

Philippines: Learning their rights, leading the way

In the Philippines, World Vision teaches children about their rights, supporting them as they organize local children's village associations. Some children went on to participate in the International Peace Building Conference held in Manila. Proceeds from the 30 Hour Famine will further empower young people in conflict-vulnerable areas of the Philippines to become advocates in their own communities.

Ginalyn describes the children's congress in which World Vision first explained that children have rights. "I was so excited," she recalls. "I want to share it with my friends and classmates."

That was three years ago, when she was 14. Now, at 17, Ginalyn helps run the children's association in her village and shows a maturity beyond her years. "I want other children, especially those younger than me, to play, have fun, learn about many things and know that they can also do something (in the world)" she says.

Held regularly, the children's congress is a venue where children practice their right to participate, interact with one another, express themselves and deepen their understanding of their rights and responsibilities.



Learning and acting

Each congress explores in detail the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Participants also undergo workshops on how to conduct orientation and facilitate activities, so they can share their learning's with other children.

After attending the congress, Ginalyn and other child leaders were encouraged to form organizations composed of all the children in their village. Participating in the congress has helped Ginalyn to realize what she's made of, and perhaps, made for.

"I never saw my mother," she shares. "She left me when I was still a baby. My father and my grandparents took care of me. Growing up without a mother is difficult but I believe God called me to be a big sister to other children who suffered pain and were neglected."

Leaders of the future

For Rommel Maceda, the congress was the beginning of a commitment to help other children know their rights. "I have to do my part," he says.

Rommel enjoys devising role-plays and games so the children can easily understand and remember their rights. "I am happy because in my own little way I am helping them. I also learned a lot from their stories and experiences."

The work that Rommel and Ginalyn have done in each of their village children's organization led them both to handle greater responsibilities in the municipal and provincial associations of children. They initiated and led activities like cleanliness drives, retreats, prayer congress, sports fests, leadership training and team building, which allowed them to learn while having fun.

They both say that the opportunity to serve their fellow children gave them great joy. Through children's congress, they were molded to become leaders in their communities.

Eat nothing. Do something.

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