



Bantay Bata

--Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect



The Bantay Bata (Child Watch) Committee was created by Frank Chavez in RY 1997-1998 when PDG Sid Garcia was club president. Originally a tie-up with ABS-CBN Foundation and the Makati Social Welfare Department, it ran on a donation of P250,000 from Pagcor (solicited by Frank Chavez) and later evolved into an exclusive partnership between the Club and MSWD.

On its maiden year, the committee conducted a series of seminars on outreach techniques, counseling and values formation/promotion and sponsored a seminar on the provisions of the Anti Child Abuse Law for parents and children from two Makati barangays.

In 1998-1999, a new feature was added to the Christmas Bazaar—the Last Angel, a gift-giving project for children in selected institutions and communities. Among the institutional beneficiaries were the Bantay Bata wards under the care of the MWSD. Since then the Bantay Bata children have been receiving gifts from the Club through the Last Angel, the latest instance last 9th December, where we handed presents and treated 60 children to a small party at the Makati City Hall.

For the past 14 years, the Committee and its partner, MSWD, have organized seminars, workshops and forums for parents, social workers and barangay volunteers to advance the cause of the abused, abandoned or neglected child.

These include: a forum on Re-Parenting a Child; seminars on the prevention and early detection of child abuse for workers in various barangays in Makati; a Parenting Enhancement Seminar for two groups of parents; a Couples for Life Commitment

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Seminar for parents of Bantay Bata wards; a Recreation & Training Seminar on the Management of "A Children's Desk in Every Barangay;" an Advocacy Seminar on the Promotion & Protection of the Rights & Welfare of Children for day-care, pre-school and elementary school teachers; a Spiritual Enrichment seminar for juvenile delinquents and children in conflict with the law; a Leadership Seminar on the Protection of Children for Barangay Council members; a workshop on children's rights for volunteer barangay coordinators; a Family Life Improvement Seminar focusing on the rights of children and parents' duties and responsibilities; a Youth Leadership Seminar for leaders of youth organizations; a training program on Volunteerism for Children's Welfare & Protection; a "Children First" seminar on the importance and imperativeness of prioritizing the welfare of children; a whole-day seminar for Children on the Preservation and Protection of the Environment; a Solo Parenting Seminar for single parents; a Seminar on Responsible Parenting for Young Parents; and this Rotary year, a 3-day Child Protection Seminar for resource speakers, barangay facilitators and volunteers.

The Committee also spearheaded the establishment of a Children's Desk in police stations in Makati, with the sole responsibility of handling complaints and reports on abuse relating to children. It also handled, and provided legal service, pro bono, in the first-ever legal referral by the Makati DSWD: the case of an 8-year old girl who was sexually abused by a neighbor.

For the children, the Bantay Committee and MSWD held a drawing contest among young artists from 31 Makati schools, among them 10 abused children from various barangays in Makati; a day camp in Tagaytay City aimed at facilitating the healing process among children wounded by abuse; an on-the-spot logo-designing contest and a dance contest among barangay youth groups; various psychosocial activities for child-victims of abuse; Trees of Life for Children, an environment promotion program participated in by children from several barangays in Makati and workers from MSWD and the Makati Dept. of Environmental Services; mass baptism for children from 20 barangays in Makati; the first-ever Spiritual Recollection for Young Offenders as a preparation for Lent; and a mural painting contest among young artists.

The Committee and the MSWD Council for the Protection of Children also organized a family get-together that brought together 25 families, an activity that focused on the importance of a solid family.

Both the Club and Bantay Bata Committee chairman Frank Chavez have been recognized by the Makati City Government for our strides in the protection of abused children.