



# Tomorrow's Future Today

## The Forgotten Of Metro Manila

In recent years, the problem of street children has worsened throughout the world due to increasing family separations and conflict brought about by urbanization, economic crisis, political change, civil unrest, wars, as well as natural disasters and epidemic. Due to political, economic and other considerations, the criteria for defining "street children" vary from country to country and with time. Therefore it is difficult to arrive at any precise global estimates. Today, different estimates place the number of street children at between 80 and 100 million worldwide (WHO,

1997).

The Philippines, a country of approximately 80 million people, is home to an estimated 1.5 million street children. Over 100,000 of the live in Metro Manila. The children come from various parts of the country. Parents leave their provinces in search of a better life in the city, taking their children with them, only to find themselves being another addition to the slums of Manila. Their children eventually pay the price by having to work in the streets or on dumpsites. Those who cannot sell are left to beg in order to bring what little they receive back to

their parents who are either unable to work, or simply prefer to let their children earn for them. Aside from traffic risks, children are confronted by drug abuse, prostitution, imprisonment, and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, TB, scabies and mental health disorders.



Children on the streets of Manila

## Responding To The Tragedy

Papa John Center (PJC) is a Christian organization, established on 28 January 1994 as a response to the growing needs of street children in Quezon City, Metro Manila. The PJC was registered with the Securities and Exchange Com-

mission, a registration arm of the Philippine government over stock and non-stock corporations, on 6 May 1994, under reg. no. 001789. Later on it was issued license number YW-95, by the Department of Social Welfare and Del-

opment on 19 May 1995. In the year 2000, the center expanded its clientele group to include urban working children, most of whom live and sort through refuse at a nearby garbage dump site.

## Children's Relief Fund

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### Special points of interest:

- J Street children in Metro Manila
- J The Papa John Center
- J Meet some of the kids
- J Information about the Children's Relief Fund, Inc. (CRF)
- J How to contact the CRF

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# The Goals Of The PJC

1. To make children aware of the risks/hazards involved in spending long hours in the streets.
2. To inform children of the ill effects of child labour.
3. To provide basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.
4. To develop a positive self-image among the children served.
5. To reconcile children with their families through improving the family's life-situation.
6. To look for long-term placement for children who do not have families to turn to.
7. To promote and advocate for the rights of the children.
8. To provide educational opportunities and skills training for those children interested.
9. To make the children's respective families aware of their duties and responsibilities as the children's primary support system.
10. To network and coordinate with individuals, agencies and institutions that are directly/indirectly involved with children as a whole.
11. To share the redeeming Gospel of Christ as the only hope in a broken and tragic world.



## Challenges Facing The PJC

The PJC houses approximately 32 children on a full-time basis. In addition there is also a full-time staff working at the center. At the moment the Center aids between three and four hundred children in the streets as well. All these children have need of many things, the most important being food, clothing and shelter. However, all these things are not free. Money is necessary to

pay for the maintenance and up-keep of the Center. Recently a well was dug, but it was not deep enough and the water that is brought up is not potable for the children. Dirty water exposes them to potential parasites and diseases. Furthermore, the paint on the walls, banisters and other objects made of iron are peeling and rusting due to the high humidity level of the Philippines. These must

be painted and treated before they corrode. Lastly, there is only one old refrigerator for storing enough food for almost 40 people. Much of the food spoils.

**“Dirty water exposes them to potential parasites and diseases”**

## Child Summary 1: Bae Emilio

Bae Emilio was approximately 4 years old when she was found near a church in Quezon City, accompanied by her brother who suffered from mental illness. When they arrived at the Center, they told how they fled their home because of



physical and mental abuse by their parents and older sibling. Bae was found with cigarette burns on her body. Due to her brother's illness, he was institutionalized and she was referred to the PJC. However, after some time at the Center, Bae recounted that their

mother had deliberately abandoned the two of them at a bus station. After a few days, they realized that she was not coming back for them, so they began walking the streets. Presently she is in grade 5 and dreams of becoming a nurse some day. Bae continues to suffer psychologically from the abuse she endured, but is receiving counseling.

## Child Summary 2: Robie Santos

Robie Santos is the product of a broken family. His mother left her unemployed spouse and lived with another man with whom she now has another child. Robie was left in the custody of his grandmother, who was unable to attend to his needs. His father decided to take Robie and his older sister to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), while he looked for work. Some time later, the father collected Robie, but unfortunately they ended up sleeping on the streets or in open parked vehicles. In March of 1997, Robie was accepted for temporary shelter at the PJC, while another institution, exclusively for

girls, took his sister. Robie was deeply affected by the situation, and remained quiet for almost a month. Eventually he adjusted to the centre as well as the other children. Last year Robie contracted third degree dengue fever, and it was by the grace of God that he survived. Two of the other children, suffering from the same illness as Robie, died. Today, he is a responsible child. He loves going to school



Robie now serves as a representative for the PJC

and dreams of becoming an engineer some day. He continues to dream that his family will be reunited one day. Sadly, Robie's father was gunned down and killed in connection with a drug deal.

Through the centre's support, he is recovering from this traumatic experience, hoping to be united with the surviving members of his

family. Robie recently finished his primary education.

## Child Summary 3: Mark Benson

Mark Benson is approximately 7 years old. He was found sleeping on the ground outside a shopping mall with other children. He was covered in dirt, sleeping on a straw mat that was as filthy as the ground upon which he lay. Mark's skin was also infested with scabies. His teenage mother, also a street child, conceived Mark when she was raped on the street by an unknown man. A

staff worker at the PJC encouraged the mother to bring Mark to the centre. He was extremely timid the first weeks, refusing to mingle with the other children. However, after 2 years at the centre, Mark has adopted the PJC as his home; especially now that his mother is pregnant once again with another unknown man. Despite his emotional pain, Mark has learned to be quite

independent, coping with his lessons and learning to enjoy singing and other activities. He dreams of one day becoming a doctor in order to help other sick children.



## Tragedy at PJC

The PJC experienced once again the pain of losing a former ward to a painful death. It is the kind of death that should not have happened had the child only been given a proper environment as a normal child deserves. R.L. used to be in the Temporary Shelter programme of the PJC for almost 3 years. Missing his family, he opted to go back to them in order to help his father. His latest

job was as a helper to a man whose business is to peddle hot "mami" or noodles. One day, while the two of them were traversing a road, the container of hot noodles toppled onto R.L. His employer brought him to the hospital suffering from extreme scalding and burns to his body. There he writhed in agony for three days without a single member of his family present at his bedside.

One can only surmise that the employer tried to hide the incident from the family. R.L. died on the fourth day of his confinement, shortly after seeing his family members. It was not until the fourth day that the employer had the nerve to inform the family of the tragic and un-necessary accident that ended a life so young and so full of promise.

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Today's Children Tomorrow's  
Future



Children's Relief Fund, Inc. is a European non-profit foundation established in the Philippines in order to:

- Raise funds for street children and the less advantaged;
- Implement programs/projects, through donor funds, to alleviate conditions besieging the less fortunate;
- Promote and advocate for the rights of children, provide educational opportunities and skills training;
- Provide basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter for the less advantaged.

CRF was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Philippines under No. CN200259125, on 30 October 2002.

## How You Can Help

The United Nations has called the children of today the future of tomorrow. This is a fact that can not be ignored. In a world ravaged by wars, disease, poverty and famines, the only hope that humanity has for a more civilized tomorrow is the children of today. If we can show them love and compassion, and teach them the wondrous things of our world, then maybe they can love and teach their children, and their children's children. However, if we don't help them, who will? What lessons are we then passing along to the next generation?

Giving the street children the chance of a lifetime does work, and it matters. They are receiving an education. They have a home,

whether temporary or permanent. They are learning that the world is not "out" there solely to exploit them. For the first time in their lives they are allowed to be what they really are, children.

Please allow us to continue giving them these opportunities. Allow us to help them so that they may one day help themselves.

If you would like to contribute to the street children's cause, please send your donations to:

Children's Relief Fund, Inc.

CITIBANK, Greenhills

Philippines

Account Number: 8241085751

SWIFT Code: CITIPHMX



"I need your help!"