not been implemented due to difficulties in getting the participation of parents and other caregivers. Its GABAY seminar, on the other hand, has stopped targeting school teachers.

The ANAK program contributes to the promotion and protection of children's rights. But, it needs improvement in the area of the right to participation. The children have yet to be proactively engaged in setting up their own local school or community club to address their own issues and concerns. Further, it needs to strengthen its links with indispensable partners for program effectiveness and sustainability: teachers and parents left behind/caregivers. GABAY seminars must be given to the teachers of the OFW children, not to external agents. KAISA seminars should also be conducted as designed. In this way, the circle of support network of the child is not only in the school but also in the home. BUNGA together with the school administration should take this up in the Parents-Teacher-Students Association to get the involvement and commitment of left behind parents and other caregivers.

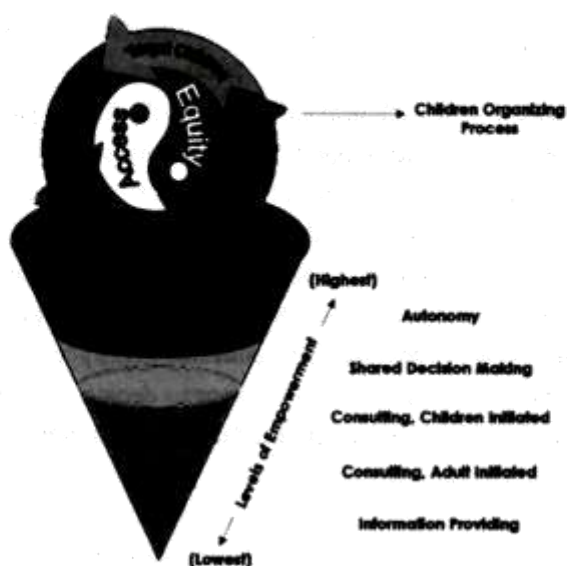
BUNGA should pursue a memorandum of agreement with school authorities to provide the mandate and the necessary logistics and other forms of support to help the OFW children set up their own local school club.

It must also develop its technical knowledge in the field of participatory development in order to effectively support the community-based organizing of OFW children. The organizing process should consider integrating the children's abilities and strengths in its design and implementation. It should also use participatory methodologies during appraisal, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. By so doing, children are given the opportunity to reflect on their situation and recognize their collective ability to influence the external environment. They are given the power to decide what they want changed, in the manner they deem appropriate. This becomes an **"empowering situation"** for them.

Two key concepts are essential to any participatory process. These are **access** and **equity** (UNICEF, 2004). **Access** refers to the right of children to use current and future resources, benefit from the services, and be given transparent information by people or institutions wanting to work with them for development purposes. **Equity** pertains to involving the children in the appraisal, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of children-related policies, programs and services in order to make such programs be more relevant and effective for them.

The author proposes a framework for organizing OFW children based on the principles of access and equity. (See Figure 2) OFW children, after being trained in community organizing and advocacy, will define their issues and agenda, and eventually form a children's organization. The latter will be the vehicle for undertaking their own development activities, learning to take responsibility for actions and their outcomes, and determining courses of action to alter power relations and create positive institutional change in their communities. It will be the means to develop leadership, and individual and collective empowerment.

Figure 2. Children's Organizing Framework



There are four overlapping phases in the process of children's organizing, namely, identifying the target children, appraisal and planning, organization formation and membership recruitment, and project implementation and evaluation.

The target children, in this case, are OFW children. As children with rights, including the right to participation, they must be encouraged to get involved in collectively addressing their needs and problems. The entry age for children's organizing can be between 13 and 16 years. As pointed out earlier, OFW children in this age bracket are disadvantaged in that adult attention and money given to them lessen as they are made to assume bigger responsibilities in the household, including caring for younger siblings.

In the Appraisal and Planning Phase, the children are engaged in awareness building activities through group discussions on personal, family,

community, and global issues, and how these affect their lives. They can validate their experiences and reflections by conducting a guided assessment or appraisal of the pressing problems facing OFW children in the community. Conducting their own assessment enables them to crystallize their understanding of their unique needs as OFW children which can then be the basis for planning. During this phase, they develop skills in critical thinking as they analyze and prioritize needs and issues. They also learn to facilitate meetings and articulate their positions.

The phase on organizational formation and recruitment of membership involves the actual setting up of a club or an association, and recruiting members who are also OFW children. As an organization, it must formulate a vision, mission and goals. Over time, policies, structures, and partnerships may evolve and be institutionalized.

The last phase, Project Implementation and Evaluation, pertains to the implementation of identified strategies to meet organizational goals. These strategies may be in the form of projects or programs that range from peer counseling to health, education, and ecological initiatives. At the end of each project or program, the organization should devote time and resources to reflect on, evaluate and synthesize the work. The process ensures analysis and learning as a basis for improving, strengthening, and consolidating the organization.

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