Project ANGEL TREE:
Value Networks as a Strategy
Toward Improving Outcomes for
Child Laborers and their Families

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VALUE NETWORKS AS A STRATEGY TOWARD IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILD LABORERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Abstract

In an effort to improve outcomes for child laborers and their families, the concept of value networks as a strategy was introduced by the then Bureau of Women and Young Workers via Project Angel Tree. This paper explains the rationale behind the effort, its implementation results and the implications for policy-makers and practitioners.

In this paper, a value network is defined as a system where interdependent stakeholders in child labor elimination interact in collaborative ways to achieve results they could not do so by acting individually.

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DOLE program management framework

The Department of Labor and Employment renders direct program services to the public via its sixteen (16) Regional Offices. Said programs are developed and are subsequently monitored and evaluated by the Bureaus. Program resource prioritization however is lodged with the Regional Offices as program implementation is largely determined by regional client requirements.

Issues in child labor program management

Child labor elimination is among the many program priorities of the DOLE. In 2006 and before that, the only child labor program enrolled and monitored was the Sagip Bata Manggagawa.

The Sagip Bata Manggagawa, given its regulatory nature, could not deliver the necessary numbers to reflect the commitment DOLE was expected to evince as far as child labor elimination was concerned. On the average, each region was reporting assistance to an average of about 10 child laborers assisted on a per year basis. With an estimated 2 million child laborers in the country (2006), the SBM numbers did not even make a dent.

In pursuit of a practicable solution

The program management challenge of the then Child Labor Program Manager, the Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW), was to design a program that would not require additions in terms of resources but would generate the numbers in terms of child laborers assisted.

It is in this context that the concept of value networks as a strategy was introduced by the BWYW via **Project Angel Tree**. Essentially, a value network is defined as a system where interdependent stakeholders in child labor elimination interact in collaborative ways to achieve results they could not do so by acting individually.

This paper explains the rationale behind the effort, its conceptual underpinnings and implementation results and its implications for policy design and program management.

Program Description

The Department of Labor and Employment, as a development organization, adopts **Project ANGEL TREE as an Advocacy Program** on Child Labor Elimination.

Project ANGEL TREE is a **Core Program** which will comprise several **Program Subsets** focusing on specific thematic initiatives, each with clearly defined focus termination dates.

Program Objective

A development cooperation project with both government and non-government stakeholders in child elimination, Project ANGEL TREE seeks to:

Influence change in the political and bureaucratic process in behalf of child labor;

Use information strategically to change policies and attitudes that affect the lives of child laborers; and

Act directly in support of child elimination.

ANGEL TREE defined

An angel as defined is a donor, a benefactor, a contributor, a friend, a backer, a patron, a sponsor, a supporter. Thus, an angel is a person who supports or champions an activity, a cause, an institution.

Essentially, the Project seeks to build an **ANGEL TREE COMMUNITY** that is caring, committed and willing to support the cause of child labor.

As such Angel Tree is a symbolic tree which bears fruits for child laborers. The fruits expectedly will come in many forms as child laborers are as diverse as their needs.

Project Angel Tree therefore represents a broad array of services that shall be made available to child labors and their families thru the adoption of a broad array of strategies and activities.

Broad Strategies and Activities

Adopting cooperation as the advocacy model, the range of approaches that will be employed in working alongside advocacy targets to achieve the desired change will involve more than one approach at any one time or over time, viz.:

- Policy Analysis
  Proving the case for change and alternatives

- Demonstration Project
  Through positive project work

- Action Research
  Documenting the impact of policies or good practice of other groups especially their impact on child labor

- Awareness Raising
  Either with an individual, a group or the general public

- Campaigning
  Highlighting, publicizing and mobilizing public support

- Media work
  Raising awareness to the media, and through them the general public and others

- Mobilizing the general public
  Put pressure on the decision makers

- Creating ways for child laborers and their families to act for themselves
  Involving the affected communities themselves in advocating for change as participants in the process, not as objects of the process

Value Network as Enabler

While child labor elimination is a complex problem, it has been shown that by collaborating thru networks, synergies can be achieved in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Project ANGEL TREE therefore uses **VALUE NETWORKs** as its organizing framework to further child elimination in the Philippines.

A value network is a system where interdependent stakeholders in child labor elimination interact in collaborative ways to achieve results they could not do so acting individually.

Further, the underlying assumption for this project is that community participation leads to the formation of social capital.

Social capital in this case refers to the networks of positive social relations that provide a context of trust and support that represent access to resources (i.e. information, connections and money) to support a cause.

Project Angel Tree therefore exemplifies DOLE'S effort to build social capital and engage further the community to support child labor elimination.

Broker-Catalyzed Networking

The development of collaborative arrangements requires a venue for social interaction among potential network participants.

DOLE therefore will act as a **broker-catalyst** to fill their institutional void between and among potential participants and create linkages by championing a result that can only be obtained via collaboration.

Among the many tasks the DOLE is expected to perform are:

- Facilitate information exchange
- Match and mobilize resources
- Assemble resources
- Assess ideas and opportunities
- Provide decision support
- Provide tactical coordination.

Network Hub

To provide a workable context for collaboration, a **network hub** will be lodged with the DOLE to serve as locus of activity to enable service.

The network hub will be technology assistance infrastructure that will provide a venue for gaining familiarity, building trust and exploring opportunities for collaboration and providing information. It will build on existing collaborative efforts and attempt to create multipliers. Content management will be provided for by the DOLE.

Management by Network

As Project ANGEL TREE will adopt the form of network focusing on specific themes, the DOLE will join together in coalitions.

Given that the culture of networks is essentially democratic and without hierarchy and based on a spirit of voluntarism, objectives of a network are potentially diffuse and pluralistic.

The network management will therefore consist of the following:

A Network Board

1. Composition: DOLE as chair including representatives of other government agencies (inc. legislative), donor institutions, foundations, academic, non-government

institutions and other entities with a stake in the specific themes of the network, each with the same voting rights

2. Functions:

- Decide on specific program subsets

- Since several program teams can be operating at any time, the network board will be responsible for assessing the overall progress of the various programs and performance of the ad-hoc program boards and secretariats.

- Contribute, if possible, in monetary or non-monetary form, to cover Network Secretariat and/or Program Team operations.

A Network Secretariat

1. Composition: BWYW which will be supplemented by consultants and a few staff on fixed-term contracts and would work largely thru electronic mail to minimize overheads.

2. Functions:

- Help identify and launch programs of interest to particular subsets of the members of the network focusing on specific themes

- Regularly submit proposals defining terms of reference, duration, organization and financing arrangements to the network board.

Program Teams comprising only on members interested in each particular program. Launching of the program team will be decided by the network board based on the proposals from the secretariat

- An ad-hoc Program Board will be established to supervise and evaluate the work of each Program Team

- A Program Secretariat will be established on a temporary basis to coordinate and execute program tasks

Both Board and Secretariat will be disbanded upon completion of the activities. Each program will have clearly defined termination date.

As advocacy can occur several levels from personal to local community level to national and international levels, participation of DOLE regional offices and their counterparts shall determined by the network board on a per program basis.

Figure I
Network Management

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   Network Board     │
                    ├─────────────────────┤
                    │     Network         │
                    │   Secretariat       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
```

Program Board	Program Board	Program Board	Program Board
Program Secretariat	Program Secretariat	Program Secretariat	Program Secretariat

Adhoc
Program
Team

Program Board	Program Board	Program Board
Program Secretariat	Program Secretariat	Program Secretariat
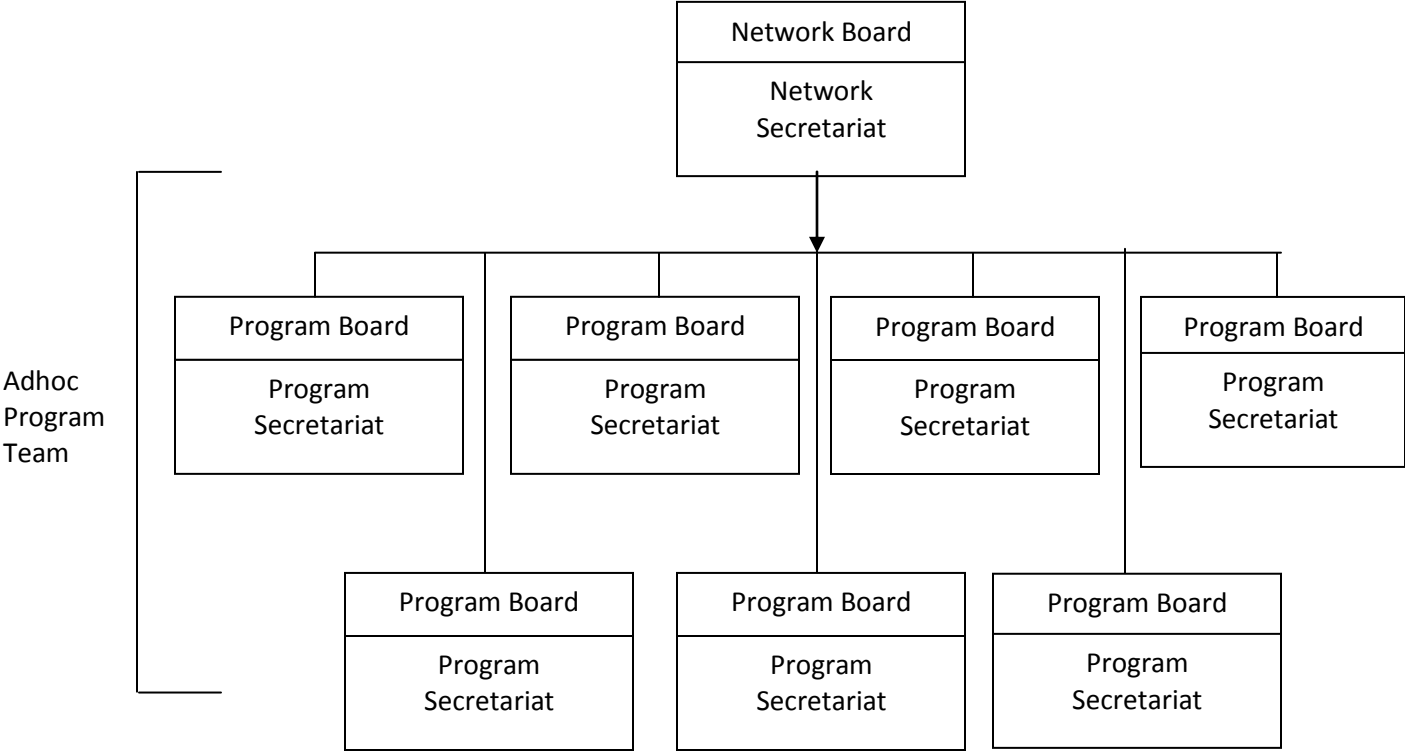
On the number of children assisted

As of December 2010, Project Angel Tree has assisted 15,902 child laborers in the country. Regions with the highest number of children assisted were Regions 4B, 3 and 10.

Table 1 Summary of Results

OFFICE/ AREA	No. of Children Beneficiaries					TOTAL
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
BWYW/Launch	83					83
BWYW/Pilot	90	112				202
NCR		68	89	60	482	699
CAR		17			39	56
1		21		89	65	175
2		88		60	100	246
3		1625	300	254	604	**2783**
4A		60	60	278	26	424
4B				5786	100	**5886**
5		160	100	180	100	540
6				40	300	340
7		86		40	100	226
8				61	505	566
9		57	62	30	125	274
10		10	100	1473	577	**2160**
11		132	41	33	31	237

12			128	375	337	840
Caraga				115	50	165
TOTAL	**173**	**2434**	**880**	**8874**	**3541**	**15902**

On the donor community profile

The project donors come from all sectors of society, government and non-government, business groups, private individuals and international organizations.

Table 2. Donor Profile (2006 – 2010)

Category	Number
Private Individuals	98
Local Government Units	18
Private Companies	106
Government Agencies	9
NGOs	6
Civic organizations/ Associations	3
International Dev't Organization	1
Schools	3
TOTAL	**244**

On Angel tree community declarations

The Provincial Government of Misamis Oriental, in a Sangguniang Panlalawigan Resolution dated March 3, 2008 adopted the Angel Tree Project implemented by the National Committee on Child Labor and integrating the same in the priority programs of the provincial government, thereby declaring the whole province as an Angel Tree Community.

The project has also received wide support from the local business communities who have been the source of most of the resources distributed to the children- beneficiaries.

Other government offices in the regions have likewise been active partners in the programs' advocacy and have contributed to the program's continuing success.

Based on the success of the program implementation, some considerations program implementers may want to take into account could include as follows:

- It is important that programs be pilot-tested first by the bureaus before it is rolled out to the regions so implementation kinks are ironed out. *Project Angel Tree, given that it used a different strategy for project implementation was thoroughly pilot-tested.*

- In the program roll-out, the regions should be provided a full Terms of Reference complete with templates so as to facilitate implementation. *BWYW provided the Regions the full template (that included the logo, powerpoint presentations, donor letters, terms of engagement) for project implementation.*

- The internet can be used to drumbeat interest in the Program and get results in a short period of time. *BWYW as part of the launch posted the program website where wishes of the children (in their own words) were posted to elicit the human interest effect. Also, it made media work easier as they were just referred to the website for details.*

Any project on reducing child labor incidence and helping children and their families will always have its adherents. However, having a collaborative mechanism where one can contribute with ease and facility to a good cause can help intensify support and continued cooperation.