

A LEGACY OF SELFLESS SERVICE

FROM YOUNG MINDS TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS

Research Study on the Influence of the WVDF Child Sponsorship Program on Volunteer Motivation and Sustained Engagement of Members of the Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) Group: Stories and Experiences in the Establishment of a Women-Led Cooperative Project in Southwest Cebu

WORLD VISION DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
QUEZON AVENUE, QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES
AUGUST 2022



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the unwavering efforts and commitment of World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) area program staff and volunteers who are mainly responsible for identifying the most vulnerable children in beneficiary communities that needed the most help. These people are the unsung heroes who consistently make sure that sponsored children and child leaders receive the intended goals of programming interventions and activities implemented by WVDF. More specifically, the research team is also deeply indebted to the core staff and personnel of the South West Cebu program area, who have successfully transitioned the 20-year program, and to World Vision Canada, who have supported the Sustaining Women’s Economic Empowerment Thrust (SWEET) Project and Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) group. We thank the members of the Alcantara-Ronda-Moalboal Credit Cooperative (ARMCC), particularly the empowered women leaders of the group who continue to build hope and inspire positive change in their respective communities.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our utmost gratitude to all LEAD group members for their unrivaled passion to serve the most vulnerable children, their family and their community at large. Finally, we offer this publication to the communities, families and children who have always been the inspiration for our sponsorship and programming interventions for the past 65 years. It is our vision and prayer for every child to experience the fullness of life, and for everyone to have the will to make it so.

Recommended Citation

World Vision Development Foundation, Inc. (WVDF). 2022. *A Legacy of Selfless Service: From Young Minds to Transformational Leaders*. Quezon City, Philippines.

This report is a collaborative output with former sponsored children and child volunteers of World Vision – Southwest Cebu Area Program (Municipalities of Ronda, Alcantara and Moalboal).

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ACRONYMS

ADP	Area Development Program
ARMCC	Alcantara-Ronda-Moalboal Credit Cooperative
CoMSCA	Community-managed Savings and Credit Association
LEAD	Locally Empowered Advocates for Development
SWEET	Sustaining Women Economic Empowerment Thrust
WVC	World Vision Canada
WVDF	World Vision Development Foundation

OVERVIEW

Studies have shown the positive connections between World Vision's child sponsorship program and its participants' personal well-being and life outcomes, benefitting their academic achievement, aspirations, and health. More importantly, families receive numerous forms of support that contribute to making their lives better. But one of the most overlooked impacts is the effect on a child's potential to become a helpful community leader.

This study focuses on this encouraging finding. It goes beyond the usual measured impacts (i.e., adult life outcomes in terms of education and employment) and explores the dynamics and consequences of community volunteerism for former participants of World Vision's child sponsorship program. It explores the experiences of former sponsored kids and youth leaders, who later went on to volunteer as adults to give back to their own community. More specifically, this study focuses on how the program affected the Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) group's goals and participation in the formation of a women-led cooperative in Southwest Cebu.

The research clearly illustrates how the sponsorship program helped develop and hone these former sponsored kids in becoming transformational leaders within their community. Processes include:

Journey — Social networks may influence how a participant's World Vision journey begins. Their parents, siblings, friends, classmates, or school's participation in the organization may have paved the way for them to become sponsored children and child leaders. Their involvement in different child sponsorship activities result in different realizations and perceived effects, including overcoming the hurdles and challenges associated with it. It contributes to their overall development, including their choice of career, academic achievements, and skills development.

Reflection — The sponsorship program helps develop strong morals, values and ideals among the children. Their childhood is a critical period. It's when they form principles that influence their inclination to give back to their own community without expecting anything in return. More importantly, the children's exposure to the communities strengthens the ties between them. This

social integration increases the possibility of a child volunteering in their community. Their interactions and shared experiences build their solidarity and unity as members of one community.

Testimony — Participants characterized their time as LEAD members as a period of maturation and transition. Their capacity to help others and give back to the community makes them feel better about themselves and boosts their spirits. Participants noted how their encounters with communities are a learning opportunity, rather than concentrating on the dynamics of their community interactions. They acknowledged that the community has given them many lessons. This signifies that their journey has come full circle. Volunteering in their adulthood becomes inevitable as a gesture of gratitude and as a way of giving back for the support they received as children.

Through the participants' individual experiences and perspectives, we can gain insight on how to provide a more informed and well-designed sponsorship program that helps children become selfless, transformational leaders. Such perspectives can be:

Co-creation — The study may create new opportunities to find initiatives that make use of the mentorship that former sponsored children or child leader volunteers can provide to an already expanding generation of present-day beneficiaries living within the Area Program communities of WVDF.

Co-opt — When developing proposals, it may be appropriate to consider accounting the LEAD group's creative design, especially if capacity-building initiatives are planned for selected community beneficiaries.

Co-advice — LEAD group members can assist WVDF area program personnel and community child monitors in developing a more inclusive and dynamic monitoring paradigm for beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION



1.1. Background of the study

It is a global goal to reduce extreme poverty by 2030. While much has been done in recent years to achieve this, more than 700 million people still live in extreme poverty.¹ Children make up half of this population and frequently experience lack of proper nutrition, hygiene, housing, medical care, and education necessary for survival and growth.²

Many organizations have implemented various programs to help children alleviate their suffering. One of the leading forms of direct aid is child sponsorship. It's a program that transfers resources from sponsors in first-world countries to children in developing countries, helping to provide them access to school tuition, uniforms, nutritious meals and healthcare.³ Through child sponsorship programs, monthly financial donations are made to a child in need in a developing nation. Sponsorship payments each month typically vary from US\$25 to US\$35 depending on the program. The purpose of sponsorship is to assist in breaking

the cycle of poverty, so that children and their families can look forward to a brighter future.⁴ Each year, more than US\$3 billion is spent on sponsorship for an estimated 9.1 million children globally where World Vision's child sponsorship programs maintain the largest number in the world.⁵

1.1.1. IMPACTS OF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMS

Child sponsorship programs have changed the lives of children all over the world. But despite the number of people involved in these programs and the amount spent to fund children, only a few studies have been done to assess the impact of child sponsorship programs. Research usually focuses on the impacts of the programs on the individual and community levels.

¹ Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed: World Bank. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>

² Child poverty. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty>

³ Ross, P. H., Glewwe, P., Prudencio, D., & Wydick, B. (2021). Developing educational and vocational aspirations through international child sponsorship: Evidence from Kenya, Indonesia, and Mexico. *World Development*, 140, 105336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.WORLDDEV.2020.105336>

⁴ What is child sponsorship? Learn about Child Sponsorship, World Vision International, <<https://www.worldvision.org/ph/>>

⁵ Wydick, B., Glewwe, P., Rutledge, L. (2013). Does International Child Sponsorship Work? A Six-Country Study of Impacts on Adult Life Outcomes. *Journal of Political Economy*, 121 (2), 393-436. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/670138>

1.1.1.1. Impacts on children

The most visible impact of child sponsorship programs is on education. Sponsorship programs improve school attendance and grade completion. As Feeny et al. (2019)⁶ found in their study, communities with ongoing sponsorship programs have a higher rate of school attendance. This rate increases every year, as long as the sponsorship program continues to run in the community. Wydick et al. (2013), on the other hand, assessed the impacts of Compassion's child sponsorship program on adult life outcomes. Their findings revealed that the program increases years of completed schooling for children by 1.03–1.46 years. This positive increase is similar to what Ross et al. (2020) discovered in their study of sponsored children in Kenya, Indonesia, and Mexico, where grade completion increased by 0.56 years.

With access to higher education, beneficiaries also elevated their career aspirations. Wydick et al. (2013) noted that sponsored children appear to have higher educational and vocational expectations. There appears to be an increased probability of working in a salaried position by 5.1–6.3 percentage points and white-collar employment by 6.5–6.7 percentage points after the sponsorship program. This has a long-term impact on beneficiaries being less likely to be multi-dimensionally poor, depending on the years they spent in the sponsorship program as argued by Feeny et al. (2019).

A key feature of sponsorship programs is the likelihood of the children and sponsors communicating with each other. Studies proved that such communication improves the overall health of the children. It's positively related to the psychosocial and emotional well-being of the children (Feeny et al., 2019). It also has a significant impact on children's self-esteem, optimism, overall aspirations, and higher self-expectations for education (Ross et al., 2021). Wydick et al. (2013) also noted that child sponsorship programs that focus on intrinsic constraints help children address feelings of hopelessness, lack of empowerment, and low self-esteem, among others.

Overall, the sponsorship programs have valuable impacts on children's lives, from education, employment, health, and psychosocial well-being — which helps them secure a brighter future.

1.1.1.2. Impacts on family

Child sponsorship programs have visibly improved family life. Sponsorship programs help bring medical services closer to poor families. Medical and dental missions conducted in the communities not only help the sponsored children but also their other family members. Child sponsorship also encourages parents to register their children's births (Feeny et al., 2019). This increases school attendance of all their children. Livelihood programs and skill - improvement seminars implemented in target communities are also reported to boost their income and help them better provide for their families (World Vision, 2016).⁷ Finally, sponsorship inspires feeling of hope in poor families. Sponsorship programs that address internal constraints — such as feelings of hopelessness, lack of empowerment, and aspiration discouragements — help them feel uplifted and supported (Duflo, 2012).⁸ It's empowering for them to know someone is rooting for them, in addition to providing for their immediate needs.

1.1.1.3. Impacts on community

World Vision's Child Sponsorship programs work alongside communities to create lasting changes. Studies reveal that sponsorship programs impact the community in which they're implemented. The years that the sponsorship programs spend in the communities have a positive impact on its infrastructures. Communities with sponsorship programs have better access to clean water and sanitation compared to communities without it (Feeny et al., 2019). Sponsorship programs established in collaboration with community organizations, faith leaders, and community members build forms of social capital for the community. It strengthens communities by fostering collaboration and connecting individuals and groups.⁹

1.1.2. WVDF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Child sponsorship is core to World Vision's history. From providing direct financial support to children back in its early years to the more recent adaptation of a community development model, World Vision's projects and programs help vulnerable children everywhere achieve brighter futures. In 2021, 3.2 million children were part of World Vision's child sponsorship program in 1,268 area programs in 54 countries.¹⁰

⁶ Feeny, S., Posso, A., Churchill S. A., Westhorp, G., Gauer, M. (2019). Changing lives – an analysis of Plan International's child sponsorship data. Plan International

⁷ World Vision. (2016). Economic strengthening, resilient livelihoods approaches and child well-being Evidence and knowledge gaps

⁸ Duflo, E. (2012). "Hope as Capability," Tanner Lectures on Human Values and the Design of the Fight Against Poverty.

⁹ World Vision (n.d.). Child Sponsorship Impact Evidence Brief. <https://www.worldvision.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Child-Sponsorship-Research-brief-with-logos.pdf>

¹⁰ WVI. 2021. Global Annual Report. World Vision International. https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/WVI%20Global%20Annual%20Report%202021_2.pdf

World Vision's child sponsorship program takes a holistic approach to improving the well-being of vulnerable children. We collaborate with communities to address the underlying causes of poverty and create sustainable change for the child, their family, and the community. World Vision makes a conscious effort to find children that live in the most vulnerable places, which are not frequently visited by other child sponsorship programs. It identifies the vulnerable regions and provinces of a country, defined by an Area Program (AP).



1.2. Child sponsorship and volunteerism

The majority of sponsorship programs emphasize helping sponsored kids become more capable leaders by getting them involved in a variety of community and volunteer activities. In their impact assessment of the sponsorship program of Compassion International, Wydick et al. (2013) observed that the program increases the possibility of the children becoming community leaders. Specifically, it measured an improvement of 2.2 to 0.9 percentage points in the probability of children becoming community leaders in their adult years. This study also found that sponsorship programs increase the probability of the children becoming church leaders in adulthood (Wydick et al., 2013). Youth religious involvement is found to have a positive effect on community participation in sponsored children's adult years. As Perks and Haan (2011)¹¹ argued, religious involvement during one's youth is a stronger predictor of adult volunteering than gender, marital status, or nativity.

1.2.1. ANTECEDENTS OF VOLUNTEERISM

1.2.1.1. Social ties

Sponsored children becoming involved in volunteer activities and taking on leadership roles in their

communities does not come as a surprise. Social ties play a role in volunteering. Beyerlein and Sikkink (2008)¹² argued that one of the strongest predictors of whether someone will volunteer or not is their proximity and familiarity with the beneficiaries. Individuals that are socially integrated in the community are more likely to join volunteer activities and commit to the volunteer service.¹³

1.2.1.2. Feeling of solidarity

Additionally, volunteering is seen as an act of solidarity. As Butcher (2010)¹⁴ noted, volunteers who help their communities view their actions as a way to benefit others "pre-supposes the existence of a community to which one has specific duties." This is why World Vision's child sponsorship programs emphasize fostering collaboration and strengthening ties within program areas.

1.2.1.3. Personality

It was mentioned earlier that child sponsorship programs have an impact on children's emotional and psychosocial well-being. Similarly, existing literature emphasizes that one of the prominent motivations for volunteering is having

¹¹ Perks, T., and Haan, M. (2011). Youth religious involvement and adult community participation: Do levels of youth religious involvement matter? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 40, 107-129

¹² Beyerlein, K., & Sikkink, D. (2008). Sorrow and Solidarity: Why Americans Volunteered for 9/11 Relief Efforts, *Social Problems*, 55 (2), 190-215, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2008.55.2.190>

¹³ Lee, Y. & Brudney, J.L. (2012). Participation in formal and informal volunteering: Implications for volunteer recruitment. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 23: 159-180. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21060>

¹⁴ Butcher, Jacqueline. (2010). Mexican solidarity: Citizen participation and volunteering. 10.1007/978-1-4419-1078-3.

a positive personality. Atkins, Hart and Donnelly¹⁵ argued that those with more “resilient” personalities are more likely to volunteer. Empathetic people, or those who are adept in putting themselves in the shoes of others, are also more likely to become volunteers.¹⁶ Other positive personal characteristics, such as extraversion and agreeableness, are also associated with the inclination to do volunteer work.¹⁷

1.2.1.4. Self-growth

People who have higher aspirations for their employment and education are also more motivated to participate in community service and volunteer work. The desire to gain career experience and increase job prospects is found to be one motivation for community engagement s. People mainly engage in volunteer service s for self-development, growth and enhancement.¹⁸

1.2.2. CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTEERISM

1.2.2.1. Personal benefits

Volunteering increases a person’s social capital. It can strengthen their ties to the community, especially during “on-the-ground” experiences. It exposes individuals to different people from whom they can learn different perspectives and skillsets. All forms of volunteering give participants the chance to network, which improves the quantity and quality of their contacts on personal and professional levels. Volunteering activities may also bring people with common interests together. This helps volunteers find friends they can do fun and fulfilling activities with.

Aside from the broadening of social networks, volunteering engagements can also improve and develop people’s personal skills. Interpersonal and social skills are strengthened during volunteer activities because volunteers can interact with different groups of people for extended periods of time. It also hones their leadership skills. Many volunteer organizations purposefully include leadership development opportunities in their models in an effort to develop the participants’ sense of leadership (Lockett & Boyd, 2012).¹⁹

Studies also demonstrated that volunteering benefits a person’s health and wellbeing. According to Thoits and Hewitt (2001)²⁰, people who volunteered more hours also experienced higher levels of enjoyment, life satisfaction, self-esteem, sense of mastery, and physical health; and less depression. Similar to this, Wilson (2012)²¹ suggested that volunteering is linked to decreased rates of illness and death, in addition to protection against symptoms of depression. Volunteering even influences a person’s perception of his or her health, regardless of whether their health status has improved or not (Fiorillo & Nappo, 2014).²²

1.2.2.2. Organizational benefits

Organizations recruit volunteers as a way to improve, strengthen, or fill important roles that help achieve their goals. Volunteers help organizations reach out to their communities and provide services that may not otherwise be available (Cordero et al., 2013). For instance, non-profit organizations benefit from the skills of volunteers who already have a background in for-profit sectors. These skills include marketing, operations, strategic planning, finance, and technical skills (Letts & Holly, 2017). With volunteers from different career backgrounds, organizations can tap into various fields and utilize their expertise.

By recruiting volunteers rather than paid personnel for various jobs, organizations also spend less money, while still enhancing their mission-related outputs (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007). Since volunteering is a prosocial activity, volunteers don’t necessarily expect compensation for their help. However, there are still expenses necessary to keep a pool of volunteers, such as expenses related to volunteer recruitment, training and support. It’s also important that organizations make an effort to maintain volunteers’ sense of belonging, happiness, and fulfillment (Gidron, 1985).

¹⁵ Atkins, R., Hart, D., and Donnelly, T. (2005). The association of childhood personality type with volunteering during adolescence. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 28, 77-94

¹⁶ Einolf, C. J. (2008). Empathic concern and prosocial behaviors: A test of experimental results using survey data. *Social Science Research*, 37, 1267-1279.

¹⁷ Omoto, A. M., Snyder, M., & Hackett, J. D. (2010). Personality and motivational antecedents of activism and civic engagement. *Journal of Personality*, 78, 1703-1734.

¹⁸ Lee, Y. & Brudney, J.L. (2012). Participation in formal and informal volunteering: Implications for volunteer recruitment. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 23: 159-180. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21060>

¹⁹ Lockett, L.L., & Boyd, B.L. (2012). Enhancing Leadership Skills in Volunteers. *The Journal of Leadership Education*, 11, 233-244.

²⁰ Thoits, P. & Hewitt, L. (2001). Volunteer Work and Well-Being. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 42. 115-31. 10.2307/3090173.

²¹ Wilson, J. (2012). Volunteerism Research: A Review Essay. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(2), 176–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764011434558>

²² Fiorillo, D., & Nappo, N. (2015). Formal and informal volunteering and health in Mediterranean Europe. *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 1(4), 297-309.

1.3. WVDF child sponsorship program in Southwest Cebu

1.3.1. SWEET PROJECT

World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), together with its partner organization AIMLife Inc., has implemented the Sustaining Women's Economic Empowerment Thrust (SWEET) project with funding from World Vision Canada (WVC).²³ One of the major motivations of this project is to address the global disparity among women in accessing financial assistance and loans. In many countries, women's microcredit and savings loan groups have become essential components in achieving gender equality in financial inclusion.

The SWEET project works toward establishing cooperatives that eventually become Community-Managed Savings and Credit Associations (CoMSCA), and then strengthening that cooperative's sustainability mechanisms. CoMSCA is an economic development project model developed by WVDF. It aims to provide simple savings and loan facilities to communities, especially in rural areas, where it's difficult to access financial services. Aside from establishing and strengthening a women-led cooperative, two other major

major enterprises were prioritized in the SWEET project: basket weaving and rice retailing.

Most importantly, the project aims to help continue interventions focused on economic sustainability in areas of Southwest Cebu, after WVDF's 20-year child-focused programs and community development initiatives closed in the area.

1.3.2. LEAD GROUP

An innovative approach that was integrated during the implementation of the SWEET project was the engagement of Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) group. This group was comprised of former sponsored children (SC) and child leader volunteers of WVDF who were willing to give back to the community. The involvement of former SC, who are now professionals, provided leadership, management and technical capacity skills that helped scale up such initiatives in 33 beneficiary barangays across three municipalities in South West Cebu, namely Ronda, Moalboal, and Alcantara.



²³ Evaluation and Impact Brief No. 5: Sustaining Women's Economic Empowerment Thrust (SWEET Project). World Vision Development Foundation

1.4. Objectives of the study

A growing number of research studies have found positive links between child sponsorship program and their participants' well-being and life outcomes. It positively impacts children's education, aspirations, and health. Significantly, it also influences children's probability of becoming leaders in their communities. Volunteering can be a manifestation of potential community leadership, especially because volunteering is usually motivated by social ties, feelings of solidarity, a positive personality, and greater aspirations. However, it remains to be explored whether or not there exists a relationship between child sponsorship and children's future volunteer motivations and community participation in adult life.

This research primarily seeks to understand the impacts of the WVDF child sponsorship programs on the members of the Locally Empowered Advocates (LEAD) group, in relation to their motivations to help establish a women-led cooperative in Southwest Cebu.

1.4.1. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the role of WVDF child sponsorship programs in influencing the family well-being and community engagement LEAD group members.

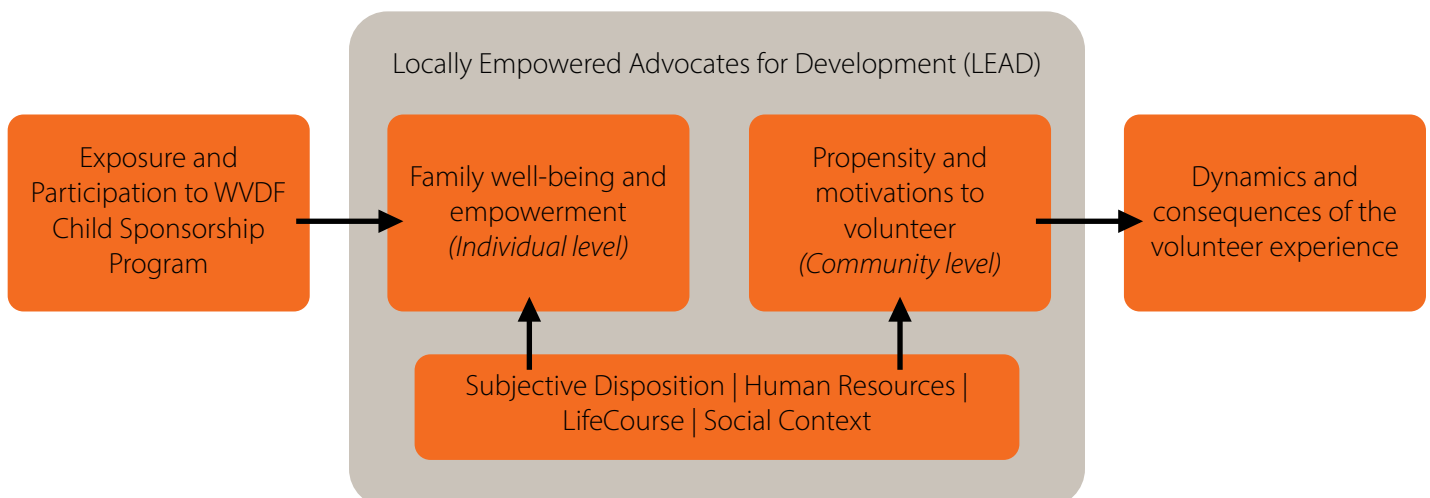
2. Analyze and understand the volunteer motivations and engagement of LEAD group members through their participation in the SWEET project.
3. Identify the intended and unintended benefits or consequences of the volunteer experience of the LEAD group members.

1.4.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1.1 is a visual representation of the relationship between exposure to child sponsorship programs and the motivation to volunteer or engage in community participation in adult life. This study follows the assumption that sponsorship programs influenced the LEAD group members, who are former sponsored children, both at the individual level, through its impact on their family well-being and empowerment, and at the community level through its development of their propensity to volunteer.

Generally, the dynamics and consequences of the LEAD group members volunteer experience is determined by their exposure to and interactions with a child sponsorship program, its impact to their own family and community relationships, and their respective social capital and milieu.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework on the relationship between exposure to child sponsorship program and motivations to volunteer or engage in community participation in adult life



METHODOLOGY



2.1. Qualitative case study approach

2.1.1. PHASES OF A CASE STUDY

A qualitative case study was conducted on the identified LEAD group members. As per Baxter and Jack, this qualitative approach helps in exploring a phenomenon in some particular context through various data sources, as well as through a variety of lenses, and reveals multiple facets of the phenomenon.²⁴

In other words, a case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis, i.e., the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of the research itself.²⁵ This study, in particular, is classified as a retrospective case study, which involves collecting data related to a past phenomenon of any kind. It generally involves looking back on a phenomenon, situation, person or event and studying it in its historical integrity.²⁶

Rashid et. al²⁷ identified four major phases in conducting a case study: 1) Foundation Phase, 2) Pre-field Phase,

3) Field Phase and 4) Reporting Phase. In implementing this research methodology, focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized among LEAD group members to facilitate the orientation of the purpose of the study. The table below summarizes the activities required for each step of the case study.

Table 2.1 Phases and activities in conducting a case study (Rashid, et. al 2019)

	(Phase 1) Foundation Phase	(Phase 2) Pre-field Phase	(Phase 3) Field Phase	(Phase 4) Reporting Phase
I.	Philosophical consideration	I. Decide	I. Contact	I. Case study reporting
II.	Inquiry techniques consideration	II. Case study protocol	II. Interact	
III.	Research logic consideration			

²⁴ Baxter, P., and Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13, 544-559

²⁵ Starman, A.B. (2013). The case study as a type of qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies*, 1, 28-43.

²⁶ Thomas, G. (2011). A Typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse and structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, Issue 6, pp. 511–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800411409884>

²⁷ Rashid, Y., Rashid, A., Warraich, M.A., Sabir, S.S., and Waseem, A. (2019) Case Study Method: A Step-by-Step Guide for Business Researchers, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1-13, [doi:10.1177/1609406919862424](https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919862424)

2.1.2. PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

The study will focus on the members of the Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) who were actively involved and contributed to the effective implementation and sustaining impacts of the SWEET project. Members of the LEAD group were former sponsored children (SC) and child leader volunteers who are also local residents in the South West Cebu area program. Originally, the SWEET project targeted to involve at least 33 active professionals or former SC representing the 33 beneficiary barangays covered across three municipalities in South West Cebu, namely Ronda, Moalboal, and Alcantara. However, only 8 active LEAD group members representing different organizations have stayed throughout the project duration.

The study considers sustained engagement among participants as a main criterion to be a study respondent. Thus, those who have not completed their involvement with the SWEET project were not included.

2.1.3. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS USED

Participants of the study underwent a workshop that oriented them with the study, including the potential risks and benefits of participating in the research. All participants participated voluntarily and signed an informed consent form as part of the ethics clearance of WVDF. Upon agreement with the participants, the study then implemented focus group discussions using semi-structured questionnaires. Questions asked during the discussion revolved around three main- related topics, namely i.) WVDF Child Sponsorship Program, ii.) Impacts of

Child Sponsorship Program, and iii.) Dynamics and Consequences of the Volunteer Experience. Audio devices were also used to document the participants' responses during discussions.

For the second round of data gathering, a series of in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant. Every member was asked the same questions to assess and validate the accuracy of their responses, and their consistency with the group consensus captured during the focus group discussions. In addition, interviews were documented through video recording. Raw footage was further reviewed to ensure the validity and accuracy of each participant's response.

2.1.4. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The qualitative information collected through the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were analyzed and transformed to address the objectives of the study. More specifically, a thematic analysis was conducted to draw out major themes fleshed out from the narratives and seek explanations for the relationship between the identified themes. The analysis was conducted manually and involved major steps, which are as follows:

- Step 1: Transcribing of data
- Step 2: Familiarizing with the data by reviewing interview transcripts
- Step 3: Highlighting key and specific responses based on research objectives
- Step 4: Generating of codes and grouping them under specific domain
- Step 5: Developing themes





2.2. Challenges and limitations

Despite the richness and great detail of the data gathered from the participants through a qualitative case study approach, this study is confronted with technical limitations that might affect its conclusiveness.

2.2.1. LIMITED SCOPE AND COVERAGE

The research done on the LEAD group is a relatively new applied case study for WVDF, as this approach is the first of its kind to be applied to the organization's programming intervention (i.e., SWEET project). Studying these individuals allows for the exploration of the possible relationship between their participation in a WVDF child sponsorship program and their involvement in community volunteerism in adult life. As of this writing, this case with the SWEET project is the only reported involvement of former sponsored children and child leader volunteers of WVDF with major roles in the organization's community programming interventions. Given that, it's not possible to include other former beneficiaries or participants of WVDF child sponsorship programs from other areas.

2.2.2. NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

The study only focused on the remaining active LEAD group members who completed their engagement with the

SWEET project. Out of the 33 listed LEAD group members, only 8 (or 24%) sustained their involvement throughout the volunteer period. It's also worth noting that a survivorship bias²⁸ can't be avoided in the selection of study participants. Thus, the findings presented in this report may not hold true for other groups.

2.2.3. GENERALIZABILITY ISSUES

The aim of using a qualitative analysis in this study is to capture a complete and detailed description of the experiences of the formed sponsored children and child leader volunteers of WVDF. No attempt is made in conducting any further statistical testing, let alone assigning frequencies to the documented responses. The themes identified are also not tested to determine whether they are statistically significant or simply due to chance. Most importantly, these findings do not represent the experience of other former sponsored children, former child leader volunteers and other beneficiaries of WVDF. Identified themes discussed in this report cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty and are only limited to the participants themselves.

²⁸ Survivorship bias is a type of sampling error bias that occurs when the selection process of a trial favours certain individuals who made it past a certain obstacle or point in time and ignores the individuals who did not (and are generally less visible)

2.3. Significance of the study

Emerging studies have shown the encouraging impacts of international sponsorship programs on its individual recipients, sometimes extending to community beneficiaries. In particular, participation in these various sponsorship programs lead to multiple improvements in children's lives, such as being happier, enjoying good health, and having higher levels of school attendance. Interestingly, these programs also increase the probability of child recipients becoming more helpful and eventually becoming leaders. The program's ability to hone and develop children to become future leaders and active community volunteers are often underestimated or unexplored in most rigorous evaluations of international sponsorships.

This study fills in existing research gap, both in terms of conceptualizing and localizing how such processes can happen within the sponsorship program framework. The results of the case study also give a more contextualized and nuanced example of how programs are able to cultivate voluntary leadership in these former sponsored children and child leaders throughout their journey, both as recipients and givers. This deep dive highlights three important reasons why such research is important:

- **WVDF trademark.** Members of the Locally Empowered Advocates for Development (LEAD) group are former sponsored children or child leader volunteers who are willing to give back to the community.
- **Organic solidarity.** The LEAD group is important in bridging the competency gap among members of the community, which is necessary to sustain the efforts and programs turned over by World Vision.
- **Community-led or grassroots initiative.** The LEAD group also has the opportunity to explore strategic positioning for further collaboration and partnership with existing agencies and local government units. This means tapping potential interested individuals that can help ensure sustainability of community program efforts previously established by World Vision.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Profile of the participants

All participants involved in the study are members of the LEAD group. Out of the 33 active professionals (and former sponsored children and child leaders) who expressed being part of the group, only 8 members completed and sustained their volunteer engagement in the SWEET project. An overview of the general profile of the participants are shown below:

Table 3.1 General profile of the study participants

Volunteer	Former Exposure or Participation	Sex	Age	Year Started with WVDF	Profession
#1 (Rutche)	Sponsored Child	F	30	2000	Teacher
#2 (Liezl)	Sponsored Child	F	29	1999	Teacher
#3 (Chingbee)	Sponsored Child	F	29	1999	Teacher
#4 (Lemuel)	Sponsored Child	M	31	1999	Public Servant
#5 (Jade)	Child Leader (or Volunteer)	M	34	2003	Call Center Agent
#6 (Cecile)	Child Leader (or Volunteer)	F	30	2008	Teacher
#7 (Jennelyn)	Child Leader (or Volunteer)	F	32	2008	Teacher
#8 (James)	Child Leader (or Volunteer)	M	34	2002	Call Center Agent

Members of the LEAD group are either former sponsored children or child leader volunteers. Child volunteers are non-sponsored children of WVDF but are volunteers in the community who willingly participated in different child-friendly activities of WVDF. The only difference between the two is that sponsored children usually receive gifts and other benefits from the general programming interventions of WVDF. Nevertheless, both groups are highly involved with and exposed to the child-focused community activities implemented by World Vision, such as Children's Congress, APR, Performing Arts activities, etc.

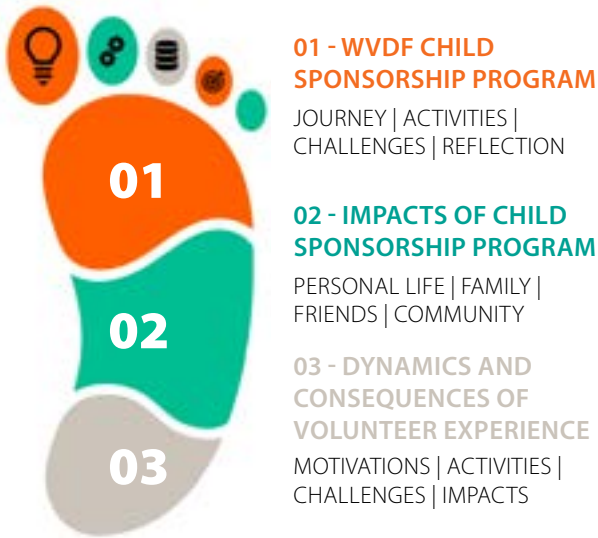
All participants were reported to have been involved with WVDF for almost two decades, with most of their time spent with fellow children and parent members in their communities. All of them voluntarily agreed to be part of the LEAD group, which has been an initiative of World Vision Canada as part of the SWEET project, a transition and economic development program in South West Cebu.

Despite their full-time professional jobs, they consistently committed their weekends and other free time to help formally establish and register their fellow community members, in particular the members of the Alcantara-Ronda-Moalboal Community Cooperative (ARMCC), through the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA).

The majority of the LEAD members are female, who decided to pursue teaching as professional career. While the male members have diverse occupations, they're usually involved in people-centric jobs. The average age of LEAD group members is 31 years old.

3.2. Emerging themes per key areas of the research

SUMMARY OF EMERGING THEMES PER AREA



Cecile, LEAD Volunteer 6

3.2.1. WVDF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

3.2.1.1. Journey

Participants shared that there are various influences that helped start their journey with WVDF. Some participants were selected by the organization to become sponsored children.

The WVDF child sponsorship program is defined as:

“Child sponsorship pairs one caring sponsor with one child in need in a mutually rewarding connection. When you sponsor a child, you help their community establish long-term access to essentials like clean water, nutrition, education, and more, according to the community’s needs. You’re also able to connect with your sponsored child through letters, photos, small packages, and your prayers for them. Our programs are Christ-centered, child-focused, and community-based” (What is Child Sponsorship, World Vision Development Foundation Official Website).

Sponsoring a child is the most effective, personal way to fight poverty and help children build better lives and futures. A sponsored child receives support from donors through WVDF, while also participating in activities as per the organization’s holistic development initiative.

Family involvement in WVDF activities is also one major influence. Some participants saw their mothers with their active involvement in World Vision activities, as leaders of

the community. This sparked curiosity about working with World Vision, which eventually led to their involvement as child leaders or sponsored children. Some participants were also siblings of a sponsored child, making them more familiar with how child sponsorship program s work and their ongoing activities.

Additionally, having close friends who’ve already participated in WVDF child sponsorship activities also led to some participants’ introduction to the organization. This makes it easier to join, as shared by Cecile (LEAD Volunteer 6):

“I’m very happy nga naka-join ko ani and then the reason why naka-join ko is because of my classmates, my very close friends ...” (I am very happy that I was able to be join the activities, and the reason why I was motivated is because of my classmates and friends who are also involved with WVDF).”

Moreover, some participants learned about World Vision and its activities through school during visits when World Vision conducted activities, such as catechism. As shared by Jade (LEAD Volunteer 5):

“There was one event sa school na nagkaroon kami ng parang Catechism, and then sabi ni Ate Iris na why not jumoin ako, mag-join doon sa Philippine World Vision.” (There was one event happened at our school where WVDF conducted Catechism-related activities, and a member of WVDF staff told me to formally join and be involved with WVDF).

01. WVDF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

CHALLENGES

- Time constraints
- Inactivity of members
- Politics in listing beneficiaries
- Logistical issues
- Establishing connection with new people
- Shyness
- Fear of public speaking
- New atmosphere when going back
- Jealousy to Sponsored Child

JOURNEY

- Influence of classmates
- Influence of friends
- Family member's involvement in WV
- School activities
- Motivation from staff and community leaders
- Interest in volunteerism

ACTIVITIES

- Vacation Bible School
- Barangay Children's Association
- Municipal Children's Association
- National Congress in Manila
- HIV and AIDS Awareness
- CCYF
- World Youth Day
- Children's Congress
- Birthday Bounce Back

REFLECTIONS

- Instill life values
- Public service
- Volunteerism
- selflessness
- Improve personal skills
- Showcase one's talent
- Community involvement
- Dream big and aspire more
- Career aspirations
- Importance of education

Overall, their connections with family, friends, classmates, and schools led them to their WVDF journey. This illustrates how social networks play a role introducing participants to the WVDF child sponsorship program.

3.2.1.2. Activities

The participants' journeys with WVDF were enjoyable and fruitful. The Birthday Bounce Back, Vacation Bible School, Barangay Children's Association and Municipal Children's Association served as avenues for the participants to meet friends, celebrate, and raise issues about their communities. There were also activities that developed their talents and skills as children. This includes different workshops, theater arts, and performances that honed their confidence and personality.

Aside from these fun activities, they also experienced leading events related to certain causes. For instance, they organized seminars that raise awareness about HIV and AIDS. They went to various communities, specifically those who have high cases of HIV and AIDS, for information and education campaigns.

There were also activities that gave participants chance to travel and gain experiences outside of their hometown such as Regional and National Congresses and the celebration of World Youth Day. These activities were memorable for them as they were exposed to different cultures, perspective and meet other people from different provinces. As James (LEAD Volunteer 8) experienced:

"During that time, akoang manghod sad na sponsor man man diri sa World Vision and then two for enjoyment plus exposure, kay na-apil ko ato ug Kelvin's kuan sa Bohol, kami tong first nga Congress, "takubata," na-exposure kami rito ana diay na-refresh na nako and then kuan siya kanang as the support sa mga mura bitaw `to pay it forward sa mga nga natabangan sa Community, kami ang murag mo-assist kay mga bata pa mani sila sa una, so kami tong mu-assist sa mga pagkaon." (During that time, my younger brother was a sponsored child so I was able to look after him while also being exposed with different activities for the youth. For instance, I was able to join the Children's Congress organized by WVDF and was refreshed of my rights and duties as child rights advocates. With these experiences, I also realized how important it is to pay it forward to my community and give them whatever support they needed no matter how small such assisting during feeding programs).

3.2.1.3. Reflection

Exposure and participation in WVDF child sponsorship programs lead to realizations and reflections that the participants treasure until adulthood.

Their experience and involvement in the communities not only improved their personal skills, it also helped them realize the importance of resilience. In their journey as sponsored child and child leaders, they were taught to value education, independence, self-reliance, and responsibility

no matter what challenges life may bring. This is captured by the words of Rutche (LEAD Volunteer 1):

"I'd like to include the word endure, ang mga, gi ana ko nga lots of experiences sa World Vision kay luoy naka sustain ba sa akong life." (I would like to include the word endure. My experiences with WVDF have helped me in overcoming challenges and sustain my life). Aside from this, the trainings and activities also honed their character as children. It still principles such as public service, volunteerism, and selflessness that have shaped the way they are today. As LEAD Volunteer 8 (James) espoused, "Kay ang World Vision kay child-friendly gyud siya, unya Christ-centered unya values-oriented man gyud siya, so exposure na ko mao diay siyang nag-build sa akong character nga, somehow refined ko ana-ana diba". (Since WVDF is child-friendly, Christ-centered and values-oriented, my involvement with the ministry helped me build and refined my character).

This legacy of selfless service-learned, experienced, and lived as children who are involved in WVDF Child Sponsorship activities have come a long way and played an important role in their involvement in other volunteering activities.

3.2.1.4. Challenges

Being involved in various activities, as children was not easy. Participants shared that they faced challenges in participating in and organizing different events.

Time constraint was a primary concern for them. As children, parents imposed curfews to ensure their safety. However, as they joined more WVDF activities and saw its benefits, their parents started to trust them. As one participant Rutche (LEAD Volunteer 1) stated:

"Ay dili man kog, basta World Vision kay masugod sila pero naay curfew. Makakiat bay wa man atason mi." (Our imposed curfews by our parents wouldn't matter as long as they know that the activities, we are involved with are WVDF-related).

Some participants also struggled with shyness and fear of public speaking, which hindered their total immersion in the holistic program. Another participant shared that sometimes she felt jealous of sponsored children, as they are the only ones who received support from WVDF.

Being child leaders as part of the planning team introduced them to challenges that come with organizing events. They



Rutche, LEAD Volunteer 1



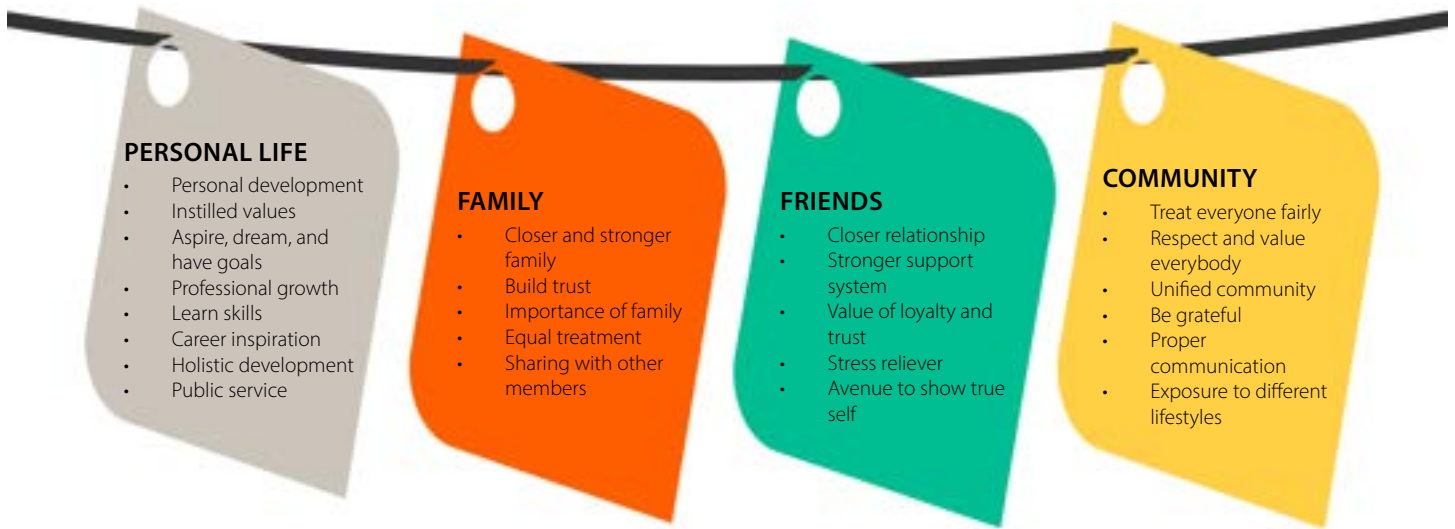
James, LEAD Volunteer 8

experienced logistical issues and issues regarding obtaining government permits, building rapport with the participants, and sustaining interest.

This is highlighted in the statement of James (LEAD Volunteer 8):

"Naa may mga activity nga involved ra ug ang government, munisipyo, ug ang kuan unsay ra ug ability or wala gyud nga permission sa ilaha. Wala mig venue, kana ra kuan, kana'y among challenge." (We usually have activities with the local government units and, most of the times, we find it hard to look for venues to conduct these events).

02. IMPACTS OF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM



3.2.2. IMPACTS OF CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

The child sponsorship program has had different impacts on the lives of the participants. It influenced their personal development, family relationships, support systems and perspectives of the community.

3.2.2.1. Personal life

As shared by participants, one of the most highlighted impacts of the child sponsorship program on their personal life is its influence on their holistic development. The WVDF program prioritizes this aspect in its project and program implementations. Not only does the program itself support children financially, it also helps them gain a healthy and spiritual community. Chingbee (LEAD Volunteer 3) spoke on how this type of program helped his growth:

"Because of World Vision gyud, kanang we are wholesome gyud nang gidevelop ba. Like dili lang siya sa physical aspect, like di lang mi provided sa physical, kanang apila, kanang mental, emotional, spiritual, ining ana gyud siya nga, holistically jud me nga kanang gi-develop gyud nila so makaingon ko nga." (Because of our exposure and involvement with WVDF, we have experienced a more holistic development as a child and now until as young adults).

The WVDF child sponsorship program also influenced the education and career aspirations of the participants. It helped them realized the value of education and why finishing their studies may eventually help their families. Their involvement in WVDF activities enabled them to



Chingbee, LEAD Volunteer 3

aspire, dream, and make goals for the betterment of their lives. They learned how to strive harder to reach those goals, keeping in mind that there are people who support and believe in them.

On top of influencing the participants' aspirations for a brighter future, the WVDF programs also affected their career choices. Meeting different types of families and being involved in community affairs helped them recognize that they may be able to help others through their chosen professions. As Chingbee (LEAD Volunteer 3) stated:

"...isa sa factor ang World Vision nganong nag, unsa nganong nag Teacher ko." (My experiences with WVDF motivated me to become a teacher).

3.2.2.2. Family and Friends

The WVDF Child sponsorship program offered great support to the participants' family needs. One member, James (LEAD Volunteer 8), said:

"Kuan sa family, added support kaayo ang World Vision sa amoa. Kay muhatagan ug school supplies, abundant ug sa school supplies akong manghod." (WVDF has given support to my younger brother throughout his schooling in terms of providing him sufficient school supplies).

The support they received from the program helped their family focus limited resources to more urgent needs, such as food.

Regardless of their sponsorship status, participants also reported that their family became closer and stronger because of the child sponsorship programs. They applied the values they learned from WVDF activities in their home lives. These values include respect for elders and building trust.

As Rutche (LEAD Volunteer 1) said:

"Unya karon jud value of respect, mupahod sa ginikanan, mao jud na mga gipang instill na values namo sa vacation bible school. Unya mu kuan jud siya, mu pay ka na ug respect sa mga elders, mao jud na niya growing up amo jud nang madala." (The value of respect was emphasized and instilled unto us throughout our vacation bible school conducted by WVDF. Because of this I was able to imbibe how important it is to show respect towards my elders growing up).

Aside from this, they also apply the values of sharing and equal treatment. Being involved in the various community engagements of the program also exposed the participants' families to volunteerism. This is evident in the statement of Jade (LEAD Volunteer 5):

"And then sa family, although dili kami, siguro sa akong papa, ambot kung diha ba niya nakita ang kuan kanang public service." (Because of my regular participation with WVDF-related activities, my father realized that he too can help his community and became involved with public service).

The child sponsorship program was also a bridge for the participants in finding their true friends. Their fellow child leaders and sponsored children are their support systems.



Jade, LEAD Volunteer 5

Together, as they participated in WVDF activities, their bonds become stronger, and they learned to trust and be loyal to each other. More so, building these friendships lowered their stress and became avenues for authentic self-expression.

3.2.2.3. Community

One of the core facets of the WVDF child sponsorship program is the involvement of the community when addressing the roots of poverty that affect the lives of children and their families. Through program activities, sponsored children and child leaders were exposed to different types of people, families, and lifestyles, which taught them different skills and life lessons. First, engaging with different kinds of people helped them improve their communication skills. Coordinating with government offices, talking with community leaders, and facilitating events trained them to follow proper communication decorum, build rapport with others and establish connection and partnerships. This experiences also built build up their confidence and improved their social skills.

Their exposure to people from different walks of life also instilled in them values of respect and fairness. As captured in the words of Lemuel (LEAD Volunteer 4):

"We learned how to communicate with different kinds of people, we learned how to connect with other people, regardless of who and what they are in the society."

They were able to see that connecting with the community is a chance to learn from them and reflect from what they have. A unified community, from their perspective, are those that value everybody regardless of their social status.



Lemuel, LEAD Volunteer 4



Liezel, LEAD Volunteer 2

common appreciation for culture and positive environment as practiced in WVDF, encouraged them to make this commitment. Additionally, they felt that being involved again with WVDF and working with friends are ways for them to authentically show themselves and relieve stress.

Second, they saw this volunteering opportunity as a chance to give back. They are more than willing and dedicated to serve their communities. As Lemuel (LEAD Volunteer 4) iterated:

“Murag ang World Vision man ang inda dayon sa SWEET LEAD group dayon kay mura siya atong gateway ba nga kanang ang community service or ang service natong gihatag sa tong mga tao.” (Our involvement with the project has opened us to acts of community service).

Lastly, participants also possess the heart to serve. As former participants of child sponsorship activities, they were honed to become future leaders in their communities. Their previous experiences within the community taught them values of helpfulness, selflessness, and service to others. The participants emphasized that serving their communities isn't just limited to providing financial help, but comes in different forms. What's important is that one has the heart to serve others.

3.2.3. DYNAMICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

3.2.3.1. Motivations

After hearing about the SWEET Project and an opportunity to get involved as volunteers, former child leaders and sponsored children expressed interest in joining their interest in joining the program. They readily accepted WVDF's invitations, putting into practice the legacy of selfless service they learned as a child. Volunteer Rutche (LEAD Volunteer 1) shared:

“We said yes although wala kami kabalo unsay among buhaton and then little did we know that the SWEET LEAD group or the SWEET project was actually with bigger responsibilities,” (We agreed to be part of the project, although we have no idea what we are going to do. Little did we know that the SWEET-LEAD project entails bigger responsibilities to us volunteers.

There are various reasons for their decision to join the group. First is the sense of home and family they feel when they're with their fellow sponsored children and child leaders. The memories they shared as active leaders, and

3.2.3.2. Activities

LEAD group members provided different types of volunteer works for the Alcantara-Ronda-Moalboal Credit Cooperative (ARMCC). They were primarily involved in training members of the cooperative. This included preparing and researching topics that were to be discussed with the cooperative; facilitating and speaking during seminars; and ensuring that logistics were smooth and efficient.

They were also involved in coordinating with other possible speakers and partner organizations. From time to time, they also did project monitoring and evaluation to ensure that discussions were applied to the operation of the cooperative. LEAD member Liezel (LEAD Volunteer 2) shared what she accomplished as a member of LEAD:

“Kanang mahimo sa program, naay maghost, naay maghikat, naa'y mag kuan recap. Kami nag-drive, nag-orientation, sa food unya kami kanang naay committee ba, so in every week na naa'y session nag uli-uli mi-.” (As a part of the LEAD group, we are expected to multi-task and do different responsibilities from conceptualizing seminar programs, hosting, conducting orientation talks, and even arranging food for our participants).

03. DYNAMICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

MOTIVATIONS

- Willingness and dedication
- Feeling of home and family
- Feeling of happiness and fulfillment
- Way of giving back
- Previous experiences with WV
- Being active instead of staying at home

CHALLENGES

- Time constraints
- Topic expertise
- Absences of others
- Distance to travel
- COVID-19 restrictions
- Work responsibilities

ACTIVITIES

- Public speaking
- Seminar organizing and facilitation
- Coordination with other orgs
- Meeting and preparation
- Research
- Logistics



IMPACTS

- Acquired new learning
- Individual growth
- Maturity
- Holistic development
- Reaching to own family
- Value family
- Be appreciative
- Be supportive
- Maturity in handling family issues
- Learn to save for family
- Openness, easy to share
- Stronger bonds
- Being there to each other
- Women empowerment
- Application of learning to own life
- See different perspectives
- Fulfillment for being part of their progress

3.2.3.3. Challenges

Leading trainings and organizing activities for the SWEET Project were not easy tasks for the volunteers. As adults, they have to juggle various responsibilities that affect their performance as LEAD members. These responsibilities may range from family roles to career-related obligations. Sometimes, other LEAD members need to be absent or late to seminars due to personal obligations.

At times, participants faced challenges with having to travel long distances to and from seminars, as well as travel restrictions. Since the project was implemented during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, they had to strictly follow health protocols imposed by authorities. These contextual and logistical issues hindered them from arriving on time or fulfilling their volunteer roles.

Participants also raised concerns about not being well-versed on the topics that needed to be discussed with community members. They had to allocate time for research and preparation to ensure that they would provide factual and reliable knowledge to others.

In addressing these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of proper communication and coordination. If a member cannot fulfill their role due to other responsibilities,

it's important that they raise the issue beforehand so that other members may step in on their behalf.

Cooperation and familiarity with other members' tasks also make project implementation more efficient, and ensures everyone is aligned. Proper time management also helped them juggle family, career, and volunteer responsibilities. They'd prioritize tasks and ensure that they completed their assignments on time.

On the issue of topic expertise, participants put extra effort and time into doing research about their assigned topics. They prepared their presentation materials beforehand and sometimes tapped other experts to join the discussion.

3.2.3.4. Impacts

3.2.3.4.1. Personal life

Participants described their experience as LEAD members as a period of maturity and transition. They acquired new learnings, and skillsets that they can apply in their personal lives. One member shared how discussions on financial management were an eye-opening experience for her and she now aims to practice it in her own life. She shared that she has now started saving for the future and encourages other family members to do the same. Another member shared that she acquired other skills that are useful for her

profession, such as public speaking and seminar facilitations.

Aside from skill and professional development, LEAD members also saw their experience as part of their spiritual and emotional growth. They learned to consider different perspectives and feel gratitude for their own blessings. One member shared that she realized the importance of being patient, God-centeredness, and fostering good relationships with family.

More so, members emphasized that they felt happiness and fulfillment through their volunteer engagements. The opportunity to serve others and give back to their community lifted their spirit and morale. They realized that there are many ways to help and that others will always be grateful for it.

3.2.3.4.2. Family

The LEAD members' participation in the SWEET project also had an impact on their families. Members realized the importance of supporting each member of the family in their aspirations. Since they sometimes need to sacrifice family time to keep up with volunteer activities, making sure their family supports and understands their involvement lessened the burden of guilt. Others shared that they learned to be more appreciative of the roles of their mothers in their lives. They saw how cooperative members, who are mostly mothers, are able to juggle time to attend trainings, manage the cooperative, and take care of their children and household chores at the same time.

In relation to this, LEAD members also learned that saving is a family responsibility. Properly handling the finances of a household impacts the overall welfare of the family. Financial management skills are vital, especially for mothers who are often the treasurers of the household.

Lastly, their exposure to different family lifestyles helped them handle family issues in more mature ways. Listening to each member's concerns and making home a safe open space brings the family closer. Members also highlighted the importance of reaching out to family and building close relationships with them.

3.2.3.4.3. Friends

Solidarity and support from other LEAD members helped members surpass the challenges they encountered throughout the program. As Rutche (LEAD Volunteer 1) said:

"I could overcome all the circumstances and the challenges

that we have experienced from day one up until the end of our journey was because of each other."

The friendships they've built from childhood into adulthood have only become stronger through time. Their close ties influence their personal, career, and family circumstances. They're more open with each other and can more easily share their struggles because of their shared experiences. Through the WVDF programs, they were able to find true friends and maybe even a second family.

3.2.3.4.4. Community

Instead of focusing on the dynamic of their relationships with the community, LEAD members highlighted their experience as a learning opportunity. While they were the ones doing the training, members also acknowledged that the community also taught them a lot. As volunteer Chingbee (LEAD Volunteer 3) said:

"Personally, we grow as our participants grow. Mao na siya, personally jud... " (My experiences with this involvement made me realize that we grow as our participants grow).

LEAD members iterated the importance of seeing things from different perspectives. This helps people value what they have, see others' struggle and how they overcome it. It is a life lesson they will carry and apply in their own lives.

Since the project also focuses on women, members saw their impacts on female empowerment. In the words of Cecile (LEAD Volunteer 6):

"And here sa SWEET project ba kanang na-appreciate na ko more ug unsa gyud kanang sense of being among women, how empowered they are because they can do things that ilang kahibuan before nga impossible kailang mahimo ba." (My involvement with the SWEET project made me appreciate and be inspired by the fact that empowering these women in the communities can actually uplift and transform their lives, which I think was really impossible before).

CONCLUSIONS



Research has shown the beneficial relationships between child sponsorship programs and an individuals' personal well-being and life outcomes. It benefits children's health, aspirations, and academic performances. It also improves family's life through the various support received.

Communities where sponsorship programs are implemented also benefit from the initiative. Studies have shown that it has significant impact on children's likelihood to become community leaders later on in life.

This study went beyond these measured impacts and explored the dynamics and consequences of volunteerism on former participants of World Vision's child sponsorship program. It delves into their experiences as former sponsored children and child leaders, who are now volunteers as adults. Specifically, it explored the impacts of the WVDF program on LEAD group members and their motives for and involvement in establishing a women-led cooperative in Southwest Cebu. The themes that emerged from the study are presented as a conceptual framework for easier understanding. The figure above illustrates the relationship between being former WVDF sponsored children and their experiences as volunteer LEAD group members as adults.

The start of their journeys with World Vision were influenced by their social networks. Their parents, siblings, friends, classmates, and schools' involvement with the organization led to them becoming sponsored children and child leaders. Through their involvement, participants gathered experiences that helped shape their personal, family, social, and community lives. They participated in a

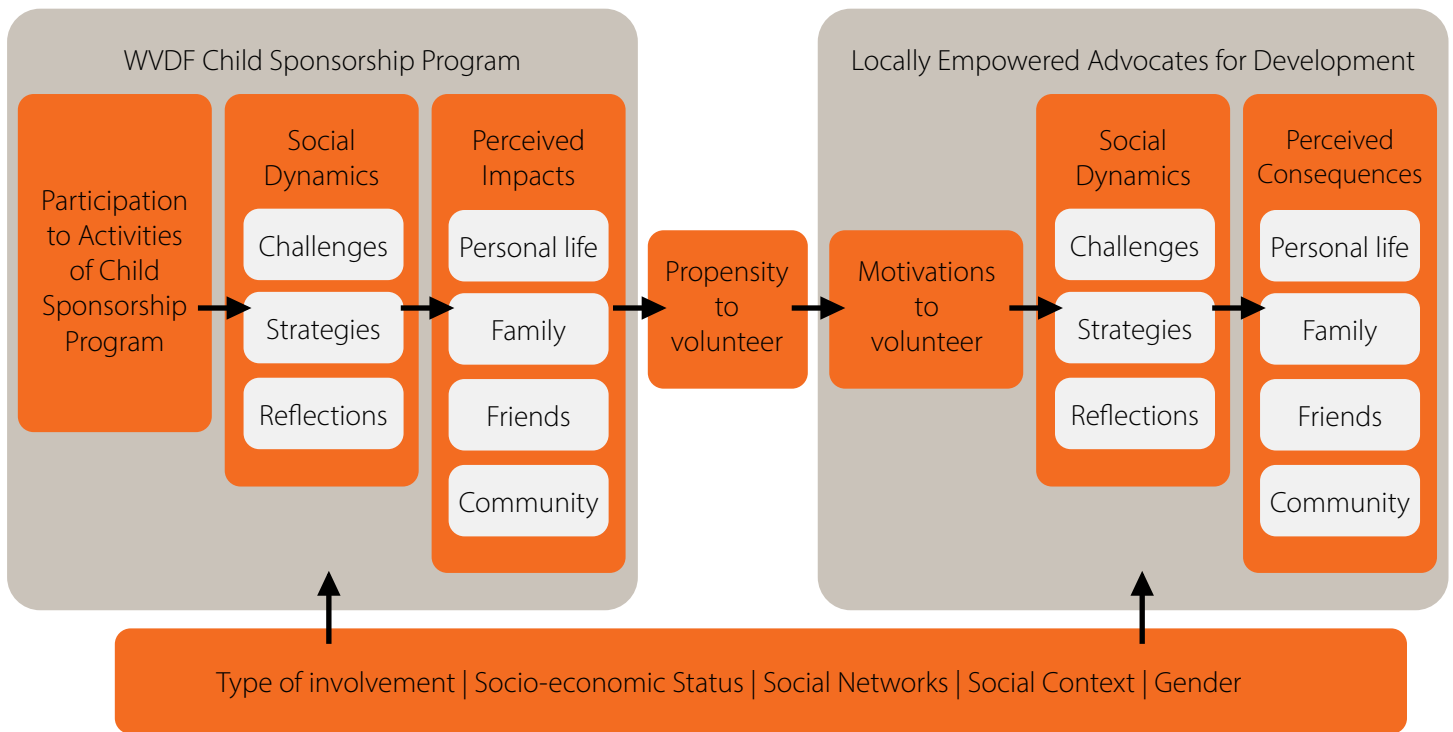
wide range of activities, from fun birthday bounce backs and engaging children's congress to meaningful seminars and Behaviour Change Communications Activities/ Information and Education campaigns.

Participating in and leading activities affected social dynamics. Primarily, participants faced personal and organizational challenges. They experienced time conflicts and constraints, as children who were still studying and under their parents' watch. They also struggled with feelings of shyness, jealousy, and fear of public speaking. These hinder them from fully experiencing activities. Issues in organizational activities, on the other hand, revolved around planning, logistics, and communications with government offices.

To address these challenges, participants need to employ relevant skills and strategies, including being responsible and trustworthy children; engaging in more activities aimed at improving interpersonal skills; and using proper communication and teamwork to address planning and implementation difficulties.

Participating in child sponsorship programs and facing its challenges helped them gain realizations and perceived impacts. Child sponsorship programs improve the holistic development of children - from skill development and educational achievement to their career choices and aspirations. Aside from this, it also impacts the quality of their relationships with their significant others. They built stronger, more united, and supportive family and friends upon their participation in child sponsorship activities.

Figure 4. 1 Modified conceptual framework on the relationship between WVDF Child Sponsorship Program and Community Volunteerism



This adds up to their positive character of being authentic, respectful, trustworthy, generous, equality-loving, and responsible individuals. Their exposure to different members of the community also improved their confidence, communication decorum, and social skills. These are valuable skillsets that help them engage and relate with people from all walks of life.

Overall, these legacies and connections ascribe to what Wydick et al. (2013) found in their assessment of child sponsorship programs. As they argued, child sponsorship programs increase the possibility of children becoming community leaders in their adult life. But unlike their assessment, this study explored how this actually happens.

Having positive personalities is a significant factor in those who choose to engage in volunteer activities. As Atkins, Hart, & Donnelly (2005) argued, people with good social skills, empathy, and resilience are more likely to volunteer. The child sponsorship program also impacts the individual development of children. It cultivates good character, principles, and values. It teaches values like civic engagement, volunteerism, and altruism that shape the propensity to volunteer.

Furthermore, children's exposure to connections with the communities strengthens the ties between them. Social ties

play a role in the likelihood to volunteer. As Beyerlein and Sikkink (2008) argued, one's familiarity with the people they will be working with influences their likelihood to volunteer.

As WVDF activities always involve communities, the children's integration in them is also vital in the dynamics of their volunteerism. Lee & Brudney (2012) said that social integration in the community influences the likelihood of an individual to volunteer for that community. The participants' extended exposure to members of the community and their shared experiences through child sponsorship activities build solidarity and unity as members of one community.

Participants emphasized how they experienced various challenges, employed different strategies, and gained reflections during their volunteer engagement. As volunteers and LEAD group members, they're primarily involved in organizing the trainings for the cooperative, facilitating seminars, and monitoring their progress. These are challenging tasks as they have to balance their family, work, and volunteer responsibilities. They also faced issues with travel restrictions, the COVID-19 pandemic, absences of other members, and lack of topic expertise. Trained to be adaptable and resilient, they employed relevant strategies to address these challenges. This included proper time management, communication and cooperation with the

whole team, and extensive research on the topics to be discussed. The dynamics of their volunteerism shaped their experience and perceived consequences of the engagement.

Participants characterized their time as LEAD members as a period of maturation and transition. They gained fresh knowledge and skill sets that they can use in their personal and professional lives. Participants further stressed how happy and fulfilled they felt as a result of their volunteer activities. They felt better about themselves, and their ability to help others and contribute to the community lifted their morale. Participants noted how their volunteerism was a learning opportunity, instead of focusing on the dynamics of their interactions with the community. Despite being the ones who trained them, they acknowledged that the community taught them many lessons in return.

Participation in the activities of child sponsorship program activities has more lasting impact than one can imagine. Not only does it improve one's educational achievement, skills, career aspirations, family and communal relationships, and overall wellbeing, it also transforms the lives of children, instilling values and legacies that transcend life phases. Their community work and volunteer experiences helped them see that there's more to life other than personal success. There is also the value of being in service of others, to be selfless and to be one with their community. Volunteering in adulthood is a gesture of their gratitude and a way to give back for the support they received as children.

RECOMMENDATIONS



This study has revealed the promising and positive effects of sponsorship on participants. It particularly highlights how the program itself can instill core values that can develop great and selfless leaders. Their journeys, including both their achievements and tribulations, have only strengthened their desire to give back without expecting anything in return, and with the purpose of uplifting the lives of fellow community members in any way they can. While their involvement with WVDF sponsorship activities ended once they had graduated from the program, they continued to be part of it — now as givers instead of as recipients. Their individual experiences and perspectives give insight into how providing better -informed and well-designed sponsorship programs can develop children into selfless and transformational leaders.

Such perspectives that can be offered by these people are as follows:

Co-create — This study may open new possibilities about how programs can capitalize on the mentoring services that former sponsored children or child leader volunteers can offer to an already growing generation of children living in the community beneficiaries of WVDF (whether sponsored or not). For instance, LEAD members can design youth leadership programs that can guide and teach the children, youth and /or adults in other existing WVDF area programs. They can help support or sustain existing WVDF program initiatives and other community projects. This may eventually lead to the creation of multiple LEAD groups in other areas.

Co-opt — Second, the innovative design of LEAD groups may be considered when drafting proposals, particularly those involving capacity-building programs among identified community beneficiaries. Not only does it carry the WVDF trademark, it also ensures sustainability and smooth transition, as members of the LEAD group are usually locals in the community. Members can also be easily tapped by the communities themselves to help with day-to-day operations of any community-based established organizations, projects or initiatives.

Co-advice — Lastly, members of LEAD group can help WVDF area program staff and community child monitors in creating more inclusive and dynamic monitoring paradigms. This could help children and youth beneficiaries maximize and enjoy more of the general activities implemented by WVDF. LEAD members can also help identify and contextualize gaps and challenges, and provide alternative solutions in the programming activities, as they experienced them first-hand and can identify how they can be further improved.



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