

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



2023 Annual Report

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Message

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, it is evident that our commitment to protecting children and youth has never been more crucial. Amidst unprecedented challenges, from the widespread repercussions of a two-year COVID-19 lockdown of all schools nationwide to the far-reaching effects of climate change, we continue in our mission to protect and safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable members of our society.

The prolonged closure of schools in the Philippines due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on the education and development of children and youth. It was the most marginalized children who suffered the greatest setback, increasing the already prominent educational gaps. To help children in the indigenous community in Baclayan catch up on academics and become digitally literate, we opened an ICT Center at our farm early in the year. The center also educates the community members on cybersafety, which is another concern worsened by the extended lockdown.

The widespread use of phones and the internet among children and youth has provided unprecedented access to information and opportunities for connection. However, it has also exposed children to a multitude of risks, from online harassment and exploitation to the dissemination of harmful content. Peer-to-peer online abuse has emerged as a fast growing problem, which we verified through a comprehensive local study counting 2400 students that lead up to the launch of a new animation film and module in our cybersafety e-learning course.

Our Manila based team made strides in their collaboration with a number of government agencies at the national level to customize e-learning modules to their specific needs. Aside from a number of recognitions from the Department of Education, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Philippine National Police, their efforts lead to the beginning of wide scaling our e-learning with nearly 10,000 teachers enrolling during the month of December. These teachers will later use their newly gained knowledge and skills and through the e-learning reach millions of children for their protection and empowerment.

On the international scene, our CyberSafety e-learning course was translated to Spanish and rolled out in five Latin American countries through our German partner, Kindernotheilfe.

Considering the ever more intricate world our children and youth must navigate, it is hardly unexpected that adolescent mental health has risen as a pressing concern over the past year. In our local communities, we have observed an alarming number of teenagers harming themselves. In response, we initiated a survey involving over 4000 students, which yielded frightening feedback. Collaborating with teachers, parents, local government units (LGUs), and engaging in direct peer-to-peer intervention; we will be allocating more resources into addressing this issue in the future.

Climate change poses a momentous threat to the safety and security of children worldwide. The Philippines is experiencing devastating typhoons, floods, and other natural disasters at still higher prevalence, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of already marginalized communities.

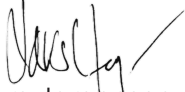
Our Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth (EACY) Program extended further on its children and youth driven expansion into new areas with the establishment of the EACY Alliance. The program inspires and empowers young people to organize and actively address the climate crisis at school and local government level.

Our Community Assistance Program ventured into work with two very remote and extremely poor indigenous communities and added children with disabilities and children mental health to their action plan.

Our Family Home expanded the number of resident children up to 18 and opened up again for local and international students joining our Youth for Change Camps.

As it appears from the following pages, 2023 has been another productive year of expansion and consolidation. We value and depend on your continued support, as we set new goals and strategies for protecting children in a fast changing global environment. Together we make a difference!

With much appreciation,



Lars Jorgensen
Executive Director

Acronyms

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency
ALS	Alternative Learning System
AMATHI	Agpaysarigan Mangyan Tadyawan-Hanunuo Inc.
ATI	Agricultural Training Institute
AYOS	Association of Youth for Ocean Sustainability
BBFA	Baloc-Baloc Farmers Association
BCA	Barangay Children’s Association
BCD	Baclayan Community Development
BCDCI	Bakyas Community Development Center, Inc.
BFSA	Baclayan Food Security Association
BHW	Barangay Health Workers
BMI	Body Mass Index
BMS	Baclayan Mangyan School
BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
BOT	Board of Trustees
BPP	Binhi ng Pag-asa Program
BTS	Break the Silence
BTSNN	Break the Silence National Network
BTS-IV	BTS Inter-Visayas Network
CALAMBA	Calamba, Laguna, Rizal, Quezon
CENRO	City Environment and Natural Resource Office
CHEC	Children’s Health and Education Center
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
COP	Child Online Protection
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPP	Child Protection Policy
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPC	Cilmate Reality and Plastic Crisis
CSAEM	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Materials
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSP	CyberSafe Schools Project
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DepEd	Department of Education
DLSU-SDEAS	De La Salle University-School for Deaf Education and Applied Studies
DOH	Department of Health
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DPCR	Directorate for Police Community Relations
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development

EACYp	EACYp	EACY project proposals
EAI		Educational Assistance Initiative
FDS		Family Development Session
FHP		Family Home Program
GIDA		Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas
GP		Global Program
HIV		Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICC		International Coastal Cleanup
ICT		Information and Communication Technology
IKSP		Indigenous Knowledge, Systems and Practices
IP		Indigenous People
IPDO		Implementing Project Development Office
IPRA		Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act
JVP		Jesuit Volunteers Philippines
KAPAKA		Kabataan Para sa Kalikasan
KNH		Kindernothilfe
LID		Localization and Institutionalization Division
LMS		Learning Management System
LRPO		Learner Rights Protection Office
MAO		Municipal Agriculture Office
MBCFI		Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc
MELC		Most Essential Learning Competencies
MENRO		Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office
MIMAROPA		Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan
MOA		Memorandum of Agreement
MOU		Memorandum of Understanding
MPA		Marine Protected Area
NACC		National Authority for Child Care
NCC		National Coordination Center
NCCYP		National Council on Children and Youth Participation
NCIP		National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
NCIP		National Council for Indigenous Peoples
NCR		National Capital Region
NGO		Non-Government Organization
NIPAS		National Integrated Protected Areas System
NPMO		National Program Management Office
ORMT		Oriental Mindoro Resource Monitoring Team
OSAEAC		Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children
PADI		Professional Association of Diving Instructors
PGVA		Puerto Galera Vendors Association
PGYC		Puerto Galera Yacht Club
PIPDAC		Provincial Indigenous People's Development and Advisory Council
PNP		Philippine National Police
PRC		Philippine Regulation Commission
PSJLC		Public Safety Junior Leadership Course
PSSLC		Public Safety Senior Leadership Course

RACCO	Regional Alternative Child Care Office
RHU	Rural Health Unit
RJJWC	Regional Juvenile Justice and Welfare Committee
SaBaliKata	Samahan ng mga Batang Naglalayon, Nagkakaisa at Nagtataguyod ng Karapatan
SamaKaBa	Samahang Kabalikat ng bawat Bata
SAS	Sea Adventure School
SDO	Schools Division Office
SELG	Supreme Elementary Learner Government
SIDPh	Safer Internet Day PH
SK	Sanngguniang Kabataan
SSCG	Sarigan Savings and Credit Group
SSLG	Supreme Secondary Learner Government
TWG	Technical Working Group
WCPC	Women and Children Protection Council
WCPD	Women and Children Protection Desk
YDS	Youth Development Session
YES-O	Youth for Environment in Schools-Organization
YFC	Youth for Change



Family Home Program (FHP)

Introduction

The Stairway Family Home Program (FHP) was founded three decades ago as one of our inaugural intervention initiatives. Despite its limited scope and reach, it stands as an invaluable testament to the potential lying in every child. Through professional and creative interventions grounded in love and respect, we consistently witness firsthand the remarkable positive transformations achievable in a child's development. Our direct engagement with multiple groups of marginalized children has functioned as a social laboratory, providing invaluable insights and inspiration for the development and testing of innovative educational initiatives focused on children's rights and protection. Situated at the heart of Stairway's main office, the Family Home keeps us grounded and emotionally connected with the realities we strive to change. It truly embodies the essence of our foundation.

Case Management

In 2023, Stairway provided intervention to 22 boys. Two were reunited with their families, and two were admitted to long-term residential care with an independent living program. The placement was based from the children's personal decisions for their continuous development, supported by parenting capability assessments and coordination with city social services.



The new boys in the program received a warm welcome from their big brothers and program team members.

Last September, we welcomed five boys from four different centers. Prior to the selection, the program team were involved in case conferences to determine which candidates will be accepted into the Family Home Program. The newly admitted boys were formerly homeless, abandoned, orphaned, or voluntarily surrendered by their parents.

Upon admission, the children were given a tour and an orientation on the Children's Handbook, which was processed and discussed with the social worker, together with the older boys in the program. This is a collaborative approach in which the children actively participate in setting the rules and expectations for the home where they will be residing.

We plan to continue the development process of the thirteen older boys for another program cycle for further development. The older children provide a supportive environment for the new boys, which promotes trust and encouragement within their group.

Most children referred to Stairway have no birth record, which makes it difficult to obtain their legal identity. Despite the challenges and difficulties in the process, 13 out of 18 boys now have a birth certificate. Five boys are still in the registration process to obtain a Certificate of Live Birth or a Certificate of Live Birth with No Known Parents.

This year, Stairway received a certificate of recognition from the National Authority for Child Care (NACC) through the Regional Alternative Child Care Office (RACCO) as one of the most responsive child-care agencies in the region.

Education and Therapy

The school year 2022-2023 was remarkable in terms of academic development of the boys.

When JM, one of our residential children, was first admitted in 2019, he was a non-reader and had never attended school. In 2021, he passed the Philippine ALS A&E Test elementary level, and last July 2023, he passed the same test for the Junior High School level. At present, he is enrolled in the eleventh grade of a local Senior High School.



Eight boys successfully passed the Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test, and two boys in homeschooling completed the program with honors.



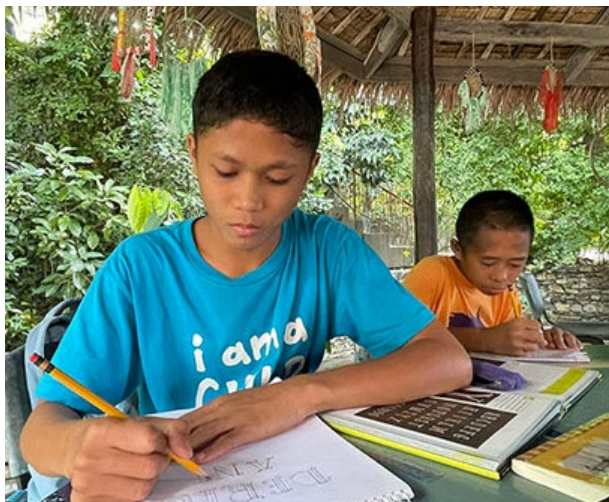
“There were moments when I doubted that I would ever reach Senior High School.

When I was still on the streets, I had no more expectations of being able to go to school at all. Upon stepping into the classroom once again, I told myself that I would finish high school!

If I am still given the chance to study until college, I want to take a bachelor’s degree in Education. I want to be a teacher and teach children like me.”

In order to accommodate the children’s diverse academic levels, we group them into five groups based on academic assessments, each following a specially designed curriculum. This approach addresses the distinct learning needs of each child, while maintaining an inclusive and effective educational environment.

Academic Category	Number of Boys
Basic Literacy	4
Advanced Elementary	8
Home schooled	1
Junior High School	4
Senior High School	1



The boys’ daily activities include academics, digital literacy, personality development, arts, sports, livelihood, and environmental education.

Stairway also provides an avenue for the boys to improve their practical skills. They engage in various activities such as baking, crafts making, organic soap, tofu and soya milk production, organic gardening, cooking, and haircutting. We also conduct trainings on financial literacy, which inspired six boys to open bank accounts and save money earned from crafts making and doing chores around Stairway.

The older boys receive ongoing training in self-development, critical thinking, and social etiquette. Meanwhile, the new batch of boys undergoes self-awareness sessions to build healthy relationships and a sense of connection within the group.

Theatre arts is one of the pillars in Stairway’s therapeutic interventions. The drama exercises offer an avenue for opening up for deep-seated emotions that need processing. While on the stage, the boys experience play and enjoyment, while learning the value of discipline and collaboration at the same time. Performing in front of large groups of audiences helps them grow confidence. The exceptional quality of their plays are their biggest reward.



The Stairway boys fully embrace the theater as a hall for entertainment and advocacy. In 2023, they had 11 major shows, four of Dr. Seuss’ “The Lorax” and seven “One Wish,” a Christmas Tale.



Wrap-ups and activity assessments with boys allow them to share their experiences, the impact of these experiences on their lives, and their recommendations for their own holistic development. Stairway acknowledges these suggestions and incorporates them into daily activities for the boys.

Child Participation

Stairway employs a peer-to-peer approach to promote an inclusive and collaborative environment. The regular meetings between the children and the grown-ups in the family home (the wrap-ups) is a forum where everybody can express their feelings and concerns.

The older boys help lead sessions focusing on Children's Rights using Stairway's e-learning courses. These courses raise knowledge and are very important as prevention of abuse and exploitation of children's rights. They also teach classes in making organic soap, arts and crafts, baking, and chess, still under monitoring and some supervision from their teachers. The younger boys are inspired by the older boys' example, which promotes and accelerates positive change.

Moreover, the older boys also teach the young boys how to maneuver a sailboat during their weekly sailing activities with the Small Boat Program of Puerto Galera Yacht Club (PGYC). Three boys competed and achieved second and fourth places during the Easter and the October Regatta, organized by the PGYC.



Our boys continually enhance their diving skills while promoting marine conservation through their involvement with the Citizen Science Initiative, a coral monitoring initiative that gives public ownership in local conservation.

Health Services

All Stairway boys underwent physical check-ups and laboratory examinations, with one child still under specialist care for pustular psoriasis. Five newly admitted boys received treatment for anemia, parasites and urinary tract infections. One child diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis is undergoing treatment for six months. All boys received dental cleaning, extraction, and restoration treatments.



Stairway's volunteer doctor facilitated orientations on health and wellness.

A Stairway friend and volunteer doctor partnered with Municipal Rural Health to conduct screening blood tests for hepatitis B, syphilis, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), as well as catch-up immunization for all the Stairway boys. They received the first and second shots, with the third dose expected by next quarter. This practice is now included in Stairway's standard health operating procedure to ensure protection of our boys against life-threatening illnesses.

The cases handled this year include appendectomy, arm cast, polyp removal, and circumcision. One child is set to undergo toe reconstructive surgery by the next quarter. To promote physical well-being and mindfulness, the boys participate in weekly yoga sessions conducted by a friend of Stairway, who is a certified yoga instructor.



The "Dream House" project was designed to feature each child's dream of a future home.

Socio-Cultural Events

Stairway has resumed its Youth for Change camps after a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic. In 2023, we hosted four camps, including a Danish School Camp, a Deaf and Hearing Camp, the International School of Manila's ICARE Camp, and a Tondo Community Initiative Camp. Interaction with a diverse group of other children and youth from around the world helps the children develop an open minded view of the world in a spirit of peace, inclusion, empathy and solidarity.

We celebrated Children's Month by showcasing the artistic abilities of the residential children through dance performances, interactive plays, and the creation of their dream houses. The children displayed their outputs and described the steps they took to build their ideal future residences.

Aside from the birthdays, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Earth Week, and World Ocean Day, the Stairway Boys also celebrated Halloween, and National Play Advocacy Week. The special celebrations serve to build up a neglected collection of happy and memorable experiences for every child.



Stairway ensures that each staff member has the skills and knowledge to excel and contribute meaningfully to the organization’s mission through capacity building and training development.

Training and Development

Stairway is committed to capacity building for all staff members to increase work productivity and quality. FHP staff joined a variety of training programs, including child participation, the national literacy conference, right-based approaches in street situations, positive discipline, and Domestic Administrative Adoption Act orientation.

This year, Stairway earned the highest level of accreditation by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), (valid for seven years, January 2023 to January 2030) for implementing center-based residential programs for disadvantaged children and youth.

In addition, The National Alternative Child Care MIMAROPA Region awarded our resident social worker as one of the most outstanding social workers in adoption and alternative child care.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the region also recognized Stairway as an accredited provider of alternative education to children.

The FHP welcomed a new houseparent, as his predecessor took on a different task in the organization.



Community Assistance Program (CAP)

Introduction

Stairway's Community Assistance Program continually broadens its scope and reach, extending from supporting individual children in need to aiding our local government units in responsibly and professionally addressing children's rights concerns as mandated. The project also encompasses local schools, where we assist in developing and implementing tailor-designed Child Protection Policies. Additionally, our Educational Assistance Initiative remains committed to providing financial aid to over 600 underprivileged families, alongside delivering life skills and personal safety training for both parents and students.



Our volunteer doctor during the conduct of a community needs assessment in a Mangyan community in Puerto Galera.

In 2023, we expanded our support to two remote indigenous communities nestled deep in the mountains, accessible only by foot. Upon conducting assessments of the villages earlier in the year, we observed that the majority of the children were in critical health conditions. This prompted us to collaborate with the local village councils to collectively devise an intervention plan.

Educational Assistance Initiative

Stairway is committed to offer educational assistance to the most disadvantaged students within our community. Our goal is to support students by providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to stay in school and succeed.

During the school year 2022-2023, we provided assistance to 607 students, with over 95% (578 students) successfully completing the academic year. Among the non-completers, reasons cited included academic difficulties (14), family obligations and financial constraints (5), health concerns (3), and non-compliance with contractual agreements (7).

For school year 2023-2024, we assisted 602 students. Unfortunately, we had to delist two due to academic difficulties and health concerns.

Educational Level	No. of beneficiaries	Dropped out	Graduating 2024
Primary	57	0	16
Secondary	441	2	76
College	104	0	40
Total	602	2	132

Intervention for Students with Special Needs

With the support and assistance of school coordinators, parent leaders, class advisers, and community development workers, we provided interventions to 50 students with special needs. These interventions covered individual and family counseling, school coordination, medical check-ups, financial aid, enrollment support, provision of educational materials and tutorials for three siblings with severe disabilities, and referral for provision of wheelchairs.

The cases that we encountered include pregnancy, early engagement to romantic relationship, poor health, noncompliance with requirements, sexual abuse, lack of requirements to open a bank account, absenteeism due to peer pressure, bullying, and family responsibilities.

Among the 602 beneficiaries this school year, 600 received school supplies, such as notebooks, pad papers, ball pens/pencils, art materials, umbrellas, white shirts, and an eco-bags.



For School Year 2023-2024, we conducted ten (10) general assemblies across 13 barangays in Puerto Galera. These assemblies included orientations, open forums, and distribution of school supplies.

Children’s Rights and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Awareness

As part of our dedication to bolstering the protection of children, all new beneficiaries of the Educational Assistance Initiative (EAI) and their parents participate in an awareness session focused on children’s rights and the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation. A total of 55 parents and 92 children attended the awareness raising sessions this school year. Online game addiction, exposure to pornographic materials online, negative peer influence, and early engagement in romantic relationships were identified as serious issues and challenges faced by children in the community.



Parents and scholars learn about relevant child protection issues in the community through awareness-raising sessions.

Local Child Protection Project



Through engaging child’s rights materials and learning resources, we aim to reach more children in our locality.

Over the past 5 years, Stairway’s Community Assistance Team has successfully elevated our Local Child Protection Project to the forefront of discussions within the offices and councils of our Municipal Hall, focusing on matters concerning children and youth. Through extended collaboration with the Local Government Unit and all high schools within our municipality, we have made significant strides toward our primary goal of establishing protective environments for children.

The project employs a comprehensive, two-pronged approach—prevention and response—to address offline and online child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as other critical child protection issues. This strategy engages multiple stakeholders, ensuring a holistic response to safeguarding the welfare of children and youth in our community.



Seventy-seven (77) teachers, guidance designates, and school heads from DepEd Division of Oriental Mindoro were capacitated to handle child protection cases and concerns.

Child Protection Education, Awareness Raising and Advocacy

Midway through the year, we achieved a significant milestone by broadening our partnership from the School District of Puerto Galera to the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Oriental Mindoro. Through collaboration with SDO-Oriental Mindoro, we launched training sessions tailored for school heads, guidance counselors, and teachers. These sessions were designed to ensure the consistent respect and protection of children's rights across all school-related procedures throughout the entire province.

In addition, we facilitated a Cybersafety training for 25 teacher representatives, in which the participants reviewed our cybersafety learning resources that they will use in their lessons next school year. The materials have been endorsed by the Schools Division Office of Oriental Mindoro.

Mental Health and General Well-being

Stairway conducted a mental health and general well-being survey for both public and private high school students to gather a comprehensive understanding of the local situation. The data collected (more than 4000 samples) will be used as a starting point for developing programs and projects for the organization, the Local Government Units (LGUs), and the schools. We sought input from medical professionals and health authorities at the local and provincial levels to develop, conduct, and analyze the survey. The survey conducted in one school revealed that 38% of students were identified as high-risk based on the suicide screening



Senior High School participants during the mental health forum in their school.

questions. This finding supports the sad realities of several suicides and attempted suicides among students in our province over the past year.

The learnings from the mental health forums we have conducted have resulted in the development of more concrete steps to address the issue, which include intensive awareness-raising sessions in schools and the community, using fellow youth as key speakers. We have formed a collaborative partnership with the Municipal Health Office, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, Municipal Youth Council, and the schools to address the issue urgently in an orchestrated manner. Moreover, we are in the process of creating informative materials for helplines and chatlines, enhancing our capacity to reach a broader audience and provide vital support where needed.

“I feel prepared to address mental health concerns, whether they affect me personally or the people around me. I have a better understanding now that I can reach out to someone for support and express my feelings freely. This has given me the freedom to acknowledge and share my emotions, and made me feel less alone whenever I encounter challenges.”

- Puerto Galera Academy (PGA) Student,
Female, 17 years old

Children’s Month Celebration



Stairway launched the I Am a Child e-learning modules during the National Children’s Month Celebration in November, which was participated by 316 students and teachers. The School District Supervisor committed to rolling out this module to more schools.

Community Advocacy Sessions

The Rural Health Unit collaborated with Stairway to conduct a series of Adolescent Health and Development, as well as Mental Health Sessions. These sessions, held in Barangay Dulangan and Sabang, emphasized self-care and the establishment of helplines. They complemented a recently concluded youth summit at PGNHS-Main Campus. In total, four hundred twenty (420) children and youth actively participated in these insightful activities.

The sessions illuminated the prevalence of casual sex among teenagers, peer-to-peer sexual abuse, victim blaming, and alarming mental health issues. This highlights the pressing need to intensify efforts in sessions focused on sexuality, sexual abuse prevention, mental health, and mindfulness.

Capacity Building of Child Protection Structures and Policy and Program Development

For your Eyes Only (FYEO)

Stairway partnered with local schools to conduct a baseline study on children's online experiences with sexual content sharing. The result of the survey, based on 2,418 samples, increased awareness and informed decisions and policies in schools and the community. It also supported the premise for Stairway's recent e-learning course on sexting and sextortion, "For Your Eyes Only", which we launched during the Safer Internet Day in February.



We invited school children and adolescents to an informative session on the potential risks of sharing sexual intimate images. During the discussion, we emphasized the importance of online safety and equipped them with practical strategies to protect themselves in the digital world.

The alarming results from our local survey inspired us to make a more comprehensive national study, which we facilitated through mobilization of the Break the Silence National Network (BTS NN). One of our partners in the BTSNN is currently processing the data from this National Study on Sexting and Sextortion. With 10,000 student participants across the country, the study aims to gather crucial data to shape future programs and policies for improved online safety of children and youth.

Municipal and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (MCPC and BCPC)

Stairway and the MCPC jointly formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) to finalize Puerto Galera's Child Protection Policy (CPP). To institutionalize the Local Government Unit's CPP, we plan to endorse it to the Municipal Council first quarter 2024. This is part of our continuous effort and coordination in assisting the municipality in developing its own CPP to create a more protective environment for children.

Stairway and the MCPC organized a training focused on the case management protocol for child victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, as well as children at risk and children in conflict with the law. It covered important laws such as R.A. 10630 (An Act Establishing a Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare System) and R.A. 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act).

Child Participation and Community Organization

We collaborated with organizations like Medical Action Group (MAG) and Divine Word College of Calapan (DWCC) to share their expertise in peer education, youth empowerment, and ways to sustain youth organizations. Plans are underway to continue these sessions.



Stairway highly values the role of children and youth in protecting their peers. Peer educators and child rights advocates continuously receive training on various child protection topics.

During the National Children's Month, Peer Educators from Baclayan conducted sessions discussing teenage pregnancy for youth and parents in the community. Approximately 50 participants actively participated in the session,

which culminated in a short play illuminating the root causes of the issue. The play underscored the significance of parental guidance and tackled the challenges posed by negative peer pressure.

“ I am happy that I now have the courage to confidently discuss peer education topics within our community. This motivates me and my fellow peer educators to extend these sessions to other areas in Baclayan. ”

- Peer Educator in Baclayan. Female, 16

Partnership with Children with Disabilities Sector

Stairway strengthened its partnership with the children with disabilities sector this year through meaningful collaborations with government and non-government agencies, and educational institutions.

- Basic Filipino Sign Language (FSL) and Disability Sensitivity sessions introduced participants to FSL and insights into the lives of deaf youth. This was in collaboration with De La Salle - College of Saint Benilde School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies (SDEAS).
- Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding workshops ensured the safety and inclusion of children with disabilities in organizational settings, which was participated by children, parents, Stairway, LGU, and schools.
- We conducted a Community-based Rehabilitation training focused on therapy support, social inclusion, physical activity, and motion development. The survey conducted by Stairway in April 2023 identified 108 children with disabilities in Puerto Galera, and highlighted the need for accessible therapy facilities. The Municipal Health Office (MHO) plans to collaborate with Stairway to establish a rehabilitation and therapy clinic, and provide staff training and operational support.



Through various initiatives, we help children with disability feel included and supported, alongside their parents and caregivers.

Strengthening Direct Service Delivery

Stairway offers case management support to reported and referred cases of children together with the municipal social workers, the police (Women and Children Protection Desk), and a school child protection team. We provide interventions, including but not limited to counseling, facilitation of family conferences, financial augmentation, assistance in court, and activity-based interventions, among others. Below is a summary breakdown of cases we handled and interventions we provided throughout the year.

Type of Child Protection Issue	No. of Cases	Type of Service
Neglect	3	Family case conference, referral to barangay for monitoring
Child at risk (with risky behavior)	15	Activity-based intervention, in partnership with MSWDO and barangay stakeholders
Child in Conflict with the Law	1	Individual Counseling/Psychosocial Support
Physical Abuse	1	Coordination with parents and school authorities / Psychosocial Support
Attempted Abortion	1	Referral to Municipal Health Officer for medical intervention and counseling
Attempted Self-Harm	2	Psychosocial Support and Monitoring
Sextortion	1	Reported case to Meta, assisted in retrieving social media accounts, individual counseling
Violation of Safe Spaces Act in relation to RA 7610	1	Assisted in filing of case
Sexual Abuse	4	Multidisciplinary Team Case Conference, Counselling and helping MSWDO facilitate the custody of the child
Mental Health concern	1	Assist in referring the case to MSWDO, offering of individual counselling

One of the complicated cases we handled is a case of an indigenous girl who was abducted at gunpoint and repeatedly raped by a non-indigenous male neighbor. She was held captive by the perpetrator for four days before her father was able to rescue her. She was highly traumatized and couldn't even mention the name of the perpetrator because it triggered her to have panic attacks. We facilitated individual and group therapeutic counseling sessions, together with other survivors, which enabled her to process the unimaginable trauma and other damaging effects of the abuse.

The abduction and rape incidents happened in September 2020 and she was only able to give her testimony in court in September and October 2023. She ran away during the court hearing because of fear of confronting the perpetrator in four instances. The judge allowed eight (8) court hearing postponements due to her powerlessness to testify. The persistent support and understanding of her family, our social worker handling the case, and the presiding judge paid off as she eventually managed to testify. There is still no verdict in the case.

Indigenous Community Development, Baclayan

Introduction

Stairway commenced its work in the Baclayan Indigenous Community in 2011 with a clear motivation: to alleviate, and ideally eradicate, the pervasive discrimination burdening its people. Now, thirteen years later, we find ourselves in a transition phase, gradually phasing out several of our interventions. This decision is rooted in the remarkable progress witnessed, particularly in the empowerment of children and women within the community.

Overall Objectives:

To facilitate community awareness and community participation to enable people to solve community problems/issues, provide their basic needs and access to opportunities that will help them to develop better living standard.

Objective 1:

To improve the economic capacities of families and youth through various livelihood interventions

Baclayan Food Security Association (BFSA)

The Baclayan Food Security Association (BFSA) aims to empower women from the Mangyan indigenous group to assert their rights and achieve a more proactive role in their homes and communities. The mothers participate in various livelihood and non-livelihood activities in the Association. They actively engage in various meetings and consultations that hold impact for both their families and personal well-being.

The Association experienced leadership changes, prompting an eagerness among members to assume the role of President. However, the presence of both Iraya and Tadyawan Mangyan tribes in Baclayan led to diminished enthusiasm from certain community leaders towards specific indigenous members of the Association.



BFSA members handcrafting baskets for a 600-piece basket order placed by a Manila-based social enterprise.

In response to this challenge, we organized capacity-building workshops aimed at fostering collaboration and communication within the council. Emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, we reiterated that the activities we implement are designed to benefit all tribal groups within the community.

Below are the enterprises that BFSA has engaged in. A group of seven mothers are members of all these enterprises.

Enterprise	Number of Members
Sarigan Savings and Credit Group	16
Natural Soap Production	7
Garden Center Management	10
Livestock Management	16
Sarigan Shop	9
Buli Basket Production	9

a. Natural Soap Production, Buli Project, Livestock Management, Garden Center Management, Sarigan Shop

Products/Enterprise	Sales
Natural Soap	Php 2,287.00
Beads Accessories	Php 200.00
Nito products	Php 1,340.00
Buri baskets	Php 1,668.00
Vegetables	Php 9,897.00
Culinary Herbs	Php 750.00
Rice Loan Business	Php 2,519.00
Livestock	Php 5,650.00
Total	Php 24,311.00

In December, members received their annual share from various projects. 60% was shared with the members, 20% will be used for expenses next year, and 20% is the savings of the Association.



Soap production and gardening are some of the activities that BFSA mothers engage in as a source of their livelihood.



b. Sarigan Savings and Credit Group (SSCG) for Adults and Sarigan Savings for Children

The group members gained leadership and organizational skills by actively participating in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of SSCG activities. BFSA and Baloc-Baloc Farmers Association (BBFA), another association supported by Stairway, received their share of savings with interest this December.

“I joined Sarigan because I can save money and in case of emergency, I can borrow from the box. I am also happy to see my friends join this group!”

- Devilla Baldo, SSCG member for 3 years

“I’m happy to be part of Sarigan. I no longer need to ask for money from my parents for our Christmas party because I have savings. I was able to buy what I needed with the money I saved.”

- Vincent Camo, Grade 8 student, Sarigan Child Member for 2 years



Sarigan Savings for Children promotes financial literacy at an early stage. Aside from Vincent, three other members of the group also received their year-end share of saving.

Baloc-Baloc Farmers Association (BBFA)

Earlier this year, our community garden operations were halted due to water scarcity. To address this, we relocated to an area with a more consistent water supply, while addressing the water shortage in the area. Some members also opted for individual gardens. Our partnership with the Municipal Agricultural Office remains ongoing for the provision of seed supply and conduct of trainings. In addition, the Savings Group of BBFA continues to operate bimonthly. There is a regular attendance of 8-10 members.

Binhi ng Pag-asa Program (Youth Livelihood)

The four members of Sarigan Youth who attended the Municipal Level Training on Leadership and Agricultural Technologies received free-range chickens in June as a grant from the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI). However, 14 sickly chickens that were distributed eventually died. The Sarigan Youth members currently have an average of three chickens left each.

Objective 2:

To improve the health status of children and the community through medical assistance, health awareness sessions, and a feeding program.

Stairway supports the Barangay Health Center of Baclayan by providing medical consultations and medicines for common illnesses such as colds and coughs, fever, skin rashes, and diarrhea.

In September, our volunteer doctor conducted stool examinations on eight elementary students, revealing a prevalent issue of intestinal parasites among the children. This situation is associated with various risk factors, including poor health, low academic performance, and stunted growth. Despite encountering delays in the deworming program due to parents' concerns about potential parasite emergence from their children's mouths, noses, or ears, we proceeded with deworming interventions for 221 children in the community. This effort was carried out in collaboration with health organizations and the school.

This year, community members received medical attention for prevalent conditions, including skin infections affecting both adults and children aged 0-5 years old, as well as upper respiratory tract infections among those aged 0-12 years old. Moreover, in collaboration with the Rural Health Unit, Stairway facilitated free blood testing for pregnant women in the community.

Moving forward, we remain dedicated to bolstering and prioritizing our collaborations with other healthcare providers to enhance health awareness within the community.



We hosted volunteers from the medical field who conducted basic medical tests and health awareness sessions on diseases, hygiene, and healthy lifestyle in the community.

Educational Sessions on Health and Hygiene:

Activities	Attendees
Diseases and Health and Hygiene Practices Session	32 Parents, BHWs, Barangay Council, Tribal Council and Youth
Film Viewing: What the Health (a film that examines the link between diet and disease)	10 BHWs and SFI Staff
Infectious Diseases and Health and Hygiene Practices Session	27 parents
Deworming Orientation	27 parents

School Feeding Program

The academic year 2023-2024 marks the fourth year of implementing the Baclayan Transition Plan, during which we transitioned from a five-day-a-week to a four-day-a-week feeding program for elementary students. As part of this transition, Mondays were designated as no feeding days. We closely monitored the overall attendance of students on Mondays to evaluate any impact resulting from this change. Fortunately, there has been no significant decrease in Monday attendance. Students typically bring packed lunches and eat in their classrooms on Mondays. The operation of the feeding center is still primarily led by the parent association with support from Stairway.

The table presents the monthly average number of students receiving meals at the feeding center.

Month	Number of students
August	159
September	165
October	159
November	164
December	162

We monitored the health of students along with the provision of meals. In September 2023, 33 students were identified as malnourished during BMI checks. To address this, we provided food supplements during weekday snack times. Before starting the supplemental program, the children underwent deworming treatment. In the first quarter of next year, the students will undergo follow-up BMI checks to evaluate improvements in their health status. They will also receive a second round of deworming treatment.

In addition to the elementary students, we provided lunch meals to sixty-eight (68) high school students five days a week. Aside from improved health and well-being, the feeding has proven to significantly increase student attendance.



BMS students receive meals at the feeding center from Tuesday to Friday.

The ambition to purchase 50% of the food supplies from the community did not materialize this year due to unfavorable weather conditions resulting in unsuccessful harvests. However, last October, parents were able to sell their harvest to the feeding center, which covered a one day meal provision every week.

Objectives 3 and 4:

To improve access to relevant quality education for all (active learning of students and attendance in class) and to improve child-centered inclusive teaching and learning methodology.

Children Enrichment and Empowerment Activities

We continue to see a strong interest in various sports among the community children, including basketball, badminton, volleyball, and table tennis. Chess has sparked the interest of younger children, especially among the girls.

Stairway Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Learning and Resource Center

In February 2023, we inaugurated the Stairway ICT Learning and Resource Center in Baclayan during the Safer Internet Week Celebration. This significant initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and offer a transformative learning experience for children and community members.

In order to secure that the new users of the center are safe online, it is a condition that all students initially must undergo Cybersafety lessons through Stairway’s e-learning platform and the Digital Engagement modules of Meta Philippines.

At the start of the 2023-2024 school year, we had 54 new students enrolling at the center. The new group includes elementary school students, high school students, and adults from the community.

We currently have 100 students enrolled at the center.

Elementary students attend the classes Wednesday through Friday afternoons, while high school students use the center on Saturdays. Adults have designated time slots on Sunday afternoons.



Friends, partners, and community members all came together for the inauguration of the center.



ICT Center Enrollees	
Grade 5	32
Grade 6	26
Grade 7	13
High School	16
Adults	13
Total	100

Computer and Life Skills Camp

Before the start of this school year, 17 Grade 7-8 indigenous students from Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) in Puerto Galera attended their first computer camp at Stairway's ICT Learning and Resource Center.

Children's Participation in Child's Rights, Life and Practical Skills, Project Management and Community Activities

Traditionally, children are not engaged in the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities designed for them by local government councils and other organizations. This area requires improvement, which we aim to support.

We are continuously advancing in our efforts to engage with children and youth, fostering their personal growth, collaboration, and the development of stronger communities. This year, we established SamaKaBa, an association of children whom we train on various aspects including children's rights, laws, leadership, life skills, and other capacity-building activities crucial for their meaningful participation and empowerment.

SamaKaBa took the lead in organizing a sports and storytelling event for the children titled "Enhance the Natural Talents of an IP Child". They were involved in every stage of the project, from conceptualization to implementation and evaluation. They mobilized resources from their teachers, school administrators, and local community leaders to provide financial support for their activities.



During the camp, the students gained knowledge and skills in basic computer literacy, sewing, food preparation, proper hygiene, sports, and arts. SamaKaBa, a Children's Association, facilitated activities and games.

During the Children’s Month celebration, members of Peer Educators from the Children Association, facilitated an orientation about Teenage Pregnancy and Child Rights and Responsibilities for 27 children and 6 parents.

“Participating in SamaKaBa activities allowed me to interact with other children and youth. I learned about social responsibility and enhanced my communication skills too.”

- Hiyas Angkasan, Gr 10 student, Member of SamaKaBa

SaMaKaBa is currently comprised of 116 members and the following committees:

- A. Baclayan Stakeholders Committee for Project Management
- B. Baclayan Sports Committee
- C. Binhi ng Pag-Asa for Livelihood Programs
- D. Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth (EACY)
- E. Peer Educators for Adolescent Health and Cybersafety
- F. Sarigan Children Savings for Social Protection
- G. Teatro Tamu-Ani for Theater and Arts

We also facilitated the following activities to promote child participation at the grassroots level.

Activity/Topic	No. of Participants
Baclayan Stakeholder Meetings and Capacity Building Sessions (Application for Certification Precondition from NCIP)	9
Life Skills Education (Communication, Critical Thinking, Cooperation, Creativity, Cybersafety, Children’s Participation, and Environmental Awareness)	39
Child’s Rights Session	26
Creative Learning Activities (Art, Reading, Play and Sports)	116
IP Awareness Trainings (Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, Indigenous Knowledge Systems Practices)	39
Samahang Kabalikat ng bawat Bata (SamaKaBa)- Barangay Children’s Association (BCA)	24

Further, we facilitated a Seminar Workshop on Organizational Development and Sustainable Community Works to 30 graduate school students of Pacific InterContinental College. As we continue to share our expertise in organizational development, community building, and sustainable practices, we hope to engage other institutions on community-based workshops that extend beyond traditional classroom learning.

Objective 4:

To create awareness and inspire action amongst children and adults responding to an escalating environmental crisis.

To raise child participation in environmental conservation activities, EAI beneficiaries conducted monthly clean-ups in the community. There were 27 high school students, 22 female and 5 male, participating in this activity. After the clean-ups, we conducted short discussions to deepen the students' understanding on sustainable conservation practices to promote a safe environment for children.



EAI scholars team up with SaMaKaBa's EACY Committee to lead impactful environmental campaigns in their community.

To help their peers develop a deeper sense of appreciation and responsibility towards our environment, the high school scholars conduct environmental campaigns centered on home segregation and proper disposal of garbage, installation of environmental awareness signage, and information awareness campaigns in their community. They work hand in hand with SaMaKaBa's EACY Committee.

Objective 5:

Strengthen culture-sensitive protection and support initiatives for children and their families.

We continue to work on projects that reinforce cultural sensitivity and integrity. We have established partnerships with different Tribal Council members to support and facilitate sessions about Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) and Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices for parents, children and youth.

We are actively working on strengthening our partnership with Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities through the implementation of a Certification Precondition from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Communities of Baclayan and Sitio Bignayan, another IP community we are working with, was drafted after a two-day validation consultation involving the two communities and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). The MOA is currently being reviewed and finalized.

We also attended the following engagements to better understand and promote the interest and well-being of indigenous cultural communities:

- Mangyan Summit 2023 themed Empowerment of Indigenous People for Self-Determination and Sustainable Development
- Provincial Indigenous People's Development and Advisory Council (PIDDAC) Multi-stakeholders Meeting organized by the Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro.

Objective 6:

Improve networking and partnership

- A. **Education and Development.** Baclayan Food Security Association, Baclayan Mangyan School, Chinese International School, Dutch Family, ERDA Foundation, Inc. Chinese International School, ICT Community Facilitators, International Volunteers, Jesuit Volunteers Philippines (JVP), King Arthur's Academy, Municipal Social Welfare Office, Philippine Play Coalition, Stairway Global Project Inc, Teach for the Philippines, Iraya Tribal Council
- B. **Livelihood and Development.** Chinese International School, Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO), Metrobank Foundation, Inc., Puerto Galera Vendors Association (PGVA), Sarigan Savings and Credit Associations, Vegan Beauty PH
- C. **Health and IP Education.** Agpaysarigan Mangyan Tadyawan-Hanunuo Inc. (AMATHI), NCIP, Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro, Iraya Tribal Council BHWs, RHU, DOH, Midwives, International Volunteer, BMS, Peer Educators
- D. **Children's Participation.** Barangay Baclayan, ERDA Foundation, Inc., Samahan ng mga Batang Naglalayon, Nagkakaisa at Nagtataguyod ng Karapatan (SaBaliKata), National Council on Children and Youth Participation (NCCYP), Parent leaders from Caloocan City, Samahang Kabalik ng Bawat Bata (SamaKaBa), Stairway GP Project, Iraya Tribal Council, SFI's Global Program (GP)



The Baclayan Community Development has also expanded in terms of collaboration and cooperation. Our projects cover different components with engagement and support with different sectors and stakeholders.

Health Initiatives in Sitio Ambang and Sipit Saburan

During a consultation visit to two remote Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities in Puerto Galera, namely Ambang and Sipit Saburan, our team encountered a critical situation concerning children's health and hygiene. With the assistance of volunteers, we conducted medical examinations and were alarmed to observe a distressing prevalence of intestinal infections among children in both communities. Specifically, Sitio Ambang exhibited a 93% positive rate, while Sitio Sipit-Saburan showed a 100% positive rate for such infections. The most commonly detected parasites were *Ascaris lumbricoides* and *Trichuris trichiura*. Research suggests that intestinal infections can lead to cognitive deficits, anemia, and growth retardation, underscoring the urgent need for intervention in these communities.

In order to address the urgent need regarding health and nutrition in the two identified remote IP communities, especially amongst the children and the pregnant and lactating women, we will introduce crops high in protein, minerals and vitamins that can grow in their respective areas.

As a more long-term intervention in order to boost the local economy, we will introduce coffee and cacao as a possible cash crops. The yield from these crops holds substantial monetary value, and we have identified suitable varieties to cultivate. Presently, the primary source of income in the two villages is derived from coconuts, which command a different price per kilogram. Given that villagers must trek for 2 to 3 hours to reach the market, this logistical challenge significantly impacts their earning potentials.



Our team members on their way to conducting a community visit in Sipit Saburan and Ambang villages.

Moreover, Stairway's organic farm is poised to undertake the processing of coffee within a near future, and potentially cacao (currently under study), so the local farmers will have the opportunity to sell their harvest to Stairway at fair prices. We will purchase the raw beans, or as they learn to do the processing at the Stairway Organic Farm School, the farmers can use the available equipment to facilitate the refinement processes themselves. Packaging and marketing will be part of the training agenda as well.

We will assign one of our community assistance social workers, who is also a fully trained agriculturist, to work in the villages.

Stairway Organic Farm (SOF)

Introduction

Our five-year goal for Stairway Organic Farm (SOF) is to address food security and poverty alleviation through development of an accredited Training School for Sustainable Farming that promotes social inclusion and cultural preservation. We have partnership commitment from crucial stakeholders, including our local Government, the provincial Agriculture Training Institute, the National Council for Indigenous People, the Gabutero Farm (a renowned accredited organic farm on our island), a local and an international college for agriculture, an international volunteer agency for farm volunteers, a coffee specialist from Uganda, and more.

We hope to demonstrate the Farm School's effect on remote marginalized communities. We have identified two such IP communities as our pilots, and we are in the process of developing an intervention plan in collaboration with the local village councils and the heads of the local schools. Food security and nutrition are the top concerns amongst the villagers, which is where the training in sustainable and effective farming come in. Provision of seeds, seedlings and tools will be an added part of the intervention strategy.

The training school and demo farm will also be a venue for convening international youth volunteers with experience and interest in sustainable farming. Since farming proves to be an alarmingly unattractive career choice for young people in the Philippines, we aim to make our

farm school a valuable beam of inspiration, working with youth from our entire province, and beyond. Aside from remote IP communities and our local youth, the school will also be open to other interested groups, including marginalized urban youth recruited amongst Stairway’s Manila based partners.

A significant aspect of establishing an accredited farm school is to have the facilities for training and accommodating students and workshop participants. We have an already established ICT Resource and Learning Center on the farm, which will serve as an important part of the learning environment for the farm school. What we need to add is the accommodation and living quarters, along with processing and packaging facilities for produce. We are currently in the process of planning location and construction design of this expansion.

Enhancing our Vegetable Production

Our foremost immediate objective remains the enhancement of vegetable and fruit production to fulfill the fresh produce requirements of both the Baclayan School feeding center and the Family Home Program.

To achieve this objective, we have expanded on our vermicast production facility, acquired a soil cultivator and a banana trunk shredder. The soil cultivator is employed in flat areas to minimize the necessity for manual land preparation, while the banana trunk shredder plays a pivotal role in processing organic matter for vermicast production, with the aim of enhancing soil quality and promoting vigorous plant growth.



We successfully cultivated a diverse range of vegetable seedlings and planted an additional 50 seedlings of calamansi, rambutan, and lansones, with different varieties.

Furthermore, we have expanded our team by welcoming two additional agriculturists, a strategic move aimed at bolstering our capacity for increased production.

Below is a summary of this year’s fruits and vegetable harvests.

Harvested Crops	Quantity	Harvested Crops	Quantity
Eggplant	115 kgs	Pomelo	222 kgs
Tomatoes	53 kgs	Avocado	219 kgs
Sitao	89 kgs	Lemon	225 kgs
Okra	34 kgs	Calamansi	33 kgs
Cucumber	45 kgs	Banana	132 kgs
Mustard	48 kgs	Coconut	1,168 pcs
Papaya	110 kgs		

Coffee Plantation

The most ambitious new project on SOF in 2023 was the launching of a coffee plantation. We have planted 630 Robusta seedlings with the anticipation of yielding coffee beans within two to three years. We plan to plant another 500 seedlings upon assessment of the performance of this first large batch after a year.

This coffee initiative was far from impulsive; it stemmed from a thorough feasibility process conducted in 2022, guided by a Ugandan volunteer who is both a seasoned coffee farmer and an internationally awarded barista. Previous experimentation with coffee trees planted around 8 years ago, albeit on a smaller scale, provided valuable insights, confirming their viability under the sometimes challenging conditions of Baclayan.



One of our FHP kids actively participating in the robusta coffee planting activity at the farm.

While awaiting the fruition of our coffee plants, we plan to nurture hundreds of seedlings. As our confidence in the potential of coffee production in Baclayan grows, we plan to offer seedlings to local farmers and provide them with training on cultivation and maintenance practices.

Upon the commencement of harvesting our coffee, we will allocate resources towards acquiring essential equipment and machinery for processing and packaging our yield. Concurrently, as community farmers begin their own coffee harvests, we aim to either procure their produce or empower them with the skills to independently manage their harvest using our equipment. We envision coffee production as a promising avenue for economic empowerment within the indigenous communities we serve.

Trainings and Partnerships

Over four consecutive Saturdays, we hosted a series of training sessions aimed at cultivating an appreciation for agriculture among young people by offering hands-on experience in sustainable farming practices. We conducted two batches of these training sessions, engaging a total of 36 participants. Each participant was equipped with a starter gardening kit, seeds, and organic fertilizer to kickstart their own individual or community garden endeavors.

Additionally, we extended technical assistance and offered a supply of vegetable seeds to four operational community gardens located in Km. 37, Paraway, Poblacion, and Aninuan, as well as two gardens in Dulangan.

The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) spearheaded a comprehensive three-day organic agriculture training program at our farm. The program encompassed lectures and hands-on sessions covering land preparation and fertilizer production, attracting 21 participants from the Family Home Program, farm workers, and volunteers.

Furthermore, our farm workers benefited from a specialized corn production training organized by the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO).

We also received valuable support from the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) in Los Baños, Laguna, who generously provided us with vegetable seeds. A portion of these seeds, we distributed to participants of the Women Organic Gardening Skills (WOGS) program, as well as to 140 individuals within the municipality.

During the first half of the year, we had the honor of hosting visitors from esteemed partners and sponsors, including the Ming Yi Foundation, Roncalli Foundation, and various partner agencies such as Teach for the Philippines, MIMAROPA Regional Police Unit, and Youth For Change participants.

Farm Volunteers, Interns, and Visitors

In our first year as a registered host with Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), we welcomed five volunteers who brought a diverse array of backgrounds and agricultural expertise. They supported our agriculturists and farm workers in tasks ranging from coffee planting to daily farm operations.

In December, we received three new volunteers, who will be working with us throughout the first quarter of 2024.

We also opened up the farm for senior high school work immersion interns. They participated in various activities, gaining insights into the fundamentals of organic agriculture and its significance to the environment.

In addition, a water expert from PUM Netherlands, a non-profit organization offering technical assistance, collaborated with Stairway in evaluating the potential of a water source located within our farm premises.



Our organic farm thrives with diverse support from our friends and stakeholders, which nurtures both agricultural and environmental stewardship.



Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth (EACY) Program

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Stairway's partnership with Marshall Foundation, which means it is now ten years ago that we started this children and youth anchored environmental initiative. As we reflect on the progress and milestones of the EACY Program, we are pleased to see our collaborative efforts manifested in multiple remarkable developments pertaining to advance children's right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

In 2014, we initiated the EACY Clubs with only eight chapters and a few hundred members in Puerto Galera. Over the years, we witnessed the ups and downs, the growth, and the potential strength of the local child and youth movement for environmental advocacy. To date, we have reached thousands of members and youth leaders from different communities within and outside of Puerto Galera through the EACY Alliance.



SAS participant learning about mangroves and its importance to our ecosystem.

We started the Sea Adventure School (SAS) back in 2014. Initially we had to use the students' summer vacations to run our trips, but within a year, we had established a collaboration with our local schools to incorporate the floating classroom into their curriculum. The sea adventure gives a chance for students to explore the interrelatedness of mangroves, sea grass and coral reefs and understand how human activities affect these marine ecosystems. Today, SAS trips are reaching more than 1,000 participants each year. The formal collaboration with the local high schools has rooted SAS into the community.

Year	Months	No. of Trips	No. of Participants
2014	May	7	136
	July-Dec	0	0
2015	Jan-July	27	653
	Nov-Dec	7	183
2016	Jan-Apr	31	717
	Nov-Dec	5	124
2017	Jan-Jun	31	768
	Oct- Dec	17	488
2018	Jan-Jun	57	1,513
	Jul-Dec	31	679
2019	Jan-Jun	31	877
	Jul-Dec	16	469
2020	Jan-Dec	26	608
2021	Jan-Dec	0	0
2022	Jan-Dec	44	932
2023	Jan-Dec	54	1,348
TOTAL		384	9,495

No trips were recorded from July to December 2014 due to the maintenance of M/V Berge Apo, the vessel we use for SAS Trips. Similarly, in 2021, trips were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sea Adventure School in Full Swing

We surpassed our goal of 40 SAS trips this year despite operating most of them during weekends. DepEd's "No Disruption of Classes" policy has seriously disrupted our SAS operations, but thanks to teacher and student dedication, we kept the Sea Adventure School in operation. The floating classroom embarked on 54 trips with 1,348 participants, an average of 25 participants per trip.



Local students immersed in the wonders of marine life during their SAS trip.

In partnership with the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Oriental Mindoro, all eight local public and private high schools, and vocational schools in Puerto Galera with tourism flagship programs participated in our SAS Trips. Most of them are current Grade 9 students, while some are older students, who missed joining SAS trips during the pandemic lockdowns in the previous school years.



Over the past ten years, SAS students have collected several tons of plastic garbage for proper disposal. By now, their collection is more moderate.

Aside from the exposure to the different marine ecosystems, the students on the SAS clean up a large mangrove area, which ten years ago looked more like a garbage dump than an invaluable piece of nature.

Here's what one student remarked about her experience:

“ This Sea Adventure School was enjoyable and entertaining. I enjoyed it not only because I got to spend it with my classmates but I also learned more about marine life, its beauty, and its importance to the environment. Some educational stuff can often be dull, but this experience was the opposite! ”

(-Bien, a Grade 9 student from Puerto Galera Academy)

On Berge Bulk's second annual visit in November, ten of their crew members witnessed and experienced all the inspiring projects and activities that their company has supported over the past decade.

Kuya Romeo, a member of the Berge Bulk crew, shared his experiences during their exposure trip at Stairway.

“ As a Berge Bulk employee, I am very thankful that they have given me a chance to go on this trip to Stairway Foundation. It gave me a lot of background regarding the kids we support. I realized that our programs are not only for our environment but also for the kids' future. ”

Local Movement on Youth Participation

The program has further consolidated and expanded Stairway's network of environmental education advocates and engaged more children and youth through various camps, events, campaigns, and projects. The initiative of the EACY network was underscored by its quick response to the oil spill incident near Mindoro Island earlier this year through the mobilization of its partners, especially the students and youth organizations.

During the Earth Day Celebration last April, the focus was on the recent oil spill near Mindoro Island a few month earlier. We invited partners from the Batangas State University, Oceana Philippines, and ABS-CBN Foundation to give talks on the subject.

Last September, hundreds of young people from EACY's network of youth partners joined the annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC). There was relatively less rubbish to collect from the beach compared to previous years. A positive indication!



Youth volunteers collected coconut husks and used plastic bottles for the creation of makeshift oil spill booms in preparation for a possible reach of oil slicks on the coasts of Puerto Galera.



We invited partners, young leaders, and kids to join us in celebrating Earth Day. In addition, hundreds of people watched the Facebook Live coverage.



Along with the EACY Club Chapters and Kabataan Para sa Kalikasan (KAPAKA), ninety percent of Stairway's over 600 Educational Assistance Initiative scholars joined the International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) in coordination with the local government, MENRO, local Philippine National Police unit, and other barangay organizations.

EACY Alliance organizations outside of Puerto Galera responded to the call as well and initiated their clean-ups in Calapan City and in the municipality of Roxas.

To amplify our environmental awareness campaign and reach out to more students and youth groups in the schools and communities, we have continued to develop and support various projects with our youth partners.

- 1) Now in its second year, our youth-led Climate Reality and Plastic Crisis (CRPC) Talks volunteers have been sought as resource speakers and facilitators in various youth leadership camps. These camps were organized by our partners from the local police and other non-governmental organizations, Boys Scouts, local barangays and schools.
- 2) We conducted monthly environmental education sessions with our Family Home Program boys and utilized the materials of our CRPC Talks. We have covered the first three subtopics on climate change, biodiversity, and solid waste management, which were carried out using games, lectures, film shows, and field trips.
- 3) Inspired by their trip in the floating classroom last May during the Deaf Camp, our partners at the De La Salle School for Deaf Education and Applied Studies (DLSU -SDEAS) created a video regarding the EACY Program and the contents of the Sea Adventure School. Boosting our call for inclusivity in upholding children's rights. The video is especially useful for young deaf people to raise their awareness and interest in environmental issues presented by the Sea Adventure School.

Watch the video on this link: <https://bit.ly/SDEAS-EACY-Program>

To further sustain and enhance child and youth participation in our programs, we have organized different youth leadership camps, workshops, and other capacity-building activities:

- 1) EACY Leadership Camp with KAPAKA-Calapan, Student Government members from Mindoro State University Calapan Campus, and officers of the Association of Youth for Ocean Sustainability (AYOS). The leadership camp included sessions in the Sea Adventure School, Climate Reality Talks, EACYp EACYp Orientation, and a comprehensive discussion on Project Management and Development.

- 2) CRPC Workshop with Puerto Galera KAPAKA Volunteers, EACY Club Officers from Aninuan, Yes-O officers from Oriental Mindoro National High School, officers from a community youth organization in Victoria, and volunteers from Mountain Support PH Inc. The outputs of the workshop were CRPC session guides covering the topics on biodiversity, solid waste management, and natural calamities.
- 3) Freedive Training and Citizen Science for Coral Monitoring — a series of sessions to develop freediving skills and a workshop on how to conduct coral surveys and monitoring through the Alwan (Filipino term for easy) method. Five of our senior FHP kids and five members of the Bignayan community organization attended the sessions.
- 4) Sitio Scientist Program for Hanunuo Mangyan pupils of Mansalay. Our partner youth organization, Mountain Support PH Inc., gathered 16 Mangyan Hanuno Grade 6 pupils of off-grid schools from the remote mountain village in Mansalay and trained them as sitio (village) scientists. They are now all set to bring their project ideas to life at their Happy Schools. Their time at Stairway was packed with first-time experiences, such as boat rides, beach walks, and encounters with marine life.

As a result of the workshops and capacity-building activities, together with our partner organizations, we have launched citizen science initiatives that will continue to run through next year.

- 1) Coral Monitoring Through the Alwan Method. Last November, our FHP kids and members of the Bignayan community organization applied what they learned from the sessions to get the baseline data about the coral reefs across the village in Bignayan. The data was presented to the newly-elected barangay council of Aninuan to contemplate steps to protect the reef from degradation. The Stairway boys actively participated in the meeting with the council and stressed the urgency of intervention in the interest of children.
- 2) Bat Counting in Muelle. volunteers from various youth groups in Puerto Galera and our Stairway kids attended a session on bats and flying foxes and how to count them. They had an unforgettable time watching around 16,000 flying foxes taking to the skies over the mangrove forest at Muelle Bay Cultural Heritage Park. They will count the flying foxes regularly in the coming year.



Our FHP kids, who are trained free divers, participated in EACY's coral monitoring initiative.



- 3) Sitio Scientist projects in the IP Schools in Mansalay. After their training at Stairway, they will implement their simple project proposals on creating a school garden, painting their school and classrooms, and making IDs for their fellow students. They will also be engaged in the installation of solar panels in their off-grid schools.

Meanwhile, our partners from DLSU SDEAS launched their version of coastal cleanup at DENR Las Pinas-Paranaque Wetland Park last November, as part of their 29TH Deaf Festival. With the power of over 50 participants, they collected 349 kg of assorted rubbish.

Finally, to consolidate the gains of our collaboration with different youth organizations and further sustain and expand child and youth participation in different areas and levels, we have organized the EACY Alliance. The alliance was formally launched last September after its core members and leaders formulated its vision, mission, organizational structure, and other principles expressed in its constitution and by-laws.

The umbrella organization is comprised of various youth groups that collaborated with previous EACY campaigns like the EACYp EACYp (2021) and the Camp Kalapen Environmental Journalism Camp (2019), EACY Club Chapters in various barangays, KAPAKA, Girl Scouts of the Philippines-Puerto Galera National High School, DALOY-Environmental Journalism Group, the Association of Youth for Ocean Sustainability (AYOS) and the Mountain Support-PH Inc.

The alliance envisions to support and implement EACY initiatives and projects that advance child and youth participation. It commits to strengthening the voice of the youth in adult-dominated decision-making structures in the community.

During the launching of the alliance, the members saw the opportunity to reform the Youth Councils in most barangays where its members and leaders ran in the recent elections. For the first time, several leaders from the EACY Alliance organizations were elected as chairpersons and councilors in most barangays in Puerto Galera, Calapan City, and the municipalities of Victoria and Roxas. Traditionally, the role of the Youth Councils have been limited to organize beauty contests and basketball tournaments. We are proud to see the youth bringing new agendas that affect their lives to the table.



Last November, newly elected Puerto Galera Youth Councilors and Chairpersons gathered at Stairway to discuss collaborations with the EACY Program for child protection and environmental projects in their barangays.

New Milestones in Marine Protection and Hillside Conservation

Stairway provided ongoing support to Bignayan Indigenous Community Organization through a tri-fold initiative:

- a) Completion of the construction of a simple structure that serves as their center where they hold their meetings and other organizational activities
- b) Provision of additional water pipes and other materials to complete the connection of their village's additional water system. Over a hundred households have benefited from this new continuous supply of water, thus improving their family's overall well-being and hygiene. The new water supply will also be utilized in their plans to develop community gardens.
- c) Provision of technical assistance in the completion of their organization's constitution and by-laws and the processing of their registration to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). This registration will bolster their organization's credibility in clinching more support and funds from other government and non-government institutions.

We also guided the organization in formulating a three-year plan that covers their organization's thrusts in sustainable agriculture, protected seas, and empowered youth and women. Our initiatives in this area are coordinated with the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).

Five members of their organization completed a freediving course and citizen science training to monitor coral reefs. Last November, they joined a survey in the coral area in front of their village. They also presented the results of the coral survey to the newly elected barangay officials to push for the protection of the reefs. We have shared our findings with the barangay authorities, and we are now closer to achieving our goal of declaring Aninuan as a Marine Protected Area (MPA).

Renewable Energy for Environmental Sustainability

Nine years ago, Stairway had the luck and privilege to be introduced to SolEnergy, a new and upcoming company providing sustainable energy solutions in the Philippines. Since then, a great friendship has evolved, and it has become a tradition that SolEnergy will visit Stairway with their entire crew as part of the company's Christmas outing and celebration. The first year, the company counted a single digit number of staff, but that has changed drastically. This year, we had the pleasure to present our environmental



The installation of solar panels is a part of our broader initiative to harness renewable energy sources and contribute to the sustainability of our operations. We aim to reduce our carbon footprint and energy costs, as well as promote environmental awareness.

play, “The Lorax”, to nearly 80 SolEnergy people, after they had installed an additional 81 solar panels distributed between our main campus, the farm and our water pump station.

SolEnergy has sponsored and installed Stairway’s entire solar power system, which has provided a large majority of our power over several years and saved us millions of pesos in power bills. With the new installations, we will be close to 100% self-sufficiency, and we will continue being unaffected by frequent power cuts and fluctuations that destroy or significantly shorten the life span of all electronic equipment.

Also in line with our efforts and initiatives towards environmental sustainability, we need to mention Grundfos, who have supported Stairway for a number of years and who recently provided us with a new super effective solar powered water pump. With the help of our local partners, we have reached a point where our consumption of water and electricity is nearly 100% carbon and cost neutral.

EACY Dive

To enhance the operations of the EACY Dive Center, one of our former Educational Assistance Initiative (EAI) beneficiaries is currently undergoing training to become a dive instructor. He has been awarded a scholarship from PADI. His training is presently in progress, and we anticipate the EACY Dive Center to be up and running within the second quarter of 2024.

Stairway has applied for a PADI grant under the habitat restoration and protection category. We provide crucial technical support for the underwater surveillance and assessment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the province by assigning a certified Stairway diver to the Oriental Mindoro Resource Monitoring Team (ORMT) for the MPA surveillance. We plan to expand this initiative by training more divers to safeguard our marine biodiversity.

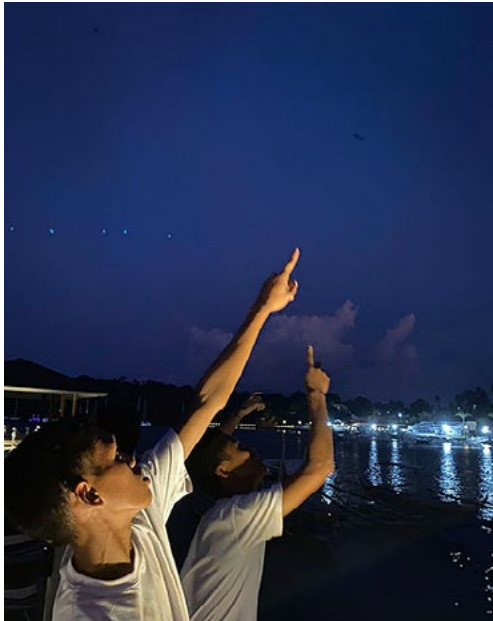
Maintaining the Network and Forging Partnerships

As clearly illustrated above, one of the keys to the success of the program’s campaigns and projects over the years is our strong partnership with other organizations and networks with similar advocacies. We have nurtured and expanded these partnerships while increasingly involving the youth.

We are actively involved in local government committees, including the Municipal Solid Waste Management Council, Task Force Puerto Galera, the Management Council of the Puerto Galera Man and Biosphere Reserve, and the Sabang Bay Water Quality Management Board.



Partnership meeting with ABS-CBN Foundation and local NGOs for the conduct of the citizen science initiatives in Puerto Galera.



In a bat counting activity last November, approximately 16,000 bats were seen in the Muelle Mangrove Walkway.

We once again clinched the fee waiver program of Green Destination’s Top 100 Stories and rallied our local partners in Puerto Galera under the call for sustainable tourism. In a meeting last August, we handed over the campaign to the new Tourism Officer, with the support of the MENRO and Municipal Planning and Development Office.

Our citizen science initiatives as well as other youth projects gained momentum through the support from our partners. The citizen science coral survey and monitoring were made possible through ABS-CBN Foundation’s INSPIRE Project as well as the Freediving Puerto Galera team that offered free training to our group.

The citizen science Bat Counting in the mangrove forest of Muelle was in partnership with the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc (MBCFI), while the oil spill response campaign was supported by our friends from The Locsin Group.

We maintained our support to the Provincial Government’s initiatives for the conservation of marine protected areas (MPAs) through participation in the regular habitat assessment of twenty (20) MPAs located in six municipalities in our province.

The collaboration we have cultivated with our partners and stakeholders over the years epitomize our dedication to nurturing impactful relationships that catalyze positive change within our communities.



As a member of the Oriental Mindoro Resource Monitoring Team (ORMT), we conducted seagrass and coral reef assessments in Suguicay, Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro, as requested by the DENR to support the island’s potential declaration as a protected area under the NIPAS Act of 1992.



Advocacy and Capacity Building Program

Stairway National Capital Region (NCR) office coordinates operations and conducts child protection training and activities both locally and internationally. It serves as a vital technical resource in networking and in building the capacities of individuals and organizations doing child protection work.

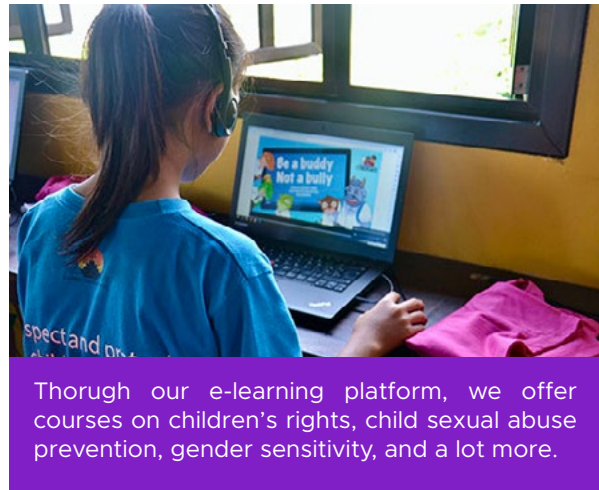
Presently, our NCR office implements three major projects that complement our overarching objective of establishing a safe environment for all children, both in offline and online spaces. These three projects are:

- **The Break the Silence (BTS) Campaign Consolidation Project** is funded by DANIDA. The project is geared towards consolidating the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN), strengthening partnerships between SFI and government partners, and strengthening SFI's capacity for training and advocacy through development of new training materials and methodologies. It continuously interconnects and consolidates with the other two major projects run by our NCR office, the Cybersafe Schools Project (CSP) and the Global Program (GP) on "Stopping Cybercrime against Children".
- **CyberSafe Schools Project (CSP)** is a consortium project involving four (4) BTSNN partners. The project is initiated and led by Stairway to further advance institutionalization of child protection in schools. The project is supported by KNH and BMZ, Germany.
- The **Global Program (GP)** is a consortium project with NGOs in Indonesia and Nepal that focuses on enhancing child protection systems. Supported by KNH and BMZ, it aims to improve child protection systems and policies at national and local levels through strengthened institutional capacities.

Stairway founded the Break the Silence Network in 2008 with only 6 members. Today, it has become an independent registered network, BTSNN, with 33 active members spread over the country.

Stairway's e-learning platform

The unchecked use of the internet and cell phones among children and youth has inadvertently turned them into unwitting participants in a global experiment. Unlike previous generations, today's youth have grown up in a digital age where constant connectivity and instant access to information are the norm. It seems that the rapid proliferation of technology has outpaced our understanding of its long-term effects on young minds and bodies.



One consequence of this unchecked digital exposure is the erosion of boundaries between the online and offline worlds. With smartphones at their fingertips, children and youth are constantly bombarded with stimuli, blurring the lines between leisure and productivity, rest and work. The 24/7 nature of digital connectivity has disrupted traditional patterns of sleep, leisure, and social interaction, leading to a generation that struggles to disconnect and find balance in their lives.

Moreover, the rise of social media has created a new landscape for social comparison and validation, where young people are constantly seeking affirmation through likes, comments, and shares. This perpetual cycle of seeking external validation can take a toll on self-esteem and mental health, as young people internalize unrealistic standards of beauty, success, and happiness portrayed on social media platforms.

Additionally, the digital age has given rise to new forms of cyberbullying and online harassment, with devastating consequences for victims. The anonymity and perceived distance of online interactions can embolden bullies to engage in harmful behavior without fear of repercussions, leaving victims feeling isolated, helpless, and traumatized.

Furthermore, the constant exposure to screens and digital devices has been linked to a host of physical health issues, including eye strain, posture problems, and inactive lifestyles. The lack of physical activity and outdoor playtime has contributed to rising rates of childhood obesity and related health conditions, further exacerbating the health disparities among young people. In essence, the unchecked use of cell phones and the internet has transformed children and youth into guinea pigs in a grand social experiment, with far-reaching consequences for their well-being, mental health, and development. As we grapple with the fallout of this digital revolution, it is imperative that we take proactive measures to mitigate its negative effects, foster healthy digital habits, and create safe and supportive environments where young people can thrive both online and offline.

Stairway's e-learning is an innovative training methodology that has facilitated the integration and institutionalization of Child Online Protection (COP) concepts within the training curricula and capacity-building activities of different organizations. The use of e-learning not only ensures widespread access to training materials but also enhances the sustainability and scalability of child protection education efforts across diverse institutions and sectors.

Inspired and informed from decades of child rights advocacy and protection work, Stairway embarked on transitioning a rich collection of creative training materials and experience into e-learning ten years ago. It has been a tedious process involving hundreds of consultations with children, youth and educators to make sure the content as well as the methodology would capture its audiences and properly address sensitive child protection issues in the online as well as the offline world.

There has been a logical progression in the development and roll out phases since the conception of the e-learning program. In the past year, we have focused on customizing several training courses for the use of specific groups and departments, like the Department of Education, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Philippine National Police.

The chronological developmental progression of our e-learning and its' dissemination:

- a. Many years of developing creative advocacy materials and facilitating trainings with children and educators/ child service providers.
- b. Development of e-learning as part of a goal to wide scale reach and make a dynamic and consistent intervention.
- c. Testing every course and module with thousands of children and educators/ child service providers.
- d. Introducing materials at local, provincial, regional up to national level.
- e. Reaching recognition for relevance and quality at national level, like the National Educators Academy Of The Philippines (NEAP) accreditation and MOUs with other government departments. (2022-2023)
- f. Working with curriculum developers in various government agencies at national level to customize e-learning to their specific learning objectives and to foster a sense of ownership with partners. (2023)
- g. Wide-scaling to educators, which is where we are at now. (2024- onwards)
- h. Rolling out to students via the trained educators. (2025- onwards)



Our e-learning platform transforms child protection education by making it accessible and engaging for children and child protection actors.



The focus of our e-learning in 2023 was not yet on reaching great numbers, but rather on adding relevant and much needed modules, while at the same time working with government partners at the national level to customize the online training courses to their specific learning objectives and needs. Below chart shows the courses offered, the number of enrolled learners, course completers and the completion rate for 2023.

e-learning Courses	Course Completers	Enrolled	Completion Rate
Child Protection e-learning Course for Educators (Batch 1)	413	758	54%
Break the Silence Level 1 for CHR-CRC(Basic CSAP and CyberSafety e-learning Course)	12	12	100%
Break the Silence: Level 1 Training for TWG (Basic CSAP and CyberSafety e-learning Course) for DSWD 4Ps FO8	11	11	100%
Break the Silence: Level 1 Training for BTSNN members	83	99	93%
Break the Silence: Level 2 Training for BTSNN members	34	34	100%
PNP WCPD MIMAROPA Child Protection e-learning course	444	495	89%
NPTI-NCRTC Child Protection e-learning course	395	459	86%
NPTI-RTC10 Child Protection e-learning course	103	112	92%
NPTI-RTC3 Child Protection e-learning course	144	159	90%
NPTI-RTC6 Child Protection e-learning course	108	120	90%
Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) members of the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN) - Refresher	7	16	37%
Piloting of RA11930 e-learning course for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) members of the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN)	14	21	66%
Break the Silence: Level 3 Training for BTSNN members (Course Managers Training)	14	14	100%
Child Protection e-learning Course for Educators (Batch 2)	Ongoing course with 9,500 enrollees		
TOTAL	1,748	2,310	84.38%

The close to ten thousand enrollees for our Child Protection e-Learning Course for Educators last December is a result of the collaboration with the DepEd and gives promise to the future utilization of our online tool for child protection within the department. The 9,500 teachers enrolled in December 2023 did so with the purpose to share with their students in 2024 and onwards. We are entering into the phase of wide scaling.

Break The Silence (BTS) Consolidation Project

Through the Break the Silence Campaign, we work on advocacy, capacity building and networking to increase awareness of the issues from ground level to government departments, and multiple non-government organizations (NGOs). We conceptualized and started to build the Break the Silence Network back in 2008 with the aim to enhance child protection capacities in every region of the country. Currently there are 33 active partners of the network of the 17 regions countrywide.

Break the Silence National Network (BTS NN)

In 2016, the network was established as a registered organization independent of Stairway under the name “the Break the Silence National Network (BTS NN)”. It is a movement of NGOs, government agencies, faith based groups, children’s groups and individual advocates that aims to put attention to child sexual abuse and exploitation issues and capacitate government and CSO partners all over the country to professionally do prevention work and respond to cases of abuse.

Based on the impact reports submitted by the network members, this year alone, BTSNN was able to reach over 1 million children and adults — a testament to the organization's widespread community outreach efforts and the effectiveness of community-based capacity-building initiatives.

For their continued professional development, the network implemented activities that centered on strengthened organizational operation, committed membership, continued capacity building, and growth and development of the members.

During the 2023 Annual General Assembly and National Conference at Stairway Foundation’s Main Office, BTS NN members received training on key topics, including new child-related laws, policy advocacy. At Stairway, we utilized the gathering of partners for the national launch of



We utilized the gathering of BTSNN partners for the national launch of our newest e-learning course and animation, “For Your Eyes Only”, which addresses sexting and sextortion, a growing problem among teenagers.



The training and workshops were designed to empower BTSNN members and enable them to further empower their communities.

our newest e-learning course and animation, “For Your Eyes Only”, which addresses sexting and sextortion, a growing problem among teenagers.

Network members also attended a training workshop on “Strategic Communications Plan” that covered topics like Basic Communication, Problem Analysis, and Message Architecture, which received high ratings from participants for relevance and effectiveness.

To further empower new members of the network, the Board of Trustees (BOT) and Bakyas Community Development Center, Inc. organized

a New Members Learning Visit in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, last September 2023. Established members from the BTS Inter-Visayas Network (BTS-IV) shared insights and collaborated with 13 new members in workshops that focused on establishing local BTS networks in their respective localities.

BTS NN members also received a series of online and in-person trainings through Stairway’s e-learning platform and trainers:

- **BTSNN Level 1 Training:** Training on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE), including Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)
- **BTSNN Level 2 Training:** Facilitating of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Sessions.
- **BTS Level 3 Course Managers Training:** Navigating the Moodle Platform and Utilizing Basic Content Creation Tools using Stairway’s e-learning program.



New members of BTSNN with the Board of Trustees during a learning visit in Bacolod City.



Child participation has been a natural and essential aspect in the process of the development and the testing of the entire Stairway e-learning platform. The above photo is from a Children's Consultation Session on the Development of Anti-OSAEC/CyberSafety Messaging with 73 participants, wherein 56 were children.

Partnership and Capacity Building with Key Government Agencies

Department of Education (DepEd)

Stairway has had a fruitful collaboration with the DepEd for nearly a decade assisting the department in establishing policies and a dedicated office for child protection, which today is known as the DepEd Learner Rights Protection Office (LRPO). In 2023, the groundwork was laid for an e-learning version of streamlined case management protocols, which is to be cascaded to schools nationwide.

Using the core messages from the children's consultation session, Anti-OSAEC and CSAEM presentation packages developed with DepEd shall be used in the conduct of nationwide classroom-based Anti-OSAEC/CyberSafety education to be launched in 2024 in celebration of Safer Internet Day. A national memorandum has been issued for this activity, which is the first of its kind in the country.



During the 31ST National Children's Month Celebration, DepEd LRPO recognized Stairway for our contribution towards protecting the rights and promoting a safe and positive learning environment for children in schools.



In collaboration with a Technical Working Group in Region 8, we produced a draft child protection course to be used in Family Development Sessions and Youth Development Sessions. The course was launched in December 2023, with pilot testing scheduled in 2024 that will target the social workers in region 8.

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)

For several years, Stairway has worked closely with the DSWD, especially their Anti-Poverty Program known as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), which reaches around 3.7 million active household beneficiaries.

Prior to this milestone, the same Technical Working Group went through a BTS Level 1 Training with the purpose to increase the members' level of understanding on the basic concept of Children's Rights and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

Early this year, Stairway made agreements with the DSWD National Program Management Office, the Family Development Division Office, (FDD) and the Implementing Project Development Office that includes the involvement of the department in the finalization of the e-learning course and its wide-scaling, updating of the Code of Conduct, elaboration of Social Media Guidelines, and updating of DSWD 4Ps Case Management Protocols to reflect the need to address COP concerns as well.

Further, we received a recognition from DSWD for our contribution as Regional Advisory Council member and for advocating Children's Rights and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention (CSAP) especially among vulnerable families under the 4Ps Anti-Poverty Program.

Philippine National Police (PNP)

Stairway started offering Children's Rights and Child Protection Training to the PNP all the way back in 2006. From the initial engagement with one regional training school for police cadets, we expanded the collaboration over just a few years to include every training school in the 17 regions of the country giving training to as many as



Members of PNP-DPCR exploring Stairway's e-learning platform.

10,000 police cadets and officers per year for a number of years. Although we were satisfied with the results of the collaboration, it was labor intensive and logistically heavy for our organization, so we decided on a new strategy to reach the same goal, namely using our e-learning.

In 2022, we signed an agreement with the PNP National Head Office to co-develop a tailor designed curriculum for three different PNP Departments based from Stairway's e-learning.

With the support from Stairway, the **Directorate for Police Community Relations (DPCR)** developed and launched the Gender Sensitivity and Child Protection e-learning Course within our e-learning platform. Piloting within a Technical Working Group and rollout of the course is scheduled for February 2024.

The **Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD)** in our home region has successfully co-developed and launched the Child Protection e-learning course for Women and Children Protection Desk Investigators. The course developed at the regional level will be adapted by the Women and Children Protection Council (WCPC) at the national level in 2024.

Most recently, we have conducted an Orientation and Training on Child Protection with Special Focus on online sexual abuse and exploitation to 17 Regional Training Center Coordinators across the country. Four of the training centers under the **National Police Training Institute (NPTI)** were strategically chosen to pilot the NPTI e-learning course within their Public Safety Leadership Courses. The signing of a Memorandum of Agreement with the NPTI is scheduled for February 2024.

Cybersafe Schools Project (CSP)

In this pilot child protection project with 42 schools in four regions, Stairway leads a consortium of three other Break the Silence National Network members to help develop capacities among teachers, school heads, barrio officials and within the schools' Child Protection Committees to develop and implement Child Protection Policies in all schools. This project was launched back in 2019, and the implementation has been challenged due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused a lockdown of all schools in the country for more than two years. However, thanks to our e-learning and a strong partnership with the DepEd, we are back on track and able to meet our goals.



During a training with the NPTI, we showcased Cracked Mirrors in Manila, our advocacy play on child sexual abuse and exploitation, attended by friends and partners including DepEd, DSWD, Philippine Congress, NGOs, and CyberSafe schools.



Initiatives with School Child Protection Committees (CPC)

In 2023, we trained 116 Child Protection Committee (CPC) members from the 42 CSP partner schools using our Child Protection Committee e-learning course, which we developed in partnership with the DepEd Learners Right and Protection Office (LRPO). A total of 116 CPC members, including school heads, guidance designates, teachers, learners, parents, and community representatives, successfully completed the e-learning course.

After the e-learning course, we conducted a mentoring session with the participants that revealed gaps in most of the schools' Child Protection Policies, particularly regarding internet use protocols.

In order to address these identified concerns, we responded with an orientation on Children's Rights, DepEd Policy, and Cybersafety for 238 Barangay Child Protection Committee (BCPC) members to influence barangays to develop policies complementing DepEd for a safe learning environment.

We also conducted a Child Protection Policy Writeshop, which helped participants to draft guidelines on preventing, responding to, and managing online child abuse and exploitation. The aim is to adopt laws on Anti-OSAEC and CSAEM, and provide clear guidelines on the responsibility of the barangay.

Preventive Measures Against Sexual Abuse

The integration of child protection in classroom discussion serves as a reinforcement to child protection policies in schools. The participants of the initiative cascaded the lesson plan integration on child protection to other teachers, and a supervisor participant also invited Stairway to discuss CyberSafety and Online Protective Behavior to all its 50 guidance designate under their district.

In 2023, through the trained teachers, we have responded to seven (7) cases of child sexual abuse, one (1) case of cyberbullying, one (1) case of sexting, and one (1) case of physical abuse. CyberSafety Training Inside the Classroom

Stairway crafted the module CyberSafe: Health Habits for a Safe Online Environment for Children used during the National Children's Month Celebration across our 42 partner schools. Through the implementation of the module, we aim to target the following enrolled learners:

Region	Target Learners
IV-A (CALABARZON)	14,649
VI (Western Visayas)	21,154
XII (CARAGA)	15,594
National Capital Region (NCR)	23,504

The actual number of children reached will be determined after all pre-test and post-test results have been submitted and collected.



Stairway distributed 84 smart TVs to our partner schools with the aim to support Child Protection Committees, teachers, and learners in facilitating the integration of child protection discussion inside the classroom. The TVs include a flash drive with relevant policies and learning materials.

“Before the implementation of the CyberSafe Schools Project, we felt sympathy, but often stopped there. Teachers were hesitant to help because we do not know what to do. The sessions we attended empowered us with the knowledge to respond. Integrating child protection through video materials has made children more aware and empowered. They are now bold enough to speak up and talk to their teachers. Armed with information, we cannot remain passive; we must act. Also, this time, the support system is better, and the learners, the school personnel and the community are informed.”

- teacher participant from Silagnanan Elementary School



Safer Internet Day Philippines (SIDPh) 2023

Stairway conducted CyberSafety Orientation using the video animation *Some Things are Not Worth Sharing* to elementary learners and reached a total of 9,275 learners across four regions. We also distributed CyberSafety bookmarks, booklets, and infographics to all its partner schools.

The Cybersafe Schools Program Consortium also conducted different activities across four regions in the country:

- Organized a Spoken Poetry and Original Songwriting Composition contest in 19 schools, with the theme “*Together for a Better Internet.*”
- Conducted awareness-raising activities via Radio and TV Guesting and face-to-face sessions on child protection.
- Set up advocacy booths in schools where learners could get “Click Before You Send” comics and bookmarks and engage in interactive educational games.
- Participated in the DepEd LRPO SIDPh 2023 celebration, attended by 352 learner representatives, where our video animation “*For Your Eyes Only*” was presented and discussed.



Global Program on “Stopping Cybercrime against Children: More Safety and Protection on the Internet”

The Global Program envisions improved protection of children and adolescents from cybercrime, with children’s meaningful participation through functional child protection structures, with qualified and responsible child protection actors and civil society cooperation at the regional and global levels.

Beyond our interrelated activities with the Break the Silence (BTS) program and established partnerships with key government agencies like the DepEd, DSWD, and PNP, we also actively engage and collaborate with other agencies.

Partnership and Capacity Building with the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)

With the aim of reaching the local government units (LGUs) with our Child Online Protection (COP) agenda, we initiated collaboration with the CWC.

Stairway, along with CWC Regional Coordinators and their Localization and Institutionalization Division Staff, conducted a three-day workshop to identify specific standards for LGU Employees’ Social Media and Technology Guidelines, organizational social media presence, and inclusion of Child Online Protection in LGU Child Protection Policy Case Management standards. The finalized outputs will be disseminated through CWC in-person training and via an e-learning course developed with Stairway.

We are actively collaborating with CWC to engage the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and extend Child Online Protection awareness sessions to Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPCs) via Stairway’s e-learning.



The collaboration with the CWC was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in the first quarter of the year. The MOU became operational following a successful workshop on Standard Setting of Child Protection Policy (CPP) in Local Government Units (LGUs).

Partnership and Capacity Building with KNH Philippines (KNHP) and Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN) Partners/Members

With the aim to strengthen child participation in the Global Program Philippines country module, we collaborate with five NGOs who are partners and/or members of KNH Philippines and the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN). This collaboration includes generation of key messages and other ideas in the development and utilization of community-based cybersafety session materials for children with their active involvement. Furthermore, the outcomes of this initiative are an integral component of our broader plan of engaging with the DSWD 4Ps in developing learning and resource materials on COP for the Youth Development Sessions.

Partnership and Capacity Building with Meta Philippines

As a long time trusted partner of META in the Philippines, Stairway has been participating in Meta's Annual Safety Summit wherein Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on child safety in digital spaces are gathered to share best practices and network with each other.



During the last Asia Pacific Safety Summit, held last August in Meta's Singapore Office, we were once again invited to share our initiatives on child online protection. Via a panel discussion, we highlighted our work in the Global Program, particularly on e-learning and our legislative lobbying efforts for the anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) bill, zooming in on the Child Sex Offender Registry (CSOR).

Partnership and Capacity Building with the National Coordination Center-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children-Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Materials (NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM)

Stairway has started a collaboration with NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM, the coordinating body of RA 11930 in the third quarter 2023. We attended an activity in relation to the Anti-Trafficking Month led by Department of Justice (DOJ) and the National Coordination Center (NCC), where we presented our COP programs. Since then, we have been in continuous dialogue with NCC to discuss strategies on how to popularize RA11930, elaborate the CSOR guidelines, and to conduct capacity building for concerned stakeholders with regards to RA11930. Concrete agreements have been made so far in relation to the conduct of round-table discussion on the Philippine

Child Sex Offenders Registry List. We are the only local NGO that served as member of the technical working group in Congress for the drafting of the law.

Advancing our Legislative Agenda for Children’s Rights

Aside from our contribution and active participation in drafting and finalization of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the RA 11930, we also recognized the need in advancing our child protection efforts in policy making and lobbying.

We served as a resource organization for the various consolidated proposed revision bills on RA7610 (Anti-Child Abuse law) and the Positive Discipline Bill. As an organization, our plenary recommendations were recorded, which included the alignment of the proposed revisions of RA7610 to RA11930 to ensure that RA7610 violators regarding Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, are registered under the CSOR and the exploration of extending corporal punishment as an act which can also be committed in the digital learning space.

Other Initiatives, Engagements, and Highlights

- Registered with the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) as an accredited Continued Professional Development (CPD) provider and offers free CPD child online protection training and programs to licensed child protection actors;
- Authorized as a Learning Service Provider (LSP) of the DepEd National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), providing NEAP accredited e-learning courses for the educators in the country;
- Organized a two-part sharing-learning session in strengthening child and youth participation in program implementation among selected staff to further strengthen best practices and improve the overall quality of service to the children;
- Implemented an e-learning course on children’s consultation design – key messages and RA11930 to all involved staff of the GP Collaborators as part of the capacity building and pre-work activities on organizing consultations with children;
- Served as a resource person to the Child Protection Training of the Regional Juvenile Justice and Welfare Committee (RJJWC) of the National Capital Region;
- Recognized by DSWD Poverty Alleviation Program NCR for our valuable contribution in organizing and conducting training on child protection concerns; and
- Continuously serves as a resource person and/or part of the technical team to various training programs and awareness raising sessions among our partners via the e-learning platform and face-to-face session.

Administrative and Finance Unit

The Admin and Finance unit collaboratively manages administrative tasks, communications, financial transactions, and compliance with government and other agencies. We ensure operational efficiency and sound financial health for the organization. This year, through the collaborative efforts of our program teams, we have accomplished the following milestones:

- Hired and on-boarded five (5) new colleagues at the Mindoro Office and three (3) new colleagues at our NCR Office to strengthen our organizational capacities;
- Organized film viewing sessions, symposiums, and health tests for colleagues to provide a supportive environment for their well-being;
- Facilitated a staff days and sports activities for team building and to promote overall health;
- Supported the professional development of our colleagues through training workshops and capacity building activities in the local, national, and international scenes;
- Complied with the audit requirements for Fiscal Year 2022 and submitted financial reports to donors and funders within the given deadline;
- Renewed our BIR Certificate of Tax Exemption;
- Strategically placed our reserve and retirement funds in a trust account with favorable interest rates;
- Hosted eighteen (18) volunteers and two (2) interns with specializations in medicine, social work, psychology, agriculture, education, engineering, circular economy, mental health, and environmental science;
- Provided work immersion placement to thirty five (35) Senior High school students from three local schools and mentored them in specific competencies for 80 hours;
- Provided financial and medical assistance to community members in need, and donated in-kind goods to local schools and indigenous groups;
- Received the highest level of accreditation valid for seven (7) years in the implementation of Family Home Program (FHP) and second level accreditation valid for five (5) years the implementation of Community Assistance Programs (CAP);
- Inked partnerships in the conduct of programs and initiatives through a Memorandum of Agreement and Understanding with Converge ICT Solutions, Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), Department of Education (Schools Divisions of Calapan City and Oriental Mindoro), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) - Field Office 8 (FO8), International School Manila (ISM), and Philippine National Police (PNP)- Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD);
- Received recognitions from CWC, DepED, DSWD, and PNP for our contribution in the advancement of Child Protection and Anti-Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Programs and for promoting the safety and well-being of communities.

Our Financial Partners and Supporters

We extend our gratitude to our partners whose support has been instrumental in our achievements throughout the year. We sincerely appreciate the shared commitment to our mission in championing children's rights, and we look forward to continuing this journey together with you in the coming years.

In alphabetical order our partners and supporters are:

- Assisi Development Foundation
- Axel og Paula Nissen Fonden, Denmark
- BMZ, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation, Germany
- Brainly.com, USA
- DANIDA, Danish International Development Assistance
- Embassy of Denmark, Manila
- Emil Ingeman Oeigaard, Denmark
- Firetree Trust, Singapore
- Global Giving, USA
- Grundfos, Philippines/Denmark
- Hit Productions, Philippines
- IWG plc'
- JOTUN, Philippines/Norway
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- Marshall Foundation, Singapore
- Metro-Schroeder, Denmark
- Phoenix Foundation, Switzerland
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- Singapore American School
- Skanderborg Gymnasium, Denmark
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- Stairway Denmark
- Tage Abildgaard Holding, Denmark
- Thailandia Import, Denmark
- Trine Wilkens, Denmark

We also want to thank all the individuals, who have supported our work through generous donations and/or membership of Stairway Denmark. Finally, a special thank you to all our volunteers, including the boards of Stairway Foundation and Stairway Denmark.

