



Annual Report 2017
Advocacy and Capacity Building,
Family Home,
Community Assistance
and EACY programs

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Acronym	Meaning
4PS MCCT IP	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program Modified Conditional Cash Transfer Indigenous People
ATI	Agricultural Training Institute
BMS	Baclayan Mangyan School
BTSNN	Break the Silence National Network
CAP	Community Assistance Program
CHEC	Children Health and Education Center
COP	Child Online Protection
CPP	Child Protection Policy
CSAAW	Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Week
CSAEP	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention
CSAP	Child Sexual Abuse Prevention
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSWDO	City Social Welfare and Development Office
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
CWC SACSEC	Council for the Welfare of Children Sub-committee against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children
DepEd	Department of Education
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DSWD-4Ps	Department of Social Welfare and Development - Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
EAC	Emilio Aguinaldo College
EACY	Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth
FDS	Family Development Sessions
FHP	Family Home Program
GO	Government Organization
IACACP	Inter-agency Council against Child Pornography
IACACP MDT	IACACP's current Multi-Disciplinary Team
IMMAP	Internet and Mobile Marketing Association of the Philippines
IP	Indigenous People
LASAC	Lipa Archdiocese Social Action Commission
LCPCs	Local Councils for the Protection of Children
LGU	Local Government Unit
MACR	Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility
MCCT	Modified Conditional Cash Transfer
MENRO	Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office
MIMAROPA	Mindoro Marinduque Romblon Palawan
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
NAT	National Achievement Test
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation
NCR	National Capital Region
NGA	National Government Agency

Acronym	Meaning
NGO	Non- Government Organizations
NPTI	National Police Training Institute
NPTI RTC	National Police Training Institute Regional Training Centers
PFST	Philippine Foundation for Science and Technology
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PNP	Philippine National Police
PO	People's Organizations
PTCA	Parent Teacher Counselor Association
RIACAT-VAWC	Regional Inter-agency against Child Trafficking-Violence against Women and Children
RJJWC	Regional Juvenile Justice Welfare Council
RSCWC	Regional Sub-committee Council for the Welfare of Children
RTC	Regional Training Centers
SAS	Sea Adventure School
SEADC	Support and Empower Abused Deaf Children
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SFI	Stairway Foundation Inc.
TOF	Training of Facilitators
UNCRC	United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WACS	Waste Analysis Characterization Study
WCPD	Women and Children Protection Desk
WCPD-NCR	Women and Children Protection Desk National Capital Region

Advocacy and Capacity Building Program

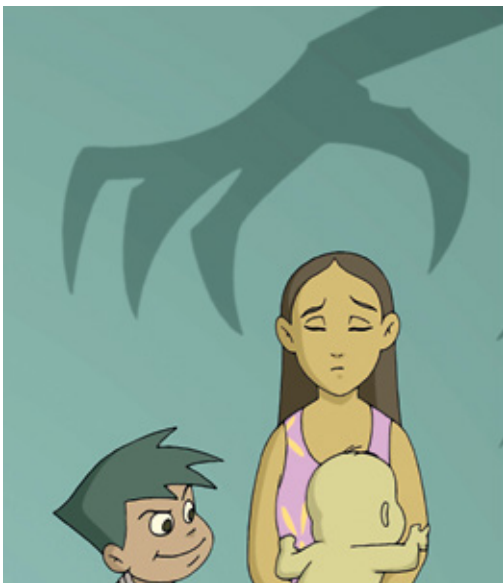
Massive Advocacy Campaign

2017 has been another remarkable year for our Advocacy and capacity building program, as we continued our work for the promotion and protection of children's rights locally and internationally. A major milestone was the registration of the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN), which already counts 44 active child protection agencies spread across the country.

We primarily aim to raise society's awareness and understanding on the issues of child protection, with focus on child sexual abuse, and to develop basic prevention skills among children and adults from various sectors. We do this through orientation and training sessions on various topics, like Child Protection Policy (CPP), Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention (CSAEP) and Cybersafe or Child Online Protection (COP).

For the year 2017, Stairway along with our BTSNN partners reached a total of 118,420 children and adults nationwide, with sessions on CSAEP. The beneficiaries include police recruits, police officers, workers from local government units (LGUs), school personnel, staff from non-government organizations, teachers, parents and students. Cybersafe or COP sessions were participated in by more than 1,500 government staff, teachers and students. In addition, 425 staff members and parents of different government and non-government organizations received orientation and trainings on CPP development.

More than 30 disclosures had been reported, many coming from adults, who experienced sexual abuse during their childhood. Some disclosures were filed with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and included: the case of an 8-year-old girl who was sexually abused by her grandfather; the case of a child with disability, who was gang raped; and several cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. One of the disclosures was from a girl, who along with approximately 30 other children, was chained and abused by high ranking government officials. Disclosures had been responded to and are being followed up as well by the BTS National Network.



Capacity-building, Institutionalization and Sustainability of Child Protection Initiatives

With the goal of reaching as many children and adults as possible, we have continued to train other non-government- and government organizations to develop their capacities in advocating for the protection of children. Further, initiatives have been taken towards institutionalization and sustainability of child protection strategies within these organizations, based on their respective contexts.



Ambassador Jan Top Christensen at the BTSNN launch.

The Break the Silence National Network

Part of SFI's Break the Silence (BTS) campaign, or the advocacy for the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation, is the intensive training of other organizations to develop their capacity to do the advocacy on their own. Throughout the years, many of the trained organizations in the Philippines have joined forces and are now collectively known as the BTS National Network (BTS NN), a movement of active organizations and advocates committed to the protection of children from child sexual abuse and exploitation. Their mission is to bring people together in creating protective environments for children against sexual abuse and exploitation.

Consisting of 44 member organizations from 10 different regions in the Philippines, the BTS NN is now a duly registered organization with the country's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and was formally launched in February 2017. The launch served as a kick-off activity in observance of the 2017 National Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Week and also the World Safer Internet Day 2017. Participants came from various local, regional, national, and international organizations, and guest speakers included Danish Ambassador Jan Top Christensen, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) country representative, Kindernothilfe (German funding organization) country coordinator, and officials from the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Philippines Department of Education (DepEd). The event was covered on national television and in a number of newspapers.

SFI's BTS Campaign has become more widespread nationwide through the BTS NN and its members. Aside from SFI, the BTS NN members have been recognized as technical resources on child protection, particularly on child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention advocacy. Both government organizations and non-government organizations have been tapping BTS NN members as resource persons. SFI, for one, has tapped six BTS NN members to facilitate CSAEP sessions among police recruits in the Regional Training Centers (RTCs) of the National Police Training Institute (NPTI). Gradually, SFI is handing over the conduct of CSAEP sessions in the NPTI RTCs to the BTS NN. This is more strategic as the BTS NN members are geographically closer to the RTCs and the local collaboration enhances the child protection advocacy and the response system within their respective areas of operation. A tight local cooperation between NGOs, LGUs and the NPTI schools further increases the sustainability of our child protection efforts.



Members of the BTSNN during the launch.

Local BTS Networks have been established primarily to make effective response mechanisms available and accessible for child sexual abuse victims. Advocacy materials have also been developed and localized by some of the BTS NN members, such as the comics on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and on Online Child Protection from the Lipa Archdiocese Social Action Commission (LASAC). A number of BTS NN members have been able to generate funding support for their BTS and other child protection initiatives, increasing their involvement in key government structures for children, such as the Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPCs), and improving access to local resources, too. They have also started to be visible in national gatherings that are relevant to child protection, as participants and as resource persons.

At the moment, the BTS NN is in the process of generating its own funds through membership fees, income from the BTS Advocacy Notebooks, and members' donations coming from their technical resource fees/allowances. The BTS NN looks forward to regularly conducting its annual conference, annual general assembly and an annual run for a cause starting 2018, as these would make them more connected to one another and, at the same time put the BTS advocacy on a wider scale at various levels.

Early this year, the BTS NN with SFI also mobilized a protest against the legislative proposal to lower the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) in the Philippines from 15 to 9 years, through a simultaneous nationwide noise barrage, signature campaign, press release, and formal complaint. The legislative proposal has been put on hold.

SFI's annual campaigns during the national Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Week (CSAAW) and World Safer Internet Day, both observed every February, and also the National Children's Month, observed every November, will be more extensive through and with the BTS National Network.



Partnership with National Government Agencies

SFI has been able to sustain its active engagement with national government agencies, namely, the Philippine National Police (PNP) - Women and Children Protection Desks (WCPDs), the Department of Social Welfare and Development - Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (DSWD's "4Ps" or "Pantawid" program) and the Department of Education (DepEd). SFI's work with national government agencies aims to reach to as many children and adults as possible, making child protection a part of these agencies' institutional strategies and policies, significantly contributing towards the creation of a wider environment that is more protective of children.

Aside from the NPTI, SFI has provided capacity-building sessions on child protection among the WCPDs in the National Capital Region (NCR), in the MIMAROPA Region, and in Zamboanga City. During the WCPD-NCR General Assembly cum Training on Media Protocol held at the SFI Training Center in Puerto Galera in March 2017, a Social Media Protocol for WCPDs was drafted. The draft protocol needs to be reviewed by the NCR Police Office and the WCPD before its inclusion in the internal guidelines and policies of the PNP. The CSAEP Training was also included in the 12-day WCPD Specialized Course on Investigation in May 2017.

With the DepEd, SFI and some of the trained BTS NN members have assisted more than 50 local partner schools in developing their localized child protection policies and also in initiating CSAEP and Cybersafe sessions among teachers and students.

Technological advancement offers endless opportunities for learning, but the benefits do not come free of risk. Amongst all its treasures, cyber space is loaded with traps, so there is an urgent need to capacitate and equip teachers, care givers and parents with knowledge and tools to help protect children in this relatively new and immensely appealing space.

Thus, an agreement was made between SFI and DepEd on enhancing their current Cybersafe initiative for schools, which will be improved and expanded. A Social Media Policy for Schools will be elaborated, and a draft case management system on child online protection will be created. A CyberSafe training strategy for schools was also devised. CyberSafe orientation kits will be designed for parents, who shall attend Parent Teacher Counselor Association (PTCA) meetings. The DepEd has committed to allocate funds for the CyberSafe initiative in 2018 onwards, tapping into Stairway for technical assistance.

SFI's partnership with the DSWD Pantawid program has also expanded and become stronger. As a poverty reduction program of the national government, the DSWD Pantawid program targets the four million poorest Filipino households who will have to undergo monthly Family Development Sessions (FDS) as part of their eligibility in the program. SFI aimed to reach these millions of Filipino households with CSAEP through the Family Development Sessions. A CSAEP module that can be used in the conduct of these sessions had been developed by SFI and DSWD Pantawid. In 2017, these Pantawid CSAEP modules were used during several trainings of DSWD NCR Pantawid key staff and their selected Civil Society Organization (CSO) partners, who are expected to facilitate CSAEP sessions among Pantawid households during their FDS.

In response to the increasing number of child sexual abuse cases in their locality, the Zamboanga City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) collaborated with SFI to reach all their DSWD Pantawid households with CSAEP session through the FDS. A

training of facilitators on CSAEP for FDS was conducted among 263 social workers and DSWD Pantawid staff of Zamboanga and Isabela cities. The training also gave emphasis on reporting protocols in handling and managing actual child sexual abuse cases. The Project Implementation Review (PIR) that was conducted after the 3-month implementation of CSAEP in FDS provided significant learning and insights on current practices of implementing CSAEP within DSWD Pantawid, including ways to address the challenge of the monitoring and feedback scheme of CSAEP advocacy within the DSWD Pantawid program. Action plans were also made based on the recommendations that were discussed. The PIR was attended by the DSWD Pantawid NCR Regional Program Coordinator and representatives from the DSWD Pantawid Regional Office of Zamboanga City.

As SFI intensifies its CSAEP Advocacy within DSWD Pantawid, it also addresses another equally important concern on the need to capacitate social workers, most especially the government social workers, in handling and managing actual cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation. More than 50 LGU and NGO social workers, Pantawid caseworkers and PNP WCPD personnel were trained in two separate batches on Management of Child Sexual Abuse Cases, one batch in the SFI training center in Puerto Galera and the other batch in Zamboanga City.

Significant results of SFI's engagement with the DSWD Pantawid program include the DSWD's realization of the strong need for it to incorporate a "Case Management Structure/Scheme" within the DSWD Pantawid program, as well as a Child Protection Policy (CPP) for the Pantawid program. The need for a CPP for the Pantawid program was evident in the discussions during the CPP Orientation that were conducted by SFI among selected DSWD Pantawid staff from the National Office and from Pantawid National Capital Region (NCR).

The #StopChildPornPh Training of Facilitators (TOF) for 35 DSWD regional officers and selected local NGO representatives was also conducted. The TOF was a means to expand the pool of trainers who will actively implement the StopChildPornPh modules co-developed by Stairway and the DSWD. Moreover, SFI facilitated a write-shop on expanding the modules to cover younger children. Attended by 25 participants, the write-shop's output shall be enhanced by SFI and the DSWD in time for its launch in 2018.



DepEd Undersecretary Muyot with curriculum writing team at Stairway.

Development of New Programmatic Approaches

SFI's animations on incest (Daughter), pedophilia (A Good Boy) and child sex trafficking and pornography (Red Leaves Falling) and the theatrical presentation, "Cracked Mirrors", have been effective as main advocacy and training tools. Numerous organizations continue to use the animations, and "Cracked Mirrors" made an indelible impact on more than 500 viewers in 2017 alone.

Recognizing the need to develop CSAEP training modules and advocacy materials that are more appropriate and effective to specific groups, SFI has assisted and facilitated the development of CSAEP training modules and materials for deaf groups and also for the Muslim communities. We assisted the Support and Empower Abused Deaf Children (SEADC) in developing their CSAEP modules for the deaf, which were launched at the same time with the BTS NN in February 2017. The development of the CSAEP Module for Muslim communities is still ongoing. A technical working group has been formed, composed of experts from the Western Mindanao State University, known Muslim institutions, and the Zamboanga City Social Welfare Development Office.

In recognition of a global need and an increasing demand for CSAEP trainings, we are progressing in developing an E-learning platform for CSAEP trainings. SFI's existing modules and materials will be altered into a format fit for on-line learning. A notable number of professionals and students have tested and commented on the materials with the aim to end up with a highly educational, captivating and user friendly material. While several modules of the platform have been concluded, the completion of the entire first edition of the platform is scheduled for 2018.

The collaboration with DepEd was extended with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signing between the DepEd, SFI, and the Internet and Mobile Marketing Association of the Philippines (IMMAP) for a tri-partite partnership on CyberSafe. IMMAP will provide technical and financial augmentation to the initiative in terms of social media advocacy (Project Unfriend to be launched in 2018) and chatbot set-up. In a CyberSafe orientation for the advocacy technical working group of IMMAP, the attendees were educated with the different child online protection issues. The partnership with IMMAP, nurtured by SFI, is significant, as we will be able to cover the social media domain, which we are not yet technically proficient in.

International Engagements

In 2017, we scaled up our outreach to our Asian neighbors with child online protection training and materials. CyberSafe trainings were held internationally for more than 100 participants in separate batches from Kindernothilfe (KNH) partners in Vietnam, Thailand, Bangladesh and Lebanon.

SFI conducted two CyberSafe training sessions for NGO Fontana Vietnam and a local Vietnamese school. SFI also enlisted 60 participants altogether. Aside from these, SFI participated in a cyber-safety forum in Hanoi, Vietnam, organized by NGO Fontana Vietnam. After all the sessions, the idea of how SFI can assist in localizing CyberSafe modules was noted, and agreements were made to further explore this local cultural contextualization of our Cybersafe materials.

We also facilitated a training of facilitators for NGO Fontana Vietnam, attended by 35 participants, followed by a Cyber Safe write-shop, where NGO Fontana organized a technical working group, and SFI assisted in drafting the initial module in Vietnamese context. There was an agreement that SFI will continue the training, with the aim that NGO Fontana will come up with the first CyberSafe modules in Vietnam.

Other Highlights and Challenges

Maintaining our position at the cutting edge of child protection in the Philippines, SFI has sustained its active involvement and contribution within the different national and regional inter-agency councils like the National Inter-agency Council against Child Pornography (IACACP), the Council for the Welfare of Children Sub-committee against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (CWC SACSEC), the Regional Sub-committee Council for the Welfare of Children (RSCWC), the Regional Inter-agency against Child Trafficking-Violence against Women and Children (RIACAT-VAWC), and the Regional Juvenile Justice Welfare Council (RJJWC).

SFI hosted and facilitated the meeting to enhance IACACP's current Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Model. The IACACP MDT design was enhanced using SFI's training expertise. The meeting was attended by the IACACP Secretariat, and the facilitators and members of the IACACP advocacy sub-committee (the International Justice Mission, the Asia Foundation, the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and the Philippine National Police (PNP) AngelNet).

SFI has also initiated the plan of lobbying within the national government for the presidential proclamation of the annual Philippines Safer Internet Day through the IACACP. We expect this to push through before the next Safer Internet Day in February 2018.

Pursuant to an invitation, SFI participated in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Digital Citizenship Conference, to share our experience in performing online safety initiatives. Recognized as a pioneer in the field, SFI serves as a member of the advisory board for UNICEF's Global Kids Online Survey, the largest global study on child online protection. The result of such a study is deemed beneficial for SFI as well, as it will serve as supplemental data for program development.

The Zamboanga CSWDO organized the BTS Children's Congress 2017 on November 23-24 to review the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other child-related laws with child/youth representatives, to teach online safety for children, and to promote the use of animation as a prevention strategy.

Challenges

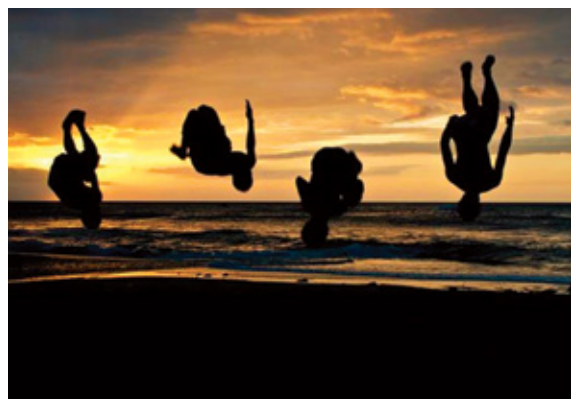
The limited human resource of the advocacy and capacity building team remains a challenge, especially with the fast-paced program expansion. The team was put under further stress, as we were forced to vacate our previous office at the Emilio Aguinaldo College and transfer to a far less attractive location under the same roof. A move out of the EAC building is imminent.

For over 27 years now, Stairway has been advocating children's rights, especially the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation in all forms. We remain ready to keep our knowledge and skills relevant with the demands of changing times and a changing society.

Youth for Change Program

Our Youth for Change Camps are getting more popular and are more in demand, so while some of our previous partner schools were not able to push through with their annual visit, new schools are in line to take their place. In 2017 we had students from the following schools visit:

Date	School
January 11-15, 2017	YFC Harvard
January 27, 2017	YFC Acacia Waldorf
February 5-9, 2017	YFC - Roedkilde Gymnasium
February 6- 10, 2017	YFC- International School Manila – Middle School
February 10 – 16, 2017	YFC- Singapore American School
April 3-7, 2017	Smokey Mountain Choir
April 21- 24, 2017	Winnipeg Student Teachers
August 12-17, 2017	DEAF and Hearing Camp with St. Benilde/ Adriatico Memorial School- Special Education Class for the Deaf
Dec. 11-14, 2017	YFC- ISM High School



The feedback from the visiting students and their teachers was overwhelming. Many express that their exposure to Stairway's work and the interaction with the children from our Family Home as well as the indigenous kids became a life altering experience.

The camps offer a whole variety of activities, from the Sea Adventure School, hiking in the mountains, visiting the homes of some of our indigenous scholars, visiting the farm and the feeding program, creation of art pieces, music presentations, drama and theater, basketball, football, snorkeling, kayaking and much more. While the rich array of exciting activities are important for active and meaningful interaction, it is sometimes the conversations and the bonding happening at mealtimes or while washing the dishes that will leave the greatest impact on the participants.

With the Youth for Change Camps we aim to challenge stereotyping and prejudices and build bridges of understanding and mutual respect between children and youth from extremely different walks of life. From the reflections we hear at the conclusion of every camp, we can see how this interaction builds empathy and compassion, and for many the camps even become a strong inspiration for their future direction in life.



Family Home Program

Every year we invite 12-14 boys, aged 10 to 14 years old, into our Family Home to engage in non-formal education, creative therapy, psychosocial interventions, livelihood skills training, and sports and recreation. The program is a living showcase of how a positive and caring environment can stimulate radical positive transformation in the lives of children. We have seasoned 27 years to develop and refine the recipe for care and education, and although there is no magic bullet that works for all, the intimate family model we practice has proven effective for more than 90% of the boys who have participated.

The Beneficiaries

Over the years there has been a tendency that most of the boys, whom we invite into the program, get younger and younger. For that reason, we decided that almost none of them were ready to leave Stairway after their first year in the program. Thus, only one of the boys left in 2017 to be reunited with his family. He was separated from his mother 16 years ago, and they were reunited last July 2017.

Replacing the departing teenager was a 10 year old boy with severe bodily disfigurements as a result of tuberculosis. Now, after six months of successful medical therapy and a healthy life, he looks and behaves nothing like a former patient. Overall, the whole group is continually thriving and developing physically, academically, socially and emotionally.



Academics, Sports and Creative Expressions

In order to help the students reach their learning objectives, we have modified and enhanced the lesson plans in each subject before the start of the new school year. We added Math drills through an online classroom called “Math Khan,” which helps enhance the students’ proficiency and skills. Their science skills and creative thinking are improved through experiments.

We are now using online software called “Class Dojo” to gauge the students’ work and progress. This software application is a digital classroom and behavior management tool wherein each student has a profile – complete with his avatar – to which teachers can assign positive and negative points. All our students have created their own email accounts, and they receive their weekly assessments templates using their accounts. This hits two birds with one stone: we do not only help the children’s computer proficiency and their confidence to work digitally, we also lessen our paper consumption.



Top right: Launching water rocket during science experiment.
Below: Lorax performance.

Recently, there were seven boys who took an acceleration exam trying to qualify into their secondary education. The results of the exam will supposedly be released within the first quarter of 2018, but experience hints that we will have to wait longer for the results.

The 14 Stairway boys, along with a number of children in our local community, have continued to grow in their theatrical performances. They have performed several Lorax plays, promoting an urgent environmental message to more than 1,500 local elementary school students and teachers, aside from the hundreds of other audiences visiting Stairway. As always, the Stairway children end the year on a theater high with the annual Christmas Show, “One Wish,” which has been running for the past 10 years. “One Wish” has become a tradition not only for Stairway, but for our community as well. Hundreds of people return every year to enjoy the evolving show. Aside from developing discipline and entertaining and educating hundreds of people, being on stage gives a well-deserved boost to the children’s self-esteem.

Moving on to sports, the boys’ football and basketball skills have been honed through regular coaching sessions facilitated by international volunteers, who have the qualifications to inspire and teach. We have had football teams from Manila visiting to run friendly tournaments, and the Stairway boys prove that they can compete at par with peers in the city clubs.

The beach and water sports continue to play a most significant role in the life of the Stairway boys. The latest cool beach activity is skim boarding, which they practice during their nearly daily trips to the beach. Swimming and snorkeling also remain a part of the weekly schedule. They have also continued their weekly sailing lessons at the Puerto Galera Yacht Club, and they were part of two separate Regattas. One of our boys won second place in the Open National Regatta for Optimist.



Our library was updated, after we received a new supply of books from Singapore American School.



Sailing
Skim-boarding at the beach.

Wood Workshop

The weekly sessions in the wood workshop continue to inspire and enhance the children's creative skills. We hope some of them will aspire to become professional crafts persons and seek further training and education in pursuit of such career.

Bakery and Cafe

The bakery is still a favorite training component, both for the practitioners and the consumers. Our boys continue to practice and improve their baking skills, which contribute greatly to the quality of our domestic food experience.

Seminars and Training for Staff

On the staff side of the program, four of the five staff members working directly with the Stairway boys have been attending external training this year for their continued personal and professional development.



Community Assistance Program

Stairway's Community Assistance Program includes educational assistance for poor and deserving students from our local community, a summer resource and recreational program, community education and crisis intervention, a school feeding program, a medical and a livelihood program for the local indigenous people.

For the general community, Stairway offers educational opportunities by providing awareness sessions on children's rights, child sexual abuse prevention (CSAP), environmental protection, adolescent reproductive health, child sex trafficking prevention and other issues relevant to children. Stairway Foundation also responds to child abuse cases from the community, which needs immediate intervention.

Local Advocacy on Children's Rights and Child Protection

In February 2017 we piloted a series of cyber safe workshops with 20 principals, guidance counsellors and teachers from high schools. The materials and the methodology used were newly created by SFI and DepEd, and the feedback from our local schools served as part of the initial testing nationwide. Following the workshops for the teachers, hundreds of students were provided orientation on how to be safe online.

Numerous workshops and trainings on children's rights and prevention of child sexual abuse were facilitated for a broad variety of audiences throughout the year. The following are the orientations and training seminars conducted in the community in 2017.

Description of Participants	Orientation or Training/Seminar Conducted	No. of participants
Parents of beneficiaries of educational assistance program	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	208 parents
Beneficiaries of educational assistance program	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	164 students
Puerto Galera Academy teachers	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	31 teachers
Primary school teachers from Puerto Galera	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	122 teachers
Beneficiaries of 4P's	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	121 students
Grade 6 students	Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child sexual Abuse Prevention	30 students
Principals, Guidance counselors and teachers from 4 local High school	Cybersafe Training of Trainers	20 teachers
Students from Puerto Galera National High School	Film showing of Audrie and Daisy-A film on Social Media bullying as part of Safer Internet Day Celebration	291 students
		Total 987

Educational Assistance

For school year 2016-2017 the educational assistance program catered to 355 students from primary to college. Among the 355 supported, 314 were able to finish the school year. There are various reasons why beneficiaries stopped schooling. Early relationship and school difficulties were the major ones. Other reasons include pregnancy, financial difficulties, family problems and illness. Interventions were conducted to prevent beneficiaries from dropping school through life skills sessions, home visits, school visits, family conference, individual counselling, stakeholders' meetings and other interventions.

In school year, 2017-2018, there are 440 beneficiaries from primary to college level. Among the 440 beneficiaries, 34 are in primary school, 359 in secondary, 41 in college and 6 in vocational. As of December, 430 beneficiaries were still in the program and 10 stopped for various reasons. Academic difficulties are the most prevalent reasons for dropping out. Other reasons include early relationship (eloping with boyfriend/girlfriend), pregnancy, illness and smoking marijuana.



skills sessions were focused on a number of issues facing adolescents such as early relationship, pregnancy, family problem, financial difficulties, gadgets usage, peer pressure, alcohol, cigarette and drug abuse, school difficulties (bullying and discrimination) and online game addiction. Life skills for college beneficiaries also focused on time management, financial management, study habits, sex and sexuality. By school year 2017-2018 we can observe a decreasing number of cases of early relationship and pregnancy. There is also a significant decrease of drop outs in SY 2017-2018, which can partly be explained by the introduction of a strengthened monitoring system allowing for early intervention.

At a meeting with principals and guidance counsellors from 4 high school campuses, it was agreed that the guidance counsellors will submit monthly school attendance to SFI and inform us if our beneficiaries incur absences without notice. This system allows us to be prompt in providing intervention to children with special needs. Another agreement with the partner schools is submission of the quarterly grades to SFI through email. We are now able to monitor the grades of beneficiaries timely and pay attention to students with low grades/marks or sudden downward fluctuations. The enhanced collaboration with the partner schools and the digital sharing of our scholars' grades has vastly improved the efficiency of our work.

The table below summarizes the services and intervention provided to beneficiaries for SY 2016-2017.

Accomplishment	Reached
Provision of school supplies	293
Provision of monthly allowance to primary beneficiaries	30
Provision of monthly allowance to secondary beneficiaries	272
Provision of tuition fee to vocational beneficiaries every semester	3
Provision of tuition fee to college beneficiaries every semester	50
Provision of lunch meals to IP beneficiaries from Monday-Friday	35
Provision of school uniform and PE uniform, school bag etc. to IP beneficiaries	53
Intervention to beneficiaries with special needs	28
Weekday tutorial session to IP from Monday-Thursday	26
Weekend tutorial twice a month on Saturdays	26
Life skills session	106
Stakeholders meeting	5 meetings in 4 campuses

School Year 2017-2018

Accomplishment	Reached
Assessment of candidates	249 assessed, 145 admitted
Provision of school supplies	415
Provision of monthly allowance to primary and secondary beneficiaries	393
Provision of tuition fee to vocational and college beneficiaries every semester	41
Provision of lunch meals to IP beneficiaries from Monday-Friday in 3 campuses	49
Provision of school uniform and PE uniform, school bag etc. to IP beneficiaries	65
Intervention to beneficiaries with special needs	17
Summer tutorial to Non-IP with low grades in Math and English	10
Computer class to incoming grade 7 and high school IP beneficiaries	24
Distribution of English and Math work-books to IP beneficiaries	60
Weekday tutorials to IP beneficiaries from Monday-Thursday	34
Weekend tutorial twice a month on Saturdays	34
Team building of IP and Non-IP students	54 students & 10 teachers
Life skills session	220
Meeting with principals and guidance counsellors from 4 high school campuses	4 principals & 4 guidance counsellors
Monthly monitoring of beneficiaries at school	359
Stakeholders meeting	8 meetings in 4 campuses

The table below shows the profile of SFI Educational Assistance Beneficiaries in SY 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

Profile of Beneficiaries SY 2016-2017				Profile Of Beneficiaries SY 2017-2018			
Level	Non-IP	IP	Total	Level	Non-IP	IP	Total
Primary	29	1	30	Primary	33	1	34
Secondary	219	53	272	Secondary	298	61	359
Vocational	3	0	3	Vocational	5	1	6
College	47	3	50	College	34	7	41
Total	298	57	355	Total	370	70	440

Beneficiaries receive various levels of assistance depending on their needs. All beneficiaries were provided school supplies before opening of classes. College and vocational beneficiaries are receiving tuition fee every semester. Secondary beneficiaries receive monthly allowance for transportation and school projects. Primary school beneficiaries receive monthly allowance for school needs or food. Generally, indigenous beneficiaries receive more services because of their special needs.

The Indigenous Community

In 2010, we extended our community outreach to include a remote settlement of indigenous people in a village called Baclayan. Our vision for this community is to break the perpetual cycle of poverty, eliminate discrimination, and mitigate teen marriages and early pregnancies; all through a sustainable and environmentally sound community development plan. Our main strategies to reach these long term goals are to enhance the quality of education and to increase the number of children attending school. To offer some context and a better understanding of the current situation with our indigenous children beneficiaries, we will take a brief look back at the developments over the past few years.

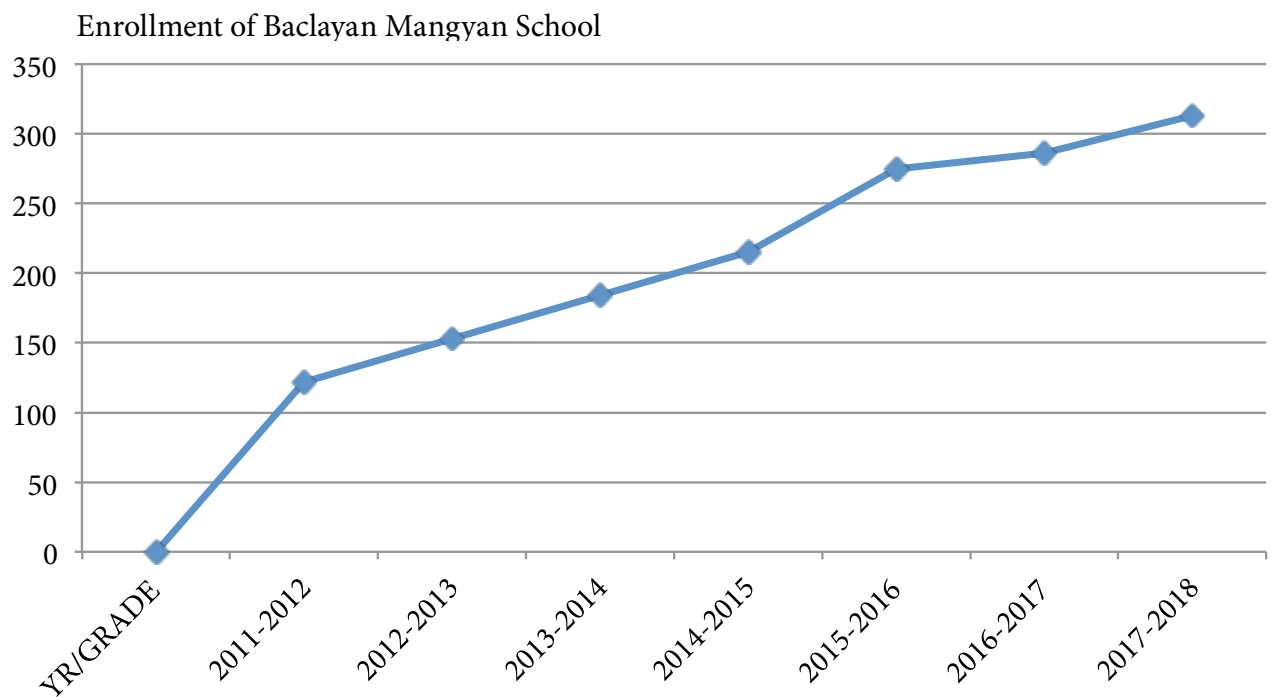
Our first activity in the indigenous community was a needs analysis/community assessment. Although more than 100 students were enrolled in the local elementary school, less than 20% showed up on a regular basis. The needs analysis revealed that the main reason for the children's absence was hunger.

In January 2011 we started the feeding program, and the number of children regularly attending class increased dramatically almost overnight. Looking at the attendance at the school and the health conditions of the children, the impact of the feeding and support program in Baclayan village is evident. At the beginning of this school year, there were 32 malnourished and underweight children, but five months later all of them were in a good healthy condition. They had gained weight and the necessary energy to grow and learn. The school supplies, the rain gear, the feeding and the health clinic are all initiatives helping everybody in the community. For the poorest of the families, these services mean everything.

The chart below shows the number of children enrolled per year in the Baclayan School, distributed by grade levels. The increased number of enrolled children is one indicator of positive impact of the feeding and support program for the students

YR/GRADE	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Kinder	0	12	14	36	50	29	40
Grader 1	29	47	46	33	40	46	37
Grader 2	24	24	40	53	50	38	42
Grader 3	21	17	28	33	61	52	42
Grader 4	21	20	19	24	38	63	52
Grader 5	14	20	18	18	23	40	64
Grader 6	13	13	19	18	13	18	36
TOTAL	122	153	184	215	275	286	313

Development in Enrollment from School Year 2011- 2012 up to the Present



While the growth in school enrollment from before we started the Baclayan program until today is already a positive indicator, the growth in the number of students actually attending classes regularly is a lot more impressive and a more significant indicator of progress. While there were 122 children enrolled in the school in 2011 when we started the program in Baclayan, the actual average number of kids attending class was less than 20% of the number enrolled. Enrollment figures masked low attendance and high drop-out rates. The real numbers were never made official as they would reflect poorly on the teachers and the management in their annual individual performance contract and review, which consequently would affect their performance based bonuses.

While the gap between children enrolled and children attending classes was still around 50% during the last school year, it is a remarkable improvement from previous years. With an average attendance so far of nearly 187 out of 313 students enrolled (60%) for the current school year, there is a tendency that the gap between enrollment and attendance is narrowing.

One major motivation for the Indigenous People (IP) to enroll their children in school is the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD's) Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) Program. This program provides cash grants to indigent people in the country as long as they comply with certain conditions, one being that their children are enrolled in and attend school. As it appears from the chart below, the attending portion of the bargain is not taken so seriously, but due to poor reporting from the schools, that is of little consequence.



Baclayan Mangyan School SY 2015-2016

Grade Level	Total Enrolled	Percentage of Attendance Compliance	Average of Class Attendance
Kinder	51	28%	14
Grade 1	38	55%	21
Grade 2	45	59%	27
Grade 3	61	48%	29
Grade 4	32	58%	22
Grade 5	33	48%	15
Grade 6	13	70%	9
TOTAL	273	50%	137

Baclayan Mangyan School SY 2016-2017

Grade Level	Total Enrolled	Percentage of Attendance Compliance	Average of Class Attendance
Kinder	29	38%	11
Grade 1	46	40%	18
Grade 2	38	55%	21
Grade 3	52	48%	24
Grade 4	63	50%	31
Grade 5	40	65%	26
Grade 6	18	67%	12
TOTAL	286	50%	143

Baclayan Mangyan School SY 2017- 2018 (till November)

Grade Level	Total Enrolled	Percentage of Attendance Compliance	Average of Class Attendance
Kinder	40	-	-
Grade 1	37	-	-
Grade 2	42	-	-
Grade 3	42	-	-
Grade 4	52	-	-
Grade 5	64	-	-
Grade 6	36	-	-
TOTAL	313	60%	187

Absence from school and dropping out of school are evidently major challenges with the indigenous students. We have addressed the issue at quarterly stakeholders' meetings participated in by parents, teachers, the local government unit (LGU) and other stakeholders. Below is a brief summary of issues discussed and actions taken.

Summary of Reasons for Absence	Actions Taken by SFI
Bad weather conditions	Provision of rain gear to all BMS students
Sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical check-up and provision of medicine - Health Education on Proper hygiene and Dental Care for Children. Maternal and Child care orientation/ workshops to the parents. - Education on Adolescent Reproductive Health for children ages 10 years old and above
Distance from school	The feeding has pulled in many more children from far away. They will, however, always be the first ones to be absent due to bad weather. Giving everybody rain coats, slippers and boots has helped though.
Indifference to formal education and laziness	Discussed with parents during PTA meeting to encourage their children to go to school. Still many of the IP parents have little recognition of the value of formal education for their children.
Teachers absent, late or attending seminars or training workshopst	Almost all teachers live down the mountain and getting to school by foot or motorcycle is extremely uncomfortable and even risky during days of inclement weather. We proposed (starting January 2017) to make a daily transport service for the teachers, which was initially met with great enthusiasm from almost all, but it was vetoed by the principal. Teachers' high frequency of being absent remains a significant disturbance in the education of the indigenous students. With the opening of the Children Health and Education Center, adjacent to the school, we will offer the kids an alternative learning space with books, games and musical instruments, when their classes are canceled.

Academic Performance of the Baclayan Mangyan School Students

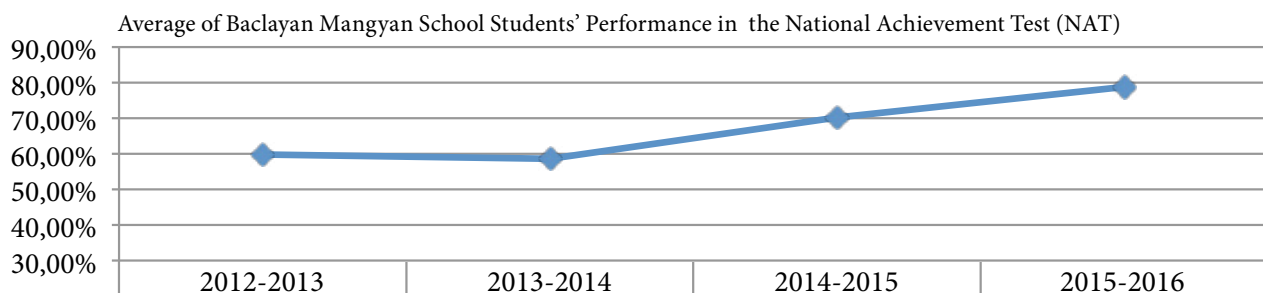
With the above numbers and charts, we can establish that despite attendance rates as low as 50% for last school year and 60% for the current school year, many more children go to school now. It is one thing to get more children to attend school, but how do the increased numbers affect the quality and the outcome of the education? To gauge whether the children actually learn more with full bellies, we can take a glance at the Baclayan Mangyan School's score in the National Achievement Test (NAT), which is a set of examinations taken in the Philippines by students in Years 6, 10, and 12. Students are given a national standardized test designed to determine their academic levels, strengths and weaknesses.

Since these numbers are coming from the National Department of Education (DepEd), it is a more reliable gauge on impact than we can hope to get from any local institution.

NAT Performance in Baclayan Mangyan School from School Year 2012-13 up to School Year 2015-16

Nat VI	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Math	63.85%	72.61%	80.00%	79.41%
English	52.69%	53.75%	80.95%	81.76%
Science	47.50%	45.80%	65.48%	81.91%
Filipino	71.35%	70.23%	70.95%	75.74%
Hekasi	63.27%	50.57%	54.17%	75.62%
Average	59.73%	58.59%	70.31%	78.85%

Increase of NAT Performance Average of Baclayan Mangyan School Students from School Year 2012- 13 to Present



We see here a significant increase in the students' performance from school year 2012-2013 and up to the most recent NAT results, which were for school year 2015-2016. There is a 19.12% increase of the school's performance within the four years they have participated in the NAT. This is an indication that the feeding and the support from our community assistance program has not only pulled more kids into the classrooms and made them healthier, it has actually also made them perform better. The DepEd should get credit for allocating more resources to the Baclayan School, as the student body has been growing. Our collaboration and positive relationship with the national level of the DepEd have most likely contributed to their prompt response to the changing and increasing needs of the Baclayan School.



The Transition from the Baclayan Mangyan School to the Mainstream National High School

Another gauge meter to see if we are reaching our goals is the number of students finishing grade 6 moving on into high school, and how they fare. Traditionally, very few IP children would make it to high school, and even fewer would graduate from high school and enter college. In order to enhance the Baclayan elementary students' academic and social skills and ease their transition into the mainstream high school, we continue to facilitate regular tutorials for grade 6 students in Math and English twice a week. Furthermore, twice a month, they have weekend tutorials in the Stairway camp house, combined with socializing, playing games, gardening and occasionally watching a movie. When we have volunteers to join these activities, the students are given an opportunity to practice and improve their English skills.

The chart below shows the number of grade 6 students graduating from Baclayan Mangyan School, grouped per school year; the number entering high school; the number and percentage that stayed in high school; and the number and percentage that dropped out of school.

School Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
No. of graduates from the record of BMS	13	13	19	18	13	18
Actual no. of students who graduated in grade 6 from Baclayan Mangyan School	9	13	19	15	13	18
Actual no. who enrolled in High School	7	7	18	14	11	15
Presently enrolled	3	4	7	9	7	13
Presently enrolled %	43%	57%	39%	65%	64%	85%
Dropped	4	3	11	5	4	2
Dropped %	57%	43%	61%	35%	36%	15%

Aside from the drop-out peak in school year 2013-14, again there is a positive tendency that the gap between enrollment and attendance is narrowing. The 61% drop out from the school year 2013-14 class did not come as a surprise to us. At the time, we had not yet introduced the tutor program for grade 6 students, but we already practiced an extended summer camp for the grade 6 graduates at Stairway, in preparation for them beginning high school. During this camp, we detected that the academic level of a majority of the students was exceptionally low, ranging around our expectations for grade 3 to grade 4 students. We consequently proposed to run a bridge class for the 11 weakest students in the class, for a year. The principal and the teachers supported the idea, but some barrio officials dissuaded the parents, arguing that it would mean an additional year before their children would graduate from high school and help provide for their families. Interestingly and sadly, exactly 11 students dropped out of this particular class within their first year of high school.

Interventions to Prevent IP Students from Dropping Out

First of all, we now do more to help raise the academic performance level and the social competencies of the graduating grade 6 students. Our interventions in this area have been intensified over the past couple of years as we have witnessed the challenge for so many students in their transition from the local barrio primary school into the mainstream high school. Currently, we offer extra tutorial classes for grade 6 students two days a week, weekend tutorials twice a month, computer classes at Stairway during some weekends (because there is neither power nor computers in Baclayan Mangyan School), and intensive preparation camps during the summer vacation before entering into high school. The summer camps focus on Computer Literacy, Math, English, and Swimming Lessons, but they also bring in older students to share their experiences transitioning into high school. The interaction between the incoming grade 7 students and the older indigenous students builds a healthy support system, and it is also the older students who will be the tutors of the younger students, once they are in grade 7.

The tutoring sessions every Monday through Thursday afternoons, and the weekend tutorials, are not reserved for the grade 7 students only. They are established and designed to offer help to any of our high school beneficiaries who need help and support.



One of the major challenges of the indigenous students is that they do not have any books, but with the help from a number of international school students, we were able to provide sixty (60) high school IP scholars from 6 campuses with mathematics and English books.

Another measure to help prevent our beneficiaries from dropping out of school is a newly enhanced system monitoring the attendance and performance of the students closely. Whenever we see “red flags,” we schedule a meeting with the student to try to understand his or her reason for being absent or running failing grades. If this meeting will not lead to improvement, we request a meeting with the teachers, school counselor and the parents. Here, the situation is discussed, and we try to mobilize comprehensive support for the child. Most “red flags” are averted through these procedures, but there are still too many indigenous children dropping out. The most common reasons for the IP students to discontinue their education are early pregnancies and early marriages, which are very common in the IP tradition and culture. As a response, we facilitate Youth Reproductive Health workshops for all our IP scholars already when they are in grade 5 and 6, and again at a later time during their high school years. The Life Skills Seminars are also designed to try to address issues that could contribute to higher drop-out rates.

The statistics and the bit of history shared here indicate that there are still huge challenges in lifting the level of education amongst the Mangyan children. But, we do see remarkable developments over the few years we have worked with the community, and we have many positive and impressive stories of success. In school year 2016-17, eight of the 24 IP junior high students were the top academic achievers of their classes. They also received awards for perfect attendance and, on top of that, they were active in extra-curricular activities and in providing tutor help to their younger peers. Having Mangyan students excel academically is a new and extremely gratifying experience, as it defies the negative discriminating stigma of them being inferior in intelligence and academic performance. Until now, it has been almost unheard of to have IP beneficiaries become top achievers in their first year in high school, but with the right stimulation and support, many of them excel in their later high school years. We have, however, one grade 7 IP scholar, who is an outstanding exception. This is a girl, whom we are particularly close to, as we have counseled her and supported her in filing a case in court after she was raped by an older male relative. She is a 15 year old indigenous girl from an extremely poor family, a rape survivor, and number one in her class in mainstream high school among 35 other students. We can’t ask for much better inspiration than that!

Other Significant Developments and Activities

Almost all high school scholars enjoy bi-monthly weekend tutorials as well as daily peer tutorials after classes from Monday to Thursday. While the tutorials were initially run by Stairway staff and volunteers, the school has now fully engaged and provides a teacher to manage the sessions. The principle of using peer tutors from the Special Science Class, who are academically advanced, is still the same. The school’s recognition of the value of the program was further manifested as they allocated the Science Laboratory as the venue for the tutorials, and an Internet connection was set up so that students can also do their research projects.

Lastly, with meals and transportation provided by Stairway, 60 students from Baclayan Mangyan Elementary School participated in the DepEd’s Science Fun Caravan at Calapan City. The activity was initiated by the Philippine Foundation for Science and Technology (PFST), designed to promote Science and Technology Consciousness among the youth from various sectors of society.

Organic Farm

Stairway's organic farm in Baclayan continues to serve as a venue for weekend and summer camps. It offers all our indigenous scholars and many of our other scholars an introduction into organic or sustainable gardening. It also remains a source of clean organic green produce, which enhances the nutritional value of the meals served at Stairway and at the Baclayan school feeding program.

The year 2017 started out on a challenging note after a super typhoon with wind speed of around 185kph and gusts up to 250kph ravaged Puerto Galera on the 26th of December 2016. While the first few months of 2017 were more of recovery than development, we had still managed to produce more than 800 kilos of assorted vegetables and fruits over the year. The hundreds of coconut trees on the land also generated income from the production of copra and coco lumber. The lumber was utilized for various construction projects at Stairway.

The farm operation, however, has many challenges. We see a big gap in skills and knowledge among the current team of farm workers. While we have not yet been able to find and recruit a professional agriculturist to manage the farm, we were able to upgrade the skills of our workers through a comprehensive training session on concepts and principles of organic farming, facilitated by the Agricultural and Training Institute (ATI) last August. In addition to our farm workers, the training session was attended by six selected women from the Mangyan community, along with two Mangyan scholars who volunteer at the farm during weekends. Aside from applying what they have learned in maintaining and developing their small organic gardens in their village, the women can be tapped as extra help during the peak season for tasks at our growing farm.



Workshop for indigenous women in Baclayan.



Construction of Children's Health and Education Center

We had expected and hoped to build and start the operation of the Children Health and Education Center (CHEC) with a sports/play court early in 2017, but this plan was conflicted by a long drawn delay in the road construction for the wind turbine project that is currently ongoing above the Baclayan village. It was only in early November that we could finally break ground and start building, after we got involved and brokered an agreement between the company building the road and the land owners affected. The delayed commencement of the construction led to several good things: we have been able to secure additional support for the project from other partners, including the company behind the wind turbine project that caused the delay.

The completion and the opening of the CHEC, including the sports/play court, are projected for the second quarter 2018.



Medical Assistance

Our medical assistance to the Baclayan community was somehow sporadic over 2017, but nearly 300 patients received treatment and free medicine. With the opening of the CHEC, we will make the operation of the medical clinics more regular, to be facilitated twice a month. The center will also have a nurse present three days a week. The nurse can manage most of the minor concerns presented and make sure that the patients will get to a doctor, when needed.

As we plan to have a collaborative project with the local women in developing an herbal and medical garden adjacent to the CHEC, we had a university student from Denmark as an intern facilitating a small study within the Baclayan community on the practice, the preference and the use of traditional and western medicine among the villagers. The study concluded a definite relevance promoting continued or even enhanced use of herbal medicines when suitable. It is, for example, very important to convey to the people that they are much better off sticking to ginger tea rather than antibiotics to cure a slightly sore throat. The CHEC will not strictly focus on educating children. We also aim to run a great variety of classes, especially for the women in the community, with subjects ranging from reproductive health and family planning to literacy and livelihood classes. As much as possible, all health related orientations and workshops will be conducted in collaboration with local government health professionals.



Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth (EACY)

The EACY initiative was conceptualized back in 2012 and aims to inspire and educate the local population of school children to better appreciate and protect the beautiful and vulnerable environment that they live in. We hope to help develop a generation of children and youth with new values and sincere appreciation for nature, who will demonstrate an active concern for environmental conservation. The program takes place in three locations, namely, the Stairway stage, the Sea Adventure School (SAS), and the Stairway organic farm.

There are endless reasons why pushing for a better informed population regarding the many environmental threats we are facing today is called for. One particularly unfortunate reason here is that the Philippines holds a very sad record in being the most dangerous place in Asia to be an environmental activist. Quoted from the Philippine Daily Inquirer:

“A London-based non-government organization has once again tagged the Philippines as the most dangerous country in Asia and third across the globe for environmental activists.

In its annual report titled “Defenders of the Earth” released on Thursday, Global Witness called 2016 the “worst year ever” for green advocates due to activist killings “both growing and spreading” worldwide, with at least 200 killed in 24 countries, up from 185 killed in 16 countries in 2015.

At least 200 land and environmental activists were slain protecting forests, rivers and land from mining, logging and agricultural companies—the highest annual number on record, the watchdog group said.

With 28 activists killed in the Philippines in 2016, the country remains the worst in Asia for the fourth year running, or since 2013 when Global Witness first launched its international report.

For 2016, the Philippines also ranked third worldwide for the most number of killings, following only Colombia with 37 and Brazil with 49.” Quote end.

Sad to say that the statistics for 2017 have not changed the ranking from the previous 3 years, according to a recent article in the Guardian!

EACY Program Merging Local, National and International Initiatives

A major threat to our local and global environment is the constantly increasing plastic pollution posing a threat to basically the entire global food chain, including our supply of drinking water. While it is a global problem, we can contribute towards a solution through local action for a change in human behavior. As it is always the case when instigating any lasting change in human behavior, it starts with awareness. Throughout 2017, plastic pollution has been a major focus of EACY, leading to a large number of small scale and large scale activities, locally and internationally.

Beginning with the international side, we have partnered up with A Plastic Ocean Foundation which, earlier in the year, released the rather shocking documentary, A Plastic Ocean. We contacted the American based foundation and obtained its permission to use the film in our local advocacy, which has resulted in dozens of showings for thousands of students, teachers, parents and community officials. There is no doubt that the film really touches its audiences, but we believed that the impact could be enhanced further if we could present it with Filipino subtitles. Therefore, with the blessing of the producers, we ended up translating and adding subtitles to the 22 minutes condensed version of the film.

Along with another important documentary film on the effect of climate change, *Chasing Corals*, the showing of *A Plastic Ocean* has become a set part of the program when we host international students from around the world. Our Youth for Change camps in 2017 have included students from international schools in the Philippines, Singapore, China, Denmark, and from Harvard University in the USA. Aside from watching the documentaries, the students also watched our theatrical rendition of Dr. Seuss' "The Lorax." Concluding their exposure, which also included immersion with the Sea Adventure School (SAS), we challenged the students to come up with ideas and plans on what they can do in their capacities and localities to help us move towards a more sustainable development, with environmental concerns at the top of our priorities.

In October, we kicked off a local Marine Waste Art Campaign with an art workshop facilitated by five French and Filipino artists and participated in by 40 kids from the Stairway Family Home, selected EACY Club members and students from the National High School. The aim was to create art from garbage, so the workshop started with a beach clean-up, in which most of the materials for the day's activities were collected, supplemented only with previously collected waste from our recycling station. The day was naturally concluded with a performance of "The Lorax". Aside from the artists and the youth participants, the audience counted a group of 40 social workers from the national office of the DSWD, who could leave Stairway the following day with the added value of their child protection training program in the form of an increased and, hopefully, active concern for our environment.





The art workshop produced some spectacular art pieces, and what the students learned can be applied in their own future creations of marine art installations to be made from the garbage they will collect from around their communities, beaches and schools. Throughout 2018, we will run a contest among all our local schools and villages in creating the most impressive sculptures out of garbage. The competition will serve as an important part in educating our local communities on proper sorting and disposal of waste.

The five French artists spent nearly two months in the Philippines and worked with several groups of children in Metro Manila, aside from the Stairway children and students. Selected pieces of the art work produced during their stay were exhibited at the Museo Pambata (Children's Museum) in Manila, where the advocacy for a more responsible use and disposal of plastic continues after the artists' departure. The executive director of Museo Pambata is a friend and a former colleague at Stairway, and we have a long tradition of collaboration in all sorts of child rights advocacies, which offers great opportunities for extended exposure and upscaling of our local initiatives.

Local Initiatives and Collaboration

In terms of networking and collaboration with the local government, we had some amazing benchmarks in 2017. The benefits of our partnership with the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) of Puerto Galera have been manifested at different levels. Fish feeding used to be an encouraged activity among tourists in Puerto Galera, but since it was recognized that it has a negative impact on the marine diversity, Stairway and Puerto Galera MENRO started a "No Fish Feeding" campaign late 2016. According to Puerto Galera MENRO Chief, Ms. Joan Yap, they observed a significant drop in fish feeding activities in 2017. The MENRO chief noted that: "The conduct of the Sea Adventure School for the different barangay officials of the whole municipality has influenced the attitude of the officials. MENRO now has local partners in the barangays for the dissemination and information drive among their constituents. The Barangay Captains and the council members have pledged to consider the creation of barangay ordinances prohibiting the fish feeding activity in their areas of jurisdictions."



Aside from the many teachers and students, who have watched the Lorax, the show has been seen and discussed by hundreds of guests and locals over the past year.



Our collaboration with the municipal government has reached the level of policy and decision making. Stairway has been invited to be the partner NGO member of various local advisory bodies, like the Municipal Solid Waste Management Board, the Technical Working Group and Management Committee for UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, and the Sabang Bay Water Quality Management Committee. These positions offer us influence on the local legislation and execution of environmental policies. Puerto Galera MENRO's decision to invite us is a fantastic breakthrough, as it indicates its recognition of Stairway in the context of environmental protection, too. It also indicates that the local government and Puerto Galera MENRO are serious about their environmental policies and practices, and seemingly intend to be transparent in their operations. All very new and promising!

The first 2 years after the Sea Adventure School (SAS) was officially endorsed by the DepEd, the teacher/educator role on the floating classroom was still facilitated by Stairway personnel. At the onset of 2017, Science teachers from both public and private local high schools took on the facilitation of the SAS sessions, and they now treat the boat like their own science classroom. Science educators from the four public high schools of Puerto Galera, along with three private high schools in Puerto Galera, piloted this milestone after undergoing SAS training workshops that were wrapped up by evaluation sessions during the first quarter of the year.

In 2017 we ran more SAS trips than ever and reached a much larger and more diverse group of partners. The SAS has become a great motivator for mobilizing a variety of interest groups in a growing campaign for protecting our environment.

Sea Adventure School (SAS) Trips during 2017

Date	School/Group	Number of Participants
01/10/2017	Teachers Workshop/Training	8
01/14/2017	YFC-Harvard + SFI Kids	31
01/24/2017	PGNHS-SSC	34
01/31/2017	PGNHS-Main	25
02/01/2017	PGNHS-Main	25
02/02/2017	PGNHS-Main	24
02/07/2017	YFC-Roedkilde Gymnasium	31
02/08/2017	PGNHS-Main	26
02/09/2017	ISM+SFI Kids	28
02/10/2017	PGNHS-Main	28
02/15/2017	YFC-Singapore American School + SFI	22
02/16/2017	PGNHS-SI	25
02/17/2017	PGNHS-SI	26
02/21/2017	PGNHS-SI	19
02/22/2017	PGNHS-SI	24
02/23/2017	PGNHS-Dulangan	26
03/07/2017	PGNHS-Dulangan + PGA teachers	34
03/10/2017	PGA+ PPC and Gloder's Teachers	30
03/14/2017	Puerto Galera Academy	27
03/15/2017	PGA	27
03/17/2017	PGA	28
03/19/2017	DWC-MAEd Students	21
03/20/2017	PGA	25
03/21/2017	PGA	22
03/30/2017	PGA	21
04/19/2017	PGNHS-SI Teachers	18
04/23/2017	Winnepeg/ UPLB Chorale Ensemble	34
04/26/2017	PG Central Elem School	24
04/27/2017	DepEd Cybersafe TWG	9
05/07/2017	Army Reservists	24
05/19/2017	Palangan Integrated School	22
Total for 1st half of 2017		768
10/01/2017	DWC-MAEd Students	39
10/07/2017	OMNHS-Senior High Teachers	21
10/08/2017	People Organization	28
10/12/2017	People Organization	25
10/19/2017	DepEd ManCom	15
10/26/2017	People Organization	19
10/28/2017	OMNHS-STEM Students	31
11/03/2017	People Organization	26
11/05/2017	OMNHS-STEM Students	35
11/11/2017	OMNHS-STEM Students	41
11/14/2017	People Organization	20
11/22/2017	Prince of Peace College	31
11/24/2017	Gloder's College	24
11/28/2017	Puerto Galera Academy (PGA)	32
11/29/2017	PGA	32
12/01/2017	PGA	35
12/08/2017	PGA	34
Total for 2nd half of 2017		488
Total SAS trips for 2017 (Until December 8,2017)		48
Total Number of Participants		1,256



SAS as a Motivator

Over the second half of 2017 an increasing number of local civic organizations have approached Stairway and expressed interest to join the SAS and become part of the growing local environmental movement. We can see that the EACY concept is spreading from the children and the youth to a broader group of the local communities. In many villages, Saturday morning has become a time for communal cleaning of their beaches and barrios, which is a great activity to further tie the community members together around a common interest. EACY and SAS have also made a name and a reputation in the city of Calapan 60 kilometers from Puerto Galera. We are having more requests for engagement with students and teachers from there than we can even accommodate.

Over the last quarter of 2017, we conducted 11 SAS trips in addition to the regular trips for high school students. The groups included five People's Organizations (POs) involved in conservation work in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Puerto Galera and nearby municipalities. Another group consisted of graduate students and educators taking up Advanced Ecology and Scientific Research at a major college in Calapan. After their trip, the educators submitted action plans to carry out environmental awareness campaign activities to a number of schools within the province, where they are teaching. Their planned activities include organizing talks, film showings, community cleanups, mangrove planting, and reaching out to other sectors in their respective communities. Several other groups from the academe in Calapan had their first SAS experience, and they all tie the trip in with a line of activities in their local communities.



Other School Related EACY Activities

The largest public high school in Puerto Galera (1,600 students) has collected thousands of plastic bottles along with a lot of other plastic waste, which the school will use to create a plastic wall that serves as a backdrop for an “Under the Sea Corner.” The corner will make up a physical space for the school’s advocacy for active environmental concern.

Another local high school has adopted a mangrove forest, wherein the school has facilitated weekly weekend cleanups since August. According to their Science teacher coordinator, they were able to clean the area for six consecutive weeks, and they gathered about 400 sacks of wood and bamboo debris and 50 sacks of plastics. As they cleaned the area, they found a lot of propagules and planted about 800 new mangrove trees.

Since the installation of our new LED stage lights early in the year, more than 1,500 students and teachers from local schools have come to Stairway to watch the enhanced version of “The Lorax.” The colorful and entertaining play with the poignant message is particularly useful in addressing the younger audiences and make them understand that they, too, have a responsibility and can make a difference. A special interactive portion addressing the issue of plastic waste was added, so audiences of all ages understand the need for a change in our current use and disposal of this wonderfully durable and potentially extremely destructive material. After each performance, we handed out Lorax eco bags to the audience to encourage them and their families to lessen the use of plastics when they shop in the market.



Potential Expansion of DepEd Collaboration

The reputation of the Sea Adventure School (SAS) has spread. The enthusiasm and appreciation for the floating classroom among teachers and principals in our province were clearly manifested when the head of our regional DepEd office requested to join a trip with a number of other DepEd officials. The director recognized the profound educational value of the immersion, and she is now exploring how to replicate SAS among more schools in coastal communities within the region, which is composed of five provinces. Again, the attraction of SAS opens up the door to enter into the schools with a more comprehensive environmental curriculum addressing numerous ways that altered human behavior will have a positive impact on conservation and protection of our marine environment, among others.



EACY Club Initiates Ecological Solid Waste Management

The EACY Club chapters, present in 10 villages, have embarked on three projects, with the aim to reduce and recycle solid waste at the community level. This is an initiative that will reduce the amount of plastic ending up in the sea.

It makes little sense to have our SAS students pull out a ton of garbage from a single mangrove area in only one season, if we do not systematically address the problem of people continuing to drop their garbage onto hillsides or into the creeks and rivers eventually leading into the sea.

In a Waste Analysis Characterization Study (WACS) done by Puerto Galera MENRO back in 2012, it was found that 60 % of the daily waste generated and collected by the municipality was biodegradable. Recyclables counted for about 10% and residual waste around 30%. According to the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001, the municipality should only collect residual waste. The households, the business institutions and the village government units should be responsible for their recyclable and biodegradable waste.

An ongoing initiative from the EACY Club chapters is a three step plan aiming to help the local villages to actually implement the waste management law all the way back from 2001. The strategy is to start within the EACY families and then expand from there with solid waste segregation, creation of sorting and recycling stations, and creation of compost pits for biodegradable waste.

Along with sharing knowledge about proper waste management, we must continuously address the local people's attitude towards the importance of caring for their surroundings and, ultimately, the sea that they are dependent on. We will continue to sensitize, inform and educate the community members through theater, film showings, talks and discussions. Not only to make them aware, but also to make them want to be part of a solution.



To serve as a model to be replicated in the various schools and villages all over the municipality, we have created a sorting/recycling station with compost pits at Stairway.

Networking and Learning from Best Practices

While we can appreciate all the EACY progress in 2017 in terms of extended and enhanced collaboration with the DepEd and our local government, we must move on, expand our networks and reach out to learn from best practices in other places. To push for fast development in the solid waste management in Puerto Galera, we have identified one municipality in the Philippines that seems outstanding with regards to their environmental management practices. Las Pinas is a city near Manila and the home of Senator Villar, who is behind some remarkable city initiatives for sorting, composting and recycling solid waste, and they have managed to become a model city by limiting their residual waste to around 10% only. We met the senator last November and we have been promised assistance from her office in our future efforts in Puerto Galera.

The meaning of EACY remains to be “Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth.” However, we will take the freedom to also interpret the meaning of the acronym as “Environmental Action for Children and You.” Starting with educating and sensitizing the children, we will embrace the challenge to include everybody in this urgent campaign, one household at the time. The Girl Scouts in Puerto Galera, who are signed up with the SAS, are interested in assisting in this tedious process. Together with their leader, who is a science teacher and an SAS instructor, they have already become active in community cleanups and tree planting. Another future partner lined up for the SAS is the Federation of Tour Guides and Boatmen. This group can educate tourists, whether they are snorkeling, swimming or picnicking, on environmentally-safe practices, like proper garbage management, not stepping on corals and refraining from fish feeding.



The EACY Dive School

Eight months after Scuba for Change trusted us with all their scuba gear, we are more optimistic than ever that we did the right thing in taking on the challenge to run the EACY Dive School as a component of the overall EACY Program. We know that our ambition to train better and more environmentally aware divers, while at the same time helping to sustain the cost of running the Sea Adventure School and other EACY program components, is not easy. It is a gradual process, but the fact that we have already trained 45 divers and we do not have a financial loss from our first months of operation gives us great hope. The initial eight months of the EACY Dive School operation were challenged by a few facts, like:

- We did not have a dedicated dive instructor connected to the center, which meant that we always had to hire an instructor from outside the school and pay 40% of the gross income.
- We did not have any tanks or a compressor, so we had to rent tanks from other dive centers for each dive.
- Our name and concept are still rather unknown.

These conditions are about to change:

- Our friend and long-time volunteer, Magnus, who is in charge of EACY Dive School, will get his instructor's license by the end of January 2018.
- A local dive shop on the neighboring beach is closing down, and the owner will let us use his tanks and compressor.
- We are actively promoting EACY Dive School among the international schools we work with through our Youth for Change Program, and we hope to start facilitating dive camps this coming summer.

With the planned improved conditions for the 2018 operations, we hope to be able to infuse between US\$10,000 to \$20,000 into SAS and other EACY components over the coming year. As we build our name and reputation as a truly unique dive school, this number should be on a constant rise for many years, ending up financing the entire EACY operations, unless we continue expanding the program. Considering the urgent need to address climate change and environmental destruction, this is, of course, not a remote possibility. The whole EACY concept is unique, as we approach advocacy and direct action for environmental protection from a child rights angle. Ultimately, anything we do in EACY is to help secure our children and their children the right to a safe environment that can sustain their basic needs.

Unless we educate the masses to pressure our decision makers into prioritizing children's right to inherit a livable planet above the greed for power and profit, nothing is going to get better. Unless we manage to slow down and eventually stop the global warming and end the current unsustainable consumption of our natural resources, our children's chances to live in peace and harmony on a planet that can sustain their needs will be slim.

As we sit with the weight of this awareness, the only thing that makes sense is to continue to spread and enact the wisdom of Dr. Seuss:

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not!”

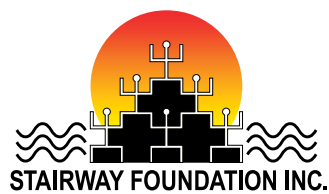




To all our friends and supporters, we thank you for your continued trust and support, and we look forward to continue our collaboration towards positive change for years to come.

With love and respect,

The Stairway Family



www.stairwayfoundation.org