

Creating Child Friendly Spaces for the PNP Women and Childrens Protection Centers



Introduction

Stairway has been involved with advocacy on Children’s Rights and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention for a substantial number of years already, raising awareness among different sectors of society regarding the importance of “Breaking the Silence” surrounding the issue of Child Sexual Abuse. Being involved primarily with prevention work, Stairway has always seen the importance of addressing the issue on a holistic manner. Giving importance to prevention and advocacy work would entail addressing the need to also strengthen the other side of the equation of the child protection field – the reactive/aftercare sector.

One of the primary mandated institutions that cater to responding to victims of CSA in the Philippines are the Law Enforcers assigned under the “Women and Childrens’ Protection Centers” in precincts at the community level. Because of this, Stairway has been actively collaborating with the people that work under this structure in order to complement the prevention and advocacy work we are doing.

The Situation

Based on statistics, there are currently xxx numbers of WCPC’s (Women and Children’s Protection Center) in the Philippines. In Metro Manila alone, there are xxx. Ideally, the WCPC should function as a structure, both manpower-wise and physically-wise, that will address all abuses of women and children. The law enforcers under the WCPC should have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude in catering to victims of abuse, as well as have the necessary facilities in order to talk these victims. The necessary facility comes in the form of a separate room exclusively for use of the WCPC for interviewing women and children victims of abuse. However, the realities are far from ideal. Not all police stations have the separate WCPC room, and even if they do have, the room is mostly shared with other personnel’s and/or is not conducive in facilitating proper disclosure of victims especially children. One common difficulty being encountered is also the lack of equipment, in the form of computers used in processing complaints, as it is not uncommon for a police station to share one computer. Because of the nature of what the WCPC handles, it should also have its own computer in order to ensure confidentiality.

Creating Child Friendly Spaces

The concept of creating Child Friendly Spaces in the WCPCs in the Philippines is deeply rooted on Stairway's own approach of using creative advocacy for prevention work. Seeing how effective it is for prevention, Stairway thought that it should also extend in the "spaces" wherein victims come in order to disclose bravely about their ordeals. Creating Child Friendly spaces also takes into account the holistic approach, by also dealing with other facets of what a child friendly WCPC should be.

- **Imagery**
The WCPC room should be a space wherein the child would feel comfortable to be in. Taking cues from how effective counseling rooms are designed, imagery in the form of colors, drawings, paintings, etc are to be imbibed in the WCPC room in order to make the child feel more comfortable in order to elicit proper disclosure from him/her. It also doesn't hurt to note that law enforcers would feel more motivated to work in such a setting, something that would certainly increase their effectiveness in dealing with children.
- **Materials**
One of the strengths of Stairway's animation toolkits are its potential to be used as an effective tool in eliciting disclosure of experiences of sexual abuse of children. Under this project, the WCPCs shall be provided with the animation toolkits in order for them to use it handling child sexual abuse cases.
- **Equipment**
The provision of a desktop computer solely for the WCPC would ensure that their processes would be more streamlined, and that confidentiality would be maximized in handling cases of child sexual abuse.
- **Knowledge, Skills and Attitude**
The Law Enforcers under the WCPC shall also receive trainings from Stairway in order to upgrade their skills and to receive constant encouragement on sensitively handling victims of child sexual abuse.
- **System**
With the provision of a desktop computer, WCPC beneficiaries shall also be asked to adhere to a system of reporting wherein victims who come to their office, regardless if they push through with a formal complaint or not, would be recorded in a database. This system would be of significant help to child-focused sectors in terms of having access to more realistic statistics.

Scope

The project would initially cover the whole of Metro Manila. 1 WCPC center shall be chosen among each city based on certain qualifications to be formulated.

It's Impact

A project like this has impact, both tangible and long term. By strengthening a structure such as the WCPC, we are ensuring that our efforts in prevention work are equally being addressed on the reactive side. The motivation factor the law enforcers can achieve by being partners in this project would benefit the children they are handling everyday.

Long term, this speaks volume on how Government, NGO and Private Business Sector can work hand in hand in addressing the needs of children. Certainly, a project such as this would send strong signals to society as how the stakeholders involved care for children.

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