

**Press Release**  
14 March 2024

## **Save the Children Philippines Wraps Up Transformative Initiatives in Cotabato**

Save the Children Philippines, a leading independent organization championing child rights, recently concluded its successful programs in Cotabato Province with an Exit and Sustainability Planning Workshop and Turnover Program held last week in Kidapawan City.

The event marked the conclusion of the **impactful initiatives of Save the Children's Sponsorship Program in the area**, bringing together representatives from Cotabato province and municipal local government units (LGUs) from Arakan, Magpet, and Makilala to reflect on achievements and plan for program sustainability.

Save the Children Philippines launched its sponsorship program in Cotabato province in 2016, directly impacting 2,981 children and 2,198 families spread throughout 42 barangays, including 19 in Arakan, 20 in Magpet, and 3 in Makilala. The program centered on essential issues such as children's survival and development. Notably, Save the Children helped to localize the First 1000 Days (F1KD) Law by lobbying for the ordinance's enactment in Arakan municipality. They also constructed a maternity waiting home to give critical assistance to expectant and nursing mothers and their newborns.

After joining Save the Children's Kabataan Konek program, 17-year-old Arakan child representative Ryan said, "I had no idea there should be a child representative on the council, or that we could go to meetings to promote ideas and initiatives to other children. I thought I was just a young person and that projects could only be created by grown-ups and local leaders, especially those on the committee for women and children."

Save the Children Philippines also empowered children and communities through child-led groups and interactions with local governments. This increased children's involvement in governance and decision-making on issues that concern them.

Save the Children also held educational programs for children, parents, caregivers, and community service providers to raise awareness about child safety issues. They discussed pressing problems such as internet safety, adolescent pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence. The Heart-to-Heart radio program, for example, aims to promote constructive communication between parents and adolescents.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, Save the Children collaborated with local governments to meet the needs of children by giving critical resources such as handwashing stations, information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, and care packages to impacted communities and families. This final workshop and handover program reflect Save the Children's continuous commitment to sustainable development in Cotabato province, encouraging positive transformation and empowerment in local communities.

Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer Lina Cañedo of Makilala expressed gratitude to Save the Children. She expressed her appreciation using an acrostic. *“The meaning of SAVE for us is this: **S** means thank you for saving and protecting our children; **A** for acting genuinely for our children’s best interests; **V** for visioning with us to realize children's rights; and **E** for empowering our children, families, and communities.”*

Project ENGAGE, empowering girls as leaders for gender equality, will continue in the three municipalities until August 2024, supporting girls' leadership development and fostering positive change in these communities.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Ms. Kay I. Yeban Maatubang**  
*Brand & Integrated Communications Manager*  
**Mobile:** 0917. 162. 1503  
**Email:** [felycora.maatubang@savethechildren.org](mailto:felycora.maatubang@savethechildren.org)