

The Philippines

The coronavirus pandemic severely affected the Philippines. After millions of people became unemployed or underemployed and the hospitals reached their maximum capacity the country was forced into one of the longest lockdowns in the world.

In a country where the poverty level has remained high despite a fast-growing economy this was a hard blow. The country already had a proportion of children living in poverty of over 30 %, and the extremely high number of 1.8 million children are estimated to be abandoned or neglected.

SOS Children's Villages has been working in the Philippines since 1967, providing quality care to children and young people who cannot live with their parents, and providing support to families to help them stick together.

There are 8 children's villages in the country, with almost 1,000 children and youths living under our care. We also provide support to approximately 8,000 families in the communities.

SOS Children's Villages always strives to support operations, children, and young people where the needs are greatest. Therefore, we are constantly assessing and analyzing the needs as well as possible reallocation of funds based on the countries' own ability to finance their activities. What we want to achieve is partner organizations and operations that are self-sufficient and financially stable. After many years of cooperation, SOS Philippines has managed to strengthen their local fundraising and are now basically self-sufficient. As previously communicated, we have initiated a dialogue between SOS Sweden, SOS Philippines and regional and international offices, to gradually phase out the financial support to SOS Philippines. Funds will instead be re-allocated and used in countries and programmes where the needs are bigger and the pre-conditions for local fundraising are very limited, to ensure that funds are used where they are needed the most.

The phase-out is gradual and will be supported by all involved stakeholders to ensure it will not affect the quality of the programmes. SOS Philippines has planned a gradual phase out plan during 5 years until 2025 at latest. The plan is based on the local contexts and pre-conditions but given the challenges and uncertainties that comes with the pandemic, all partners will have a certain degree of flexibility when it come to the time plan.

Programme information

The Children's Villages and Youth Care in Cebu and Tacloban

The coronavirus pandemic brought on an increased need for family-like care programmes. Since millions of people lost their jobs, food security became a major problem for families, and this instability sadly led to more child neglect and abandonment.

SOS Philippines made their utmost best to provide support to prevent family separation and child abandonment, and to provide alternative care in those cases where preventative measures were not enough, and children were abandoned or had to be separated from biological families for their own best. 110 children were admitted to the family-like care across eight programme locations, where they could get loving homes in family-like and safe environments, education and proper nutrition. During the period of 2020, the locations were all under strict lockdown to protect the children, young people and co-workers from covid-19.

Despite the extreme hardships that the pandemic has caused the Philippines the children and youth in the Children's villages and youth programmes have managed to reach excellent study results. By providing e-learning tools such as laptops and smart-TVs to all programme locations they successfully shifted to online or distance learning. 85 % of the children in the Children's Villages and 82 % of the young people in Youth Care have during 2020 shown average and above average educational performance. Youth-led tutorial activities helped in maintaining this educational performance.

Young people took the lead in more areas: youth-led developmental and empowerment sessions were held for the fellow younger children by youth councils that had been established at every location to boost youth participation. The youth councils organized tutorials, webinars, personality development sessions, sports events, wellness activities and creative and performing art workshops to keep the children and young people productive and active during the pandemic.

We follow and support the children and youth on their way to adulthood and provide life-skills-training, education, vocational training and mentorship to prepare them for the labor market and to become self-reliant and independent young adults. As a result of this support, medium and high employability skills of young people increased from 55 % in 2019 to 58 % in 2020. Medium and high employability skills mean that the young person has, or is in the process of acquiring, required knowledge, skills and/or resources to secure a livelihood. This increase was made possible through the cooperation and partnership with private and public sectors.

The year in numbers Cebu:

- Children in the villages **85**
- Family houses **12**
- Numbers of youths in the youth facility and boarding house **45**

The year in numbers Tacloban:

- Children in the villages **70**
- Family houses **10**
- Numbers of youths in the youth facility and boarding house **36**

The gift of a dream

Clare takes a deep breath... and exhales. The young lady is excited about today's activity because she will be sharing her dreams in front of the camera, wearing her business suit just like her friends who are also part of the activity.

– Are you ready, Clare? asks Auntie Dianne, who will be filming her.

– Yes Auntie. But I guess I still need a little time to practice, Clare responds with a nervous smile.

– Take your time! Auntie Dianne encourages her.

After five minutes of practicing the expressions that she will be showcasing in front of the camera, Clare has composed herself. To fully take the nervousness away, she inhales one more time as they begin the first scene.

– My dream profession is to become a businesswoman and a certified public accountant, starts Clare. To make this dream come true, I will work hard and be committed to my studies.



Clair practicing for her big day. Photo: SOS archive

For the next scene, they move to the village's community area. Clare will be talking about the importance of pursuing her studies despite the pandemic.

– It is important to continue my studies, especially in the time of the pandemic, because this gives me hope. Despite the hard times, I have the assurance that I can reach my goals with the learnings that I have, she says genuinely.

– And cut! says Auntie Dianne. – Thank you for sharing your dreams, Clare.

– Thank you for giving me this opportunity as well, Auntie! Clare replies with a bright smile.

Clare just recently transferred to the Semi-Independent Living Facility for Girls after almost five years of living with her SOS mother and SOS siblings in the family house. Although she will be missing her little brothers and sisters, she is also looking forward to building new relationships with her sisters in the new home as they empower themselves to become independent individuals, eager to reach their dreams.



Jojo with his sister. Photo: SOS archive,

A sister's journey

When Jojo was 8 months old, he was welcomed into the Children's Village Tacloban with great joy. There's always a celebration when a new member is welcomed to the community, but the one who was the most excited was Jaena, who was finally going to get a younger brother after being alone most of her childhood.

– I had always wanted a younger brother, not only to play with, but to guide and teach, she says. – With Jojo, my wish had been granted and it made me really happy.

Her care for Jojo was immaculate – whenever Jojo needed something, she was the first to run to his side and aid him. She has been there for every milestone in her younger brother's life.

– I remember the first time he could utter a word. It was weird because I was so happy, I wanted to cry, Jaena smiles as she reminisces. Before that, when all he could do was cry, Jaena would do her best to figure out what he needed every time he cried. At first it was hard, because she didn't have the experience of caring for a younger sibling before. But when she got used to it, she easily fell into a routine where she could tell what Jojo needed even before he started crying.

– It's gotten easier now, though. He can say words like

food or thirst. I'm proud whenever I hear him say these words, knowing that I helped teach him how to speak, Jaena says.

Her favorite moment was the first time Jojo said her name:

– He was in his crib, and I was in the kitchen fetching some water. To my surprise, I heard him kind of mumbling and when I went back to the room, he smiled and happily called my name, Jaena narrated. – It felt unreal! You know in the shows where it feels like the world goes slow-mo because something just happened and you're still processing it? That's kind of how it felt.

Jaena says that Jojo was a shy kid at first. It was difficult to get him to open up immediately with the people around him, and she had to work on building a connection with him. Even when she provided him with his needs, he would still cry because he seemed afraid of everyone around him.

– That was the hardest part for me. You know, when you're doing your best, but it still isn't working well? That's how it felt. There were times when I just wanted to give up. Maybe I just wasn't the elder sister that he needed, she fiddles with her fingers as she says this. Then she smiles before saying:

– I'm glad that I didn't give up on him, though. It was worth it. All those sleepless nights and running back and forth.

Jaena breaks into laughter: – Even getting his drool on me – all worth it!

Today, Jojo is a very happy kid. He smiles and laughs a lot, especially when his older sister is around. He is more trusting of people now, and it is also clear in the way he looks at his sister that he adores her. He has recently learned to walk, and Jaena is proud of her brother's development.

– It's kind of sad to see him become a bit more independent, but at the same time, I'm really proud of him. I cannot wait to see the person he'll become.

Financial report

Donated by Akelius University Foundation, EUR	2020 Budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
CV Tacloban, CV Calbayog, CV Cebu	368 332	368 664	373 496
Total	368 332	368 664	373 496

SEK (using exchange rate at the time of payment)	3 996 404	4 000 003	4 052 426
Average exchange rate	10,85	10,85	10,85

Total budget, Tacloban, EUR	2020 Budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
Investments/maintenance	677	1 299	0
Current working expenditures	91 273	107 104	89 766
Personnel expenditures	174 572	165 378	183 657
Other expenditures	26 049	22 851	23 342
Total	292 570	296 632	296 765
Share covered by Akelius	51%	51%	51%

Total budget, Calbayog, EUR	2020 Budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
Investments/maintenance	0	0	0
Current working expenditures	0	0	0
Personnel expenditures	0	0	0
Other expenditures	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0
Share covered by Akelius	0%	0%	0%

Total budget, Cebu, EUR	2020 Budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
Investments/maintenance	20 805	9 445	1 045
Current working expenditures	113 453	112 162	112 050
Personnel expenditures	172 945	157 470	167 375
Other expenditures	30 361	24 834	23 885
Total	337 565	303 911	304 355
Share covered by Akelius	58%	65%	65%