
Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

September 2009

An Inspiring Advocate for Children

By Pilar Martinez-Miranda

Our July meeting introduced MWF to Atty. Eric Mallonga, a child's rights advocate who spoke eloquently and passionately about the cause to which he has dedicated his professional life. Shortly after he began practicing law, Eric became exposed to the plight of child offenders. Incarcerated for prostitution or for minor offences like truancy or mendicancy, these children were jailed in cells that also housed adult offenders, hardened criminals who were serving time for rape, murder, armed robbery and the like. Eric began to lobby for these children, advocating for change in a sector "that had no voice." Focusing on child abuse, Eric has worked for decades to make the legal system more child-friendly.

With the help of specific lawmakers who listened to his proposals and worked with him through decades to re-draft archaic laws, Eric's unswerving effort has had significant impact on the landscape of the Philippine legal system. Mallonga's dissertations and Manila Times articles have been used as the primary bases for the Supreme Court Child Witness Rules, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Law, and the Law on Administrative Declaration of Legal Availability for Adoption of Abandoned Children.

Republic Act (RA) 7610:
Special Protection of Children
Against Child Abuse, Exploitation
and Discrimination Act

Eric lobbied the courts to see child prostitutes as victims rather than as offenders, and for the enforcement of the laws to send a clear message that children are not for sale and are definitely not commodities or chattel.

Supreme Court Child Witness Rules require child witnesses to testify in court. Understanding the trauma that these abused children have had to endure, Eric has been working to create rules that allow these children to testify without having to face either their tormentors or the general public in open court. With the aid of legal and medical professionals, these children may now be interviewed and questioned in one of twelve child-friendly interview studios, and may also be cross-examined in eight child-friendly courtrooms throughout the Philippines that provide live television linkage to child-friendly courts without the child having to undergo a rigorous and traumatizing face-to-face confrontation with perpetrators of crimes against children. Video and audio depositions are already deemed admissible.

In certain cases, the Supreme Court has been willing to recognize the Hearsay Admissibility Principle. This means that Witness Substitution may

be allowed in which a third party who has professionally interviewed or examined a child witness can testify on the child's behalf, based on the child's testimony or statement to such professional. Much more effort is still required to turn this exception into the general rule.

RA 9344:
The Juvenile Justice
and Welfare Law

- Prior to the intense effort to change the law, a child could be convicted of criminal liability at age 9; now the child has to be at least 15 years old, and only if it is determined by a social worker that the child acted with discernment in the alleged commission of the crime.

- Through lobbying and with the support of specific lawmakers, they have successfully decriminalized status offenses such as curfew violations/truancy/ parental disobedience and quasi-status offenses such as child prostitution/solvent sniffing/vagrancy/mendicancy.

Social welfare intervention is now a necessity for children below 15 years of age while children aged at least 15 years may go through a diversion program without having to undergo the stigmatizing and degrading effects of a criminal justice system. Child offenders under age 15 are supposed

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September MWF Meeting ■ **When:** Monday, September 14, 2009, 6:30 p.m. **Where:** Kristine Braden's home, 25 Juan Luna, San Lorenzo Village, Makati. **What:** Sylvia Lichauco de Leon, President of the Lola Grande Foundation, will speak about the recent passage of the Magna Carta of Women and the urgent need for a Filipino women's fund to provide grants for worthy social justice, education, livelihood, health and other causes related to women. **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner. **August Meeting:** Monday, October 12, 2009.



Child rights heroes, selected by an international child jury. What an inspiring idea, in the face of child rights violations all over the world.

KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited*
by Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child

*Children in 94 countries
will take part in the decision*

Mandela could be Decade Child Rights Hero for 22 million children

Twenty-two million children in 50,000 schools in 94 countries are behind the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child (WCPRC). This year, the prize will be awarded for the tenth time. The 13 prize candidates include Nelson Mandela, murdered carpet factory slave Iqbal Masih, and saviour of child sex slaves Somaly Mam.

Millions of children will participate in this year's Global Vote to decide who will be the Decade Child Rights Hero. On the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November, the children will reveal their chosen prize laureate.

Since the year 2000, the World's Children's Prize has awarded children's prestigious prizes for outstanding efforts for the rights of the child. The prize money has contributed to giving tens of thou-

* From various sources, for information purposes only. Readers are advised to exercise due diligence in getting the latest, complete and most accurate data.



Gloria and Abdul, Nigeria, carry the WCPRC voting booth.

sands of the world's most vulnerable children a better life.

So far, 27 prize laureates have received prizes and become role models for children all over the world. Thirteen of these are candidates in the children's next Global Vote, which will determine their Decade Child Rights Hero. The recipient will receive one million Swedish kronor (125,000 USD) for use in his/her work for the rights of the child.

World's largest rights-based educational programme

The WCPRC is the world's largest educational programme for young people on the rights of the child, democracy, the environment and global friendship. The WCPRC programme empowers children, giving them hope for the future and the chance to demand respect for their rights. It is carried out in cooperation with more than 50,000 teachers, as well as almost 500 organisations, departments of education and youth media projects.

Millions of vulnerable children participate

Millions of children learn about their rights and democracy through the World's Children's Prize. They include former child soldiers, debt slaves and street children. Children who have lost their parents to AIDS, genocide or in the Asian tsunami, and children who

live in dictatorships, have also found out about their rights through the World's Children's Prize.

Www.worldschildrensprize.org, the prize website, and The Globe, the prize magazine, are available in 11 languages including Arabic and Farsi (Persian). The magazine is smuggled into villages in Burma, and is read by former child soldiers in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo like 15-year-old Furaha:

"When I was twelve years old and a soldier, all I knew was death, violence and war. Now I have participated in the World's Children's Prize and in the Global Vote for our rights. Before I read The Globe I had no idea that we children had the right to protection and a good life."

Furaha was one of the 6.6 million children who took part in the Global Vote in 2008.

Mandela and the Queen of Sweden

The patrons of the World's Children's Prize include Nelson Mandela, Queen Silvia of Sweden, Nobel Prize laureates José Ramos Horta and Joseph Stiglitz, former Executive Director of Unicef Carol Bellamy, former UN Under-Secretary-General Olara Otunnu, and supermodel and refugee Alek Wek.

The World's Children's Prize is supported by Sida (the Swedish International Development Coopera-
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tion Agency), Save the Children Sweden, the Swedish Postcode Lottery, the Surve Family Foundation, Radiohjälpen, Altor, AstraZeneca, eWork, Banco Fonder and the Folke Bernadotte Academy.

In June 2008, the World's Children's Prize was called 'the most important communication initiative on the planet' by the International Association of Business Communicators, with 16,000 members in 65 countries.

The 13 candidates for Decade Child Rights Hero



Iqbal Masih, Pakistan (posthumously)

Photo © Magnus Bergmar

Iqbal was a debt slave in a carpet factory. When he was set free he fought for the rights of debt slave children. He was killed on 16 April 1995.

Asfaw Yemiru, Ethiopia

Asfaw was a street child at the age of 9. At 14, he opened his first school for street children underneath an oak tree. Since then he has devoted over 50 years to giving underprivileged children the chance to go to school.

Nkosi Johnson, South Africa (posthumously)

Nkosi fought for the rights of children with HIV and AIDS up until his death at the age of 12.

Maiti Nepal

Maiti fights the trafficking of poor girls from Nepal to India, where they are forced to work as slaves in brothels. Maiti also helps girls who have been affected by trafficking.

Maggy Barankitse, Burundi

Maggy has, over 15 years, saved tens of thousands of orphaned children in war-torn Burundi and given them a home, love, schooling and a hospital.

James Aguer, Sudan

James has, over 20 years, freed thousands of kidnapped children from



AOCM Naphtal Ahishakiye. Photo© Mark Vuori

slave work in Sudan. James has been imprisoned 33 times and four of his colleagues have been murdered.



Prateep Ungsongtham Hata, Thailand

Prateep was a child worker at the age of ten. Since starting her first school at the age of 16, she has spent 40 years

fighting to give the neediest children the chance to go to school.

Dunga Mothers, Kenya

Twenty mothers in Kenya, who for the past 12 years, have been fighting to enable AIDS orphans in their village to go to school, have a home, food, love, and have their own rights respected.

Nelson Mandela, South Africa and Graça Machel, Mozambique

Mandela for his life-long struggle for equal rights for all children in South Africa and his work to defend their rights. Machel for her 25-year-long fight for the rights of vulnerable children in Mozambique, in particular girls' rights.

Craig Kielburger, Canada

At the age of 12, Craig founded Free

The Children. He fights for young people's right to make their voices heard and to liberate children from poverty and violations of their rights.

AOCM, Rwanda

AOCM consists of 6000 people orphaned by the genocide in Rwanda, who help each other to survive by sharing food, clothes, schooling, homes, healthcare and love.

Betty Makoni, Zimbabwe

Betty started working when she was five years old and was subjected to abuse at the age of six. Through the Girl Child Network, she empowers girls to demand respect for their rights. She supports girls who are subjected to abuse and protects others from assault, forced marriage and trafficking.



Somaly Mam, Cambodia

Photo© Paul Blomgren

After being a sex slave as a child, Somaly has spent the last 13 years liberating girls from sex

slavery and giving them rehabilitation and education. She was punished for her work when her 14-year-old daughter was kidnapped, drugged, raped, and sold to a brothel.

(An Inspiring... Cont. from page 1)
to be housed separately from adults and put into programs run by the Department of Social Welfare (DSWD), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and others, with the intent of nurturing and rehabilitating these children. Unfortunately, there are still prisons that do mingle children with hardened adult offenders and the law still further requires enforcement.

RA 9523:

Legal Availability for Adoption of Abandoned Children

The Law focuses on abandoned and neglected children and, in short, provides a faster administrative process for declaring a child legally available for adoption, instead of an inconvenient, lengthy and adversarial judicial process. But, the adoption process must still be absolutely administrative so that children need not languish in orphanages, in prisons, in shelters, and in the streets while awaiting their matching placement with suitable adoptive families that would nurture and care for them.

Eric founded the Child Justice League of the Philippines and the Meritxell Children's World Foundation. He now specializes in adoption law and handles both local and foreign adoptions as he continues his personal crusade for the rights of child offenders. Becoming personally involved in her son's cause, Eric's mother has agreed to provide full scholarships at the Infant Jesus Academy for all the twenty-one wards

of the Andorra Homes of Meritxell Children's World Foundation in Marikina City, which houses runaway, rescued, abandoned, neglected, orphaned, and trafficked young children. The school has established a sterling reputation for academic excellence, so much so that it now operates in three locations: Marikina City, Antipolo City, and Kalibo, Aklan Province.

The orphanage is always in need of more funding and the donation of basic goods. Eric invites MWF members to visit the orphanage and to spend time with the children; he says the opportunity for new social interaction is invaluable for these formerly abandoned kids.

Having dedicated decades of his life towards re-drafting and modifying laws and rescuing abused children and children under exceptionally difficult circumstances, this tireless crusader dreams of being able to one day set up a series of orphanages. He envisions the next orphanage to be for abandoned babies, then thereafter for sexually abused child victims, and then for children in conflict with the law or those child offenders detained in Philippine prisons for minors and adult city jails, and all the categories of children under difficult circumstances: until the Philippine government realizes its primordial obligations to children.

If you would like to arrange a visit to the orphanage, please contact: Social Worker Norie Ann Sanchez (0918-432-8099) at the Andorra Homes, 24 Peach Street, SSS Village, Barangay

Concepcion Dos, Marikina City, Metro-Manila: telephone: (632-997-1479).

To contact Atty. Eric Mallonga directly, you may contact him through his cell phone 0920-9049960 or at his office in Mallonga Law Office, 31-32 Bronze Street, SSS Village, Barangay Concepcion Dos, Marikina City, Metro-Manila: telefax (632-475-0412).

Manila Women's Forum

Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, talk to women of various cultures, and share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join.

The current officers are: **Amy Alexander**, Message Board. **Julia Holz**, Treasurer, Membership and Programs. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair. **Junie Navarro**, Message Board. **Lisa Stuart**, Message Board Moderator. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website. **Shari Virjee**, Programs, Message Board.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. For more information about MWF, please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

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