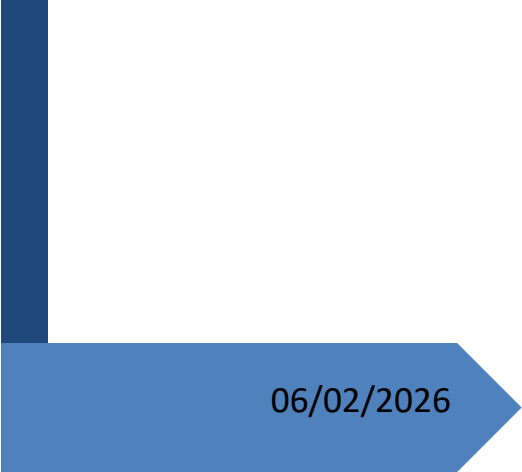




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Final evaluation report executive summary

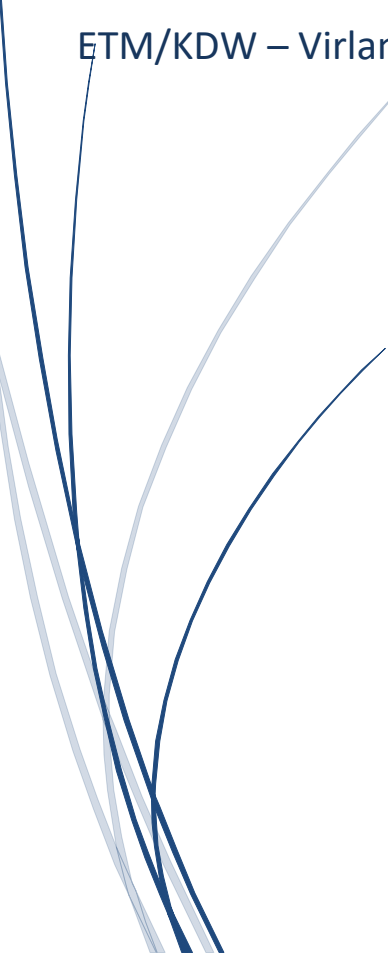
Program “A comprehensive offer for
children in street situations and
vulnerable youngsters in Bacolod
City”

2022-2025

Open Day Centre (ODC)

Bacolod City, Negros, Philippines.

ETM/KDW – Virланіe Foundation Inc.



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AICF ASBL

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1 Description of the program under evaluation

1.1 Location

The program under evaluation was implemented in the Philippines, Negros Occidental, Bacolod City.

1.2 Duration and funding of the program

The program received a second funding from the General Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an amount of € 312.479,45 for a period of 4 years (January 2022 – December 2024+ extension 1 year until December 2025).

1.3 Partnership

The program is implemented by a Filipino partner associated with a Belgian partner.

- Virlande Foundation Inc. (VFI)
- Empowering Tomorrow's Generation (ETM) (Former name : Enfance Tiers Monde – Kinderen Derde Wereld)

1.4 Type of program

The program is social, educational, sanitary and participatory

1.5 Objectives and expected results of the current program

Specific objective or outcome-

To facilitate and support 1.800 children in street situations, girls and boys, access their basic rights, and to strengthen and empower vulnerable youths and children in conflict with the law, offering them a comprehensive individual and collective program in Bacolod City (Negros Occidental).

Expected results and changes

- **Result 1:** Children in street situations, children in conflict with the law (CICL) and vulnerable youths of Bacolod have access to primary rights via the comprehensive offered services at the ODC, in the streets and in SDC.
- **Result 2:** Vulnerable children and youths follow a program on education and or skills training in preparation for their socio-professional reintegration and autonomous living. 400 vulnerable children are referred to and follow an education or training program for their socio-professional reintegration.
- **Result 3:** The program's sustainability is improved with more and strengthened collaboration amongst public and private stakeholders and partners. Collaboration and complementarity between local actors working on children's rights is strengthened.

1.6 Stakeholders

The main stakeholders are:

- Schools and vocational training institutes
- Local government units and local private organisations involved in helping intervention to children in street situation or youth at risk, and with which the program has established links and collaborations.
- Hospitals and health centres.

- Volunteers.
- Remunerated staff (social workers, teachers, management staff).

1.7 Beneficiaries

The beneficiary groups of program interventions are mainly:

- Vulnerable children or youths.
- The families of these vulnerable children or youths, even though there is no comprehensive project specifically aimed at families, but only strategic assistances.
- and consultants from partner organisations.
- The entire community.

Total number of children in street situation and youths at-risk supported by the program is 1.800 (900 girls and 900 boys).

2 Conclusions of the evaluation

For four years, the ODC has been focused on two main areas of intervention: independent living program and education. This is a wise decision that allows human and financial resources to be concentrated on a limited number of goals rather than being spread over too many different activities.

ILP seeks to give youths the tools they need to have dignified, independent lives, particularly through vocational training. Educational activities promote schooling, on the one hand, through the centre's integration into the ALS set up by the Philippine government to educate youths who have dropped out of school and, on the other hand, through the organisation of remedial classes.

The focus on two priority areas has not impeded the delivery of other essential services for the care of vulnerable children and youths, mainly living on the streets.

Street work was carried out to get contact with children in precarious situations, provide them with primary health care and food, and above all refer them to the ODC. Street work is the basis on which all ODC activities are subsequently built.

At its premises, the ODC offers children and youths the opportunity to wash, do their laundry, eat and rest peacefully in a safe place. It is also a place where they can confide their problems and seek advice. In addition, the ODC has also taken action to improve the health of youths, particularly with regard to tuberculosis, STIs and HIV.

The ODC social worker mediated and reintegrated children into their families when this solution was acceptable to both the child and their family. In other cases, children have been placed in residential facilities.

The ODC's activities are valued by the children and their families. The daily attendance at the center is proof of this. The ODC's activities are also highly appreciated by the political and administrative authorities in Bacolod. They wish that the ODC's activities continue.

All these factors show that the program funded by the DGD has had a very positive impact on the situation of vulnerable children in Bacolod. However, the program also has weaknesses, which should be addressed.

Family reintegration should be a third area of focus, as important as ILP and education. This is the first step that should be taken to reintegrate children into society, especially the youngest ones.

The program should work in depth and collectively on the case of each child and young person to achieve sustainable socio-economic integration. It has been noted that the work has sometimes been too superficial to achieve lasting results. Quality should be prioritized over quantity. To increase

effectiveness, program management should focus on the results achieved rather than the quantity of activities carried out. The logical framework should take this into account.

It appears that the monitoring of family reintegration and independent living was not always intensive or frequent enough, even though this is an essential part of the social reintegration process.

Human resources management could be improved by stabilizing the team, which unfortunately has a very high turnover, and by reducing the number of hierarchical levels, which do not seem useful in such a small team. Reducing hierarchical levels would maintain the effectiveness of the program while decreasing human resources costs.

Finally, it seems important to capitalise on the experience and knowledge gained through the project by defining written criteria for determining whether a family reunification or transition to independence is successful and sustainable.

Despite these few weaknesses, the program remains very useful for vulnerable children and youths in Bacolod and undoubtedly deserves to be continued. The ODC plays an essential role in childcare in Bacolod. Indeed, it seems to be the only organisation that maintains direct contact with marginalised children living on the streets or in extremely poor living conditions. ODC's workers build relationships with them and try to offer them the opportunity to reintegrate into society with dignity. That is why it is greatly preferable to deepen the existing ODC's interventions in its current premises conveniently located in downtown Bacolod rather than create a new project outside of the city.

3 Recommendations

All the recommendations come directly from the findings made during the evaluation. In order to gain readability, the recommendations are grouped by topic. Some recommendations already made during previous evaluations remain valid today.

3.1 General Recommendations

- Maintain results and outcome indicators within limits that are more realistic in terms of results that can be achieved in issues as complex as the social reintegration of children and youths living on the streets.
- Focus on quality rather than on quantity.
- Focus on the results of activities rather than on the activities themselves. What matters is not what you do or the means you use (if they are efficient and ethically acceptable) but the positive changes you produce in the social sphere.
- Go beyond purely affective and emotional relationships.
- Carry out in-depth social work for each child or youth
- Emotional sensitivity and empathy are important qualities for fulfilling the work assigned to the ODC, but it is not enough. It is also necessary to reflect on and act as social work professionals and maintain a certain distance from the problems of children and youths in order to develop sensitive and effective individual life plans with each of them.
- Work with fewer children and youths in order to provide more in-depth individual support and thus improve the quality and impact of the care provided.
- Develop a practical operational guidebook for each type of social intervention: street work, reunification, health care, independent living, literacy, etc.

- Document the family reintegration and socio-professional integration processes for children and youths in order to capitalise (retain, preserve) the knowledge acquired and the most appropriate practices.
- Submit the methods applied by the ODC social team to critical and collective reflection in order to refine the intervention methods.
- Ensure more efficient human resource management in order to reduce salary-related costs and increase direct operational expenditure, thereby strengthening the program's financial sustainability.

3.2 Recommendations related to the Independent Living Program

Vocational training and micro-entrepreneurship recommendations

- Select candidates based on their motivation and potential
- Join (again) the TESDA system. Indeed, field visits organised during the evaluation provided an opportunity to meet youths who have completed Grade 12. It seems to be possible to give them financial support so that they can devote themselves entirely to vocational training for a few weeks or months without having to work to secure their livelihood.
- Collaborate with private vocational training centers
- Promote apprenticeships, find employers who take on apprentices
- Develop non-formal TVET for youngsters involved in ILP (Because it seems very unlikely that all beneficiaries will succeed in the ALS and access TESDA vocational trainings)
- **Training must absolutely be very concrete and practical (as little theory and abstraction as possible).** This is not at all the case with the training documents that the evaluator was given access to.
- Complement the apprenticeship with a **minimum training on calculation, writing and reading** as well as on the acquisition of essential professional knowledge and **basic notions related to the management of a micro-enterprise.**

Paid internship recommendations

- Limit this system to as few beneficiaries as possible
- Set very specific time limits
- Define the reasons for and conditions of support with the beneficiaries.
- Make sure the contract between the ODC and the beneficiary is strictly respected (management focused on results, not on activities carried out).

Independent living recommendations

- Monitor candidates for independence. Vocational training is not enough; they must also acquire the skills necessary to survive independently.
- Promote collective case management (team meetings). The follow up of the candidates for independence must be collective. It may not be relying on a single worker (ILP coordinator or social worker)
- Ensure sustainable results. It is preferable to work in depth with a small number of candidates for independent living to achieve sustainable results, rather than working superficially with a large number who will not remain independently living in the long term.
- Produce credible, reliable figures.

- Focus on results, i.e. economic independence and real social integration not on activities carried out (management focused on results)
- As already exists for case management, elaborate a flow chart for independent living management.
- Define criteria for economic independence and successful social integration of the youth.
- Define criteria for measuring youths' progress towards their independence.
- Make aid conditional on progress towards independence.
- Conduct frequent follow-ups of the youths living independently.

3.3 Recommendations related to the educational services

- Define a clear strategy for schooling support and follow it. The selection of candidates seems to be currently quite eclectic, with a wide range of educational backgrounds and social levels. The support strategy should focus on predefined profiles rather than on random opportunities.
- The choice of candidates must be determined by this strategy.
- Support for schooling must be subjected to a contract with the youths receiving support.
- Verify the figures you report.
- Produce credible numbers.
- Restart BLS for beneficiaries who wish to participate, even if their attendance is irregular.
- Continue to support beneficiaries who are involved in ALS.
- Continue remedial classes.
- Continue collaboration with Mother Teresa High School for beneficiaries who are entering senior high school.
- Conduct frequent follow-ups of youths supported by ODC for their schooling.

3.4 Recommendations related to family reunification process.

- Intensify actions leading to sustainable family reunification.
- Give family reintegration as much importance in the program as ILP and education.
- As already exists for case management, elaborate a flow chart for family reintegration management. Precisely define the mediation process leading to children family reintegration and the follow-up process for children reintegrated into their families.
- Based on your experience, define criteria for successful family reintegration of the children over the long term
- Define criteria for measuring the degree of the child's integration into the family and the degree of acceptance by family members.
- Ensure regular follow-up of children reintegrated into their families.

3.5 Recommendations for case management

Collective case management (team meetings)

- No single person can simultaneously monitor schooling progresses, family reunification, mental health issues and autonomy processes. Case management should therefore not be the responsibility of a single worker. It is an essential cross-cutting activity that should be shared by the whole team.
- Analyse each child's case in team meetings to define a team strategy for each child.

Avoid scattering efforts.

- Do not focus on children who do not want to leave the streets or who do not show sufficient willingness to change. Work with those who are motivated. It is impossible to save everyone. This does not mean that one should not be patient. Obviously, one must also be able to wait until the child or youth is ready to begin the process of social reintegration. But one must also be able to set time limits on attempts if the young person is not receptive enough. A balance must be found between patience, emotion and affection on the one hand and reason and professionalism on the other, in order to achieve social work that is both sensitive and rational.

3.6 Recommendations related to health services

- As defined by the Executive Director *"medical support pertains to the physical medical interventions like check-up/work-ups, x-ray, etc. Specialized support pertains to the lectures conducted for learning and awareness of the beneficiaries such as HIV /STD lectures, family planning, Drugs Prevention, etc."* This distinction is not as clear in the tables provided to the evaluator (see page 24), nor in the discussions that took place during the restitution of the evaluation; therefore, it seems important to clarify the difference between medical support and specialized support.
- Hire a nurse to provide healthcare services.
- If it is not possible to hire a nurse, train ODC staff to identify the most common health problems, to provide basic care and to refer beneficiaries to the appropriate health care facilities.
- Consider the interest of integrating a psychologist in the ODC team. A psychologist's support is not restricted to treating individuals with significant mental health disorders or addictions. Psychologists can also conduct therapeutic interviews with youths experiencing social difficulties, but who do not have mental health problems.
- If it is not possible to hire a psychologist, give the staff the basic knowledge to deal with addiction and mental health problems.

3.7 Recommendations about street reach-out (street work) and one-off support

Street work

- Street work cannot be used mostly to feed the ILP or ALS with candidates.
- Street work must remain focused on the well-being of children and not on the needs of the ODC and its program.
- Street work must remain the ODC's entry point for the children and youth.
- Avoid street reach out in places where other social workers are active.
- Choose locations where the interventions will be most fruitful while keeping the workload within acceptable limits for the ODC's small staff.
- Precisely define the process of street working
- Systematically and exhaustively record all meetings with children on the street.

One-off support

- Keep a register of attendance at the ODC.
- These activities are essential, but they are not sufficient. They must serve as a springboard for achieving the program's objectives (such as street work).

- The ODC's objective cannot be limited to occasionally meeting the basic needs of children and youths. Its objective must go further: it must remain focused on removing children and youths from situations of vulnerability and reintegrating them into society.

3.8 Recommendations about the infrastructures and equipment of the ODC

- Repair roofs to prevent leaks.
- Make an inventory of defective equipment and replace what is necessary for the proper functioning of the ODC.
- Repair the wastewater drainage system.
- Refurbish showers and toilets.
- Repair the taps on the laundry sinks.
- Repair the water supply system and water storage tank.

3.9 Recommendations about human resources management

- Analyse the causes of staff turnover and ensure staff stability.
- Limit staff to the roles necessary to ensure optimal operation.
- Reduce the number of hierarchical levels.
- Reorganise the organisational chart.

3.10 Recommendations concerning financial management

- Reduce the expenses allocated to human resources by reorganising the organisational chart, reducing the number of hierarchical levels and ensuring a better distribution of roles and tasks.
- Increase the proportion of directly operational expenses to improve the impact of the activities.
- Define precise purchase procedures.
- Keep a petty cash box with a cash book.
- The financial reporting procedures were set up by ETM during the time of the previous administration. However, it is necessary to improve and simplify the ODC's financial reporting procedures to make them more easily processed by ETM.

3.11 Recommendations related to sustainability

Technical sustainability

- Develop a practical operational guidebook for each type of social intervention: street work, reunification, health care, independent living, literacy, etc.
- Document the family reintegration and socio-professional integration processes for children and youths in order to capitalise (retain, preserve) the knowledge acquired and the most appropriate practices.
- Ensure capitalization of useful experiences for the future of ODC and its sustainability.
- Capitalise in written documents the experiences and knowledge accumulated as well as appropriate practices in the field of caring for children with family and social breakdown.

Financial sustainability

- Reduce the expenses allocated to human resources by reorganising the organisational chart, reducing the number of hierarchical levels and ensuring a better distribution of roles and tasks.
- Diversify sources of funding (local contributions, funding from other international donors, etc.)
- Ensure forward-looking financial management