

A photograph of two young children sitting on stone steps in front of a heavily damaged, cracked concrete wall. The child on the left is a girl with dark hair, wearing a black tank top and black shorts, smiling at the camera. The child on the right is a boy wearing a purple tank top and dark blue shorts with a white number '7' on the leg, looking directly at the camera. The background wall is grey and crumbling, with a large rectangular opening above the children. A yellow banner is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the organization's name, a signature, and its website.

HAY NAKO
ORGANIZATION

Chris

WWW.HAYNAKO.ORG

THE STORY OF

THE HAY NAKO KIDS

The Hay Nako Kids

Cover photograph: Dannica Nunez / Hay Nako, 2019

Text and layout: Christian Katzmann

With Dannica, the teachers and volunteers of Hay Nako

A story of the early years in Mandaue City, Cebu.

Founded in 2018.

Based on the founder's recollections and the Hay Nako archive.



The story of

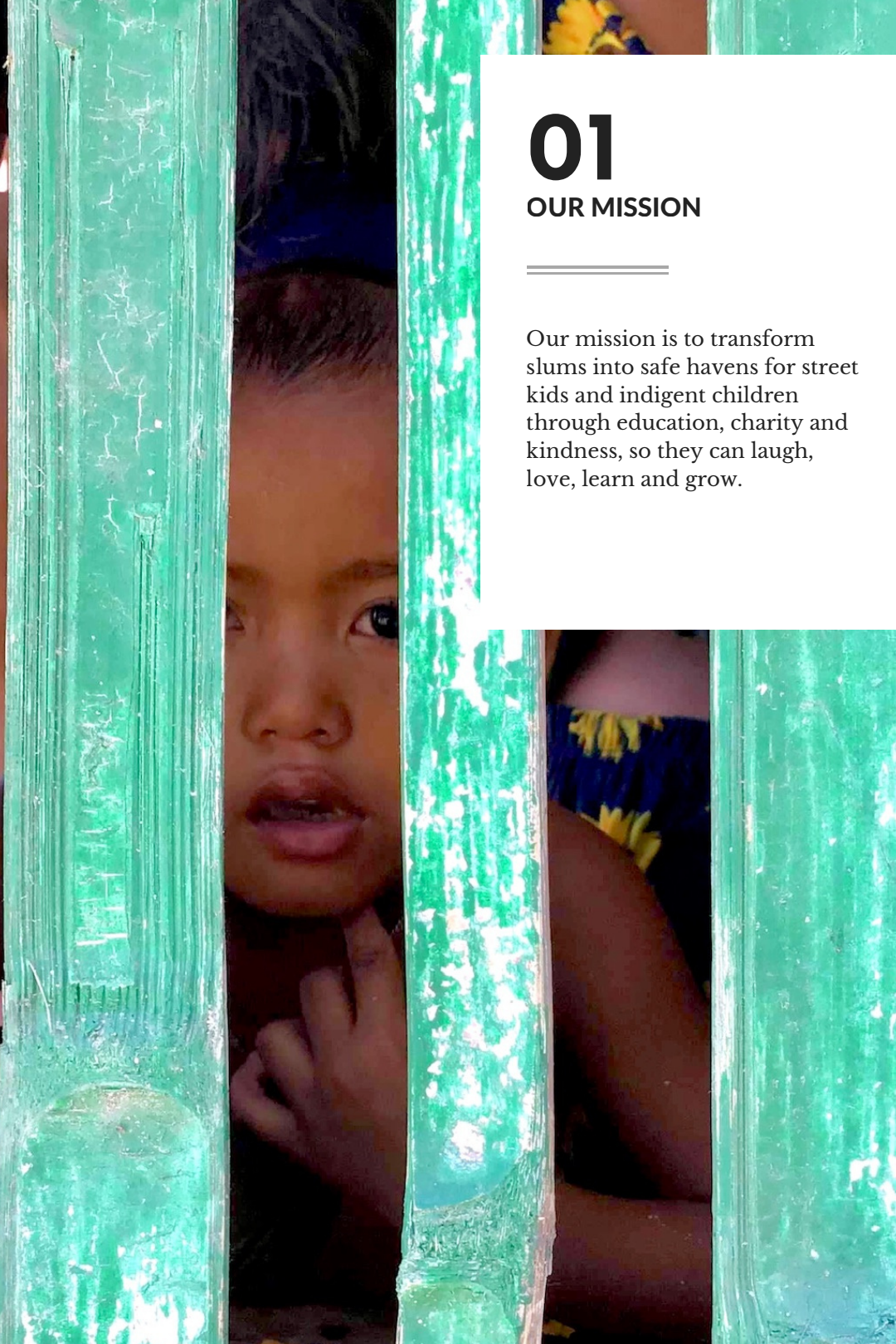
THE HAY NAKO KIDS



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A young child with dark hair and skin is looking through a green-painted wooden fence. The child's face is partially visible between the vertical slats of the fence. The fence has a weathered, textured appearance with some white paint visible underneath the green. The child's hand is visible near their chin, and they are wearing a blue garment with yellow floral patterns.

01

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to transform slums into safe havens for street kids and indigent children through education, charity and kindness, so they can laugh, love, learn and grow.

TEACHER DANNICA



Education lives at the heart of Hay Nako. A child who learns to read, write and ask questions has more ways to take part in the world.

Our children came with different starting points. Some attended public school and needed help with homework. Others needed a place to begin with English, reading and writing. Art gave them another way to learn and express themselves.

Hay Nako offered support alongside the local schools. In one rented room, with paper, pencils and colours, we made space for children who were eager to learn.

A hot meal was part of the programme from the beginning. Before asking a child to concentrate, we had to make sure they had eaten.

DANNICA, OUR LOCAL LEAD

Dannica knew the neighbourhood and the families. She and Christian found the first children together, and she went on to run daily life at Hay Nako with the local team.

The teachers and volunteers did the teaching. Dannica kept the children and their families at the centre of the decisions.

When she proposed monthly birthday parties, Christian wanted to buy more school materials instead. She insisted. The celebrations gave the children a sense of belonging, and parents came to thank the team.

Her idea helped a small art club become a family.

A group of children, mostly of Filipino descent, are gathered outdoors. Several children in the foreground and middle ground have their hands raised high in the air. They are wearing casual clothing like t-shirts and tank tops in various colors (green, pink, blue, red). The background shows a simple concrete wall and some foliage. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation or excitement.

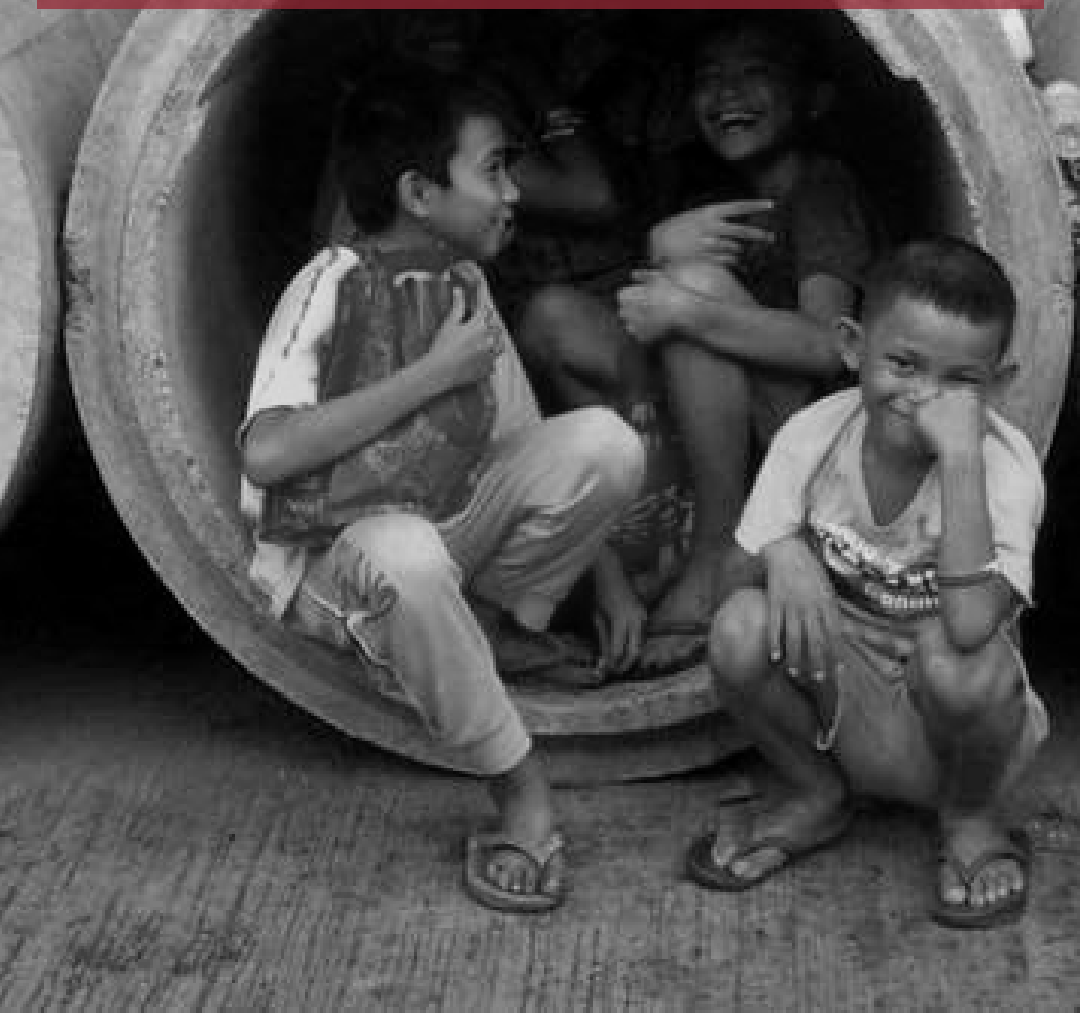
02

WHO WE ARE

Hay Nako is a philosophy, a community and a safe place for children living in poverty in Mandaue City. In the early years, our family grew to about 50 kids, 12 volunteers, a few teachers, and a lot of love!

THE SENIORS

Our older children, aged eight to fifteen, joined lessons, homework cafés, games and community activities. Some were in public school; others were learning the basics with us. Together, they had room to learn, make friends and take responsibility.





03

WHAT WE DO

We provide food and learning support for the kids, but just as importantly: we give them experiences they might otherwise miss. Through these activities they get to explore the magic of childhood, develop their abilities and learn to care for others.

HELPING HANDS



A TEACHER, A VOLUNTEER, A NEIGHBOUR, A CHILD: EVERYONE HAD SOMETHING TO GIVE.

Hay Nako began with one room, a hot meal and a small group of children. Keeping it going took many pairs of hands.

Dannica and the local team ran daily life with the children and kept in touch with their families. Teachers and volunteers led lessons, helped with homework and made room for art and play. Most volunteers came from the local community.



Some help came from Denmark. Andreas Katzmann built the website and donation tracker. Sam Enfield led the development of course material. Later, Carsten Søndergaard built a system for the community shop and offered business advice.



Christian found and rented the first room, hired teachers, bought materials and helped recruit the first children with Dannica. He developed the programme, set up the Danish association and paid most of the costs himself.

Each contribution mattered because it met a real need. A lesson needed preparation. An outing needed adults who could give their time. A small organisation needed people who could keep track of the money.



At Hay Nako, helping also became something the children did. They joined clean-up drives in their own neighbourhood. After a fire nearby, they asked to share their food and give their time to the affected families.

The children were becoming people who could care for others, too.



04

PHILOSOPHY

The Hay Nako philosophy is simple: meet children's basic needs and make room for learning, friendship and joy. These parts of life belong together. Our aim is to help the kids grow in confidence and ability, and build a good life in whatever way they define it.





**CLEAN
UP!**

Our clean-up drives began with the children and the Hay Nako team. Together, we picked up rubbish in the streets around us.

Local volunteers soon joined in. What started as a small activity became something neighbours could take part in together.

The children could see the result of their work in the place where they lived. They were helping care for their own community.

This was one way we put responsibility into practice. A lesson did not always need a classroom. Sometimes it meant going outside and doing a useful job together.





What an amazing day!

THE DAY THE CHILDREN CHOSE TO GIVE

In the beginning, the children fought to get to the front of the food line. When you have been hungry, it is hard to trust that there will be enough for everyone.

About six months later, a large fire hit a neighbouring community, where the local school was. Families needed help.

The Hay Nako Kids had a beach day planned. It was their favourite activity, with food and snacks set aside for the trip.

Then the children came to us with an idea of their own. Could they give up the outing and use that food, those snacks and their time to help the people affected by the fire?

Nobody had asked them to make that choice. These were the same children who had once pushed to be first in line.

Now they were asking if they could give their share away.

The children understood what it meant to need help. This time, they saw a way to offer it.

Their beach day could wait. The families nearby needed food and people who would show up for them.

THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE

- They gave their time.
- They shared their food.
- They offered their snacks.
- They gave up a beach day.
- They chose to help.



We wanted Hay Nako to be a place where children could grow capable and responsible. Food, lessons and activities were the beginning. What the children did with the care they received mattered, too.

That day, they showed us.

Their own lives were still difficult. They had not stopped needing support. Yet they could see that someone else needed help, and they were willing to give something they valued.

The photographs record a simple act: children sharing food with neighbours after a fire. Behind it was a choice made by the children themselves.

For Christian, it remains the moment he is proudest of. It brought together everything the programme was trying to teach: care for others, responsibility and the confidence to act.

Dannica, the teachers and the volunteers had been there with the children every day. This was part of what they had built together.



I had hoped the children would learn that they could help others. I had not expected them to show us so clearly, or so soon.

They knew what that beach day meant to them. They chose to give it away anyway.

I have never been prouder of anyone than I was of those kids that day.

CHRISTIAN KATZMANN
FOUNDER



The Hay Nako Juniors were our youngest children, around two to seven years old. For them, learning began with play.

Drawing, colours and simple learning activities gave them a place to explore, with other children and adults who were there to help.

The youngest learned differently from the older kids. Their part of the programme focused on fun activities suited to their age.

A meal, a safe place and a few hours together mattered. Some lived with parents or grandparents in very hard conditions; some had no secure place to sleep.

Hay Nako offered food, company, attention and room to be little.

Childhood was happening already. We wanted those hours to hold something good.

Hay Nako Juniors
Ages 2 to 7





Childhood cannot be rerun. That became one of the most important ideas behind Hay Nako.

Food and education were essential, but the children also needed time to play, make friends and enjoy being young. We could not ask them to wait for an easier life before having a childhood.

Our activities included games, trips to the beach, cinema visits and monthly birthday parties. They gave the children experiences to look forward to and memories to share.

The photograph above shows the boys in the middle of a game. These ordinary moments belonged in the programme just as much as lessons did.

The birthday parties began with an argument about the budget. Christian wanted more school materials. Dannica wanted a monthly celebration for the children whose birthdays fell that month.

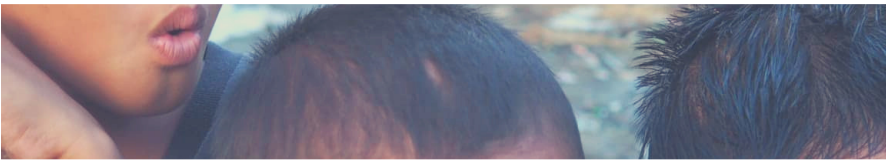
He agreed reluctantly. Then parents and guardians came to thank the team. They had wanted to celebrate their children but could not afford a cake or a party.

The celebrations helped the children feel that they belonged. They also changed how we thought about Hay Nako.

Giving a child a good day could matter in ways a budget could not measure.

Above
The boys playing together.

**Childhood cannot
be rerun.**



A place to belong.
A childhood to enjoy.

THE HAY NAKO KIDS



A hot meal was part of Hay Nako from the start. Before lessons, before homework, before asking the children to concentrate, we had to think about hunger.

The children lived in different circumstances. Some slept on the street. Others lived with parents or grandparents who were struggling to meet their needs. Some attended public school; others did not.

We began with what we could provide in one rented room: food, learning activities and time together.

A meal did not solve everything. But it met an immediate need and helped make the rest of the programme possible.

Hay Nako worked with the whole child in mind. Hunger, learning, friendship, safety and joy affected one another.

That is why food belonged alongside homework cafés, reading and writing, art, games and outings. Each answered a different need.

Our role was limited but useful. We offered support alongside public school and a safe place to be a child for a few hours a day.

At its largest documented point, the programme reached about fifty children. It was one small organisation in one community, doing what it could with the resources it had.

Above
A meal with the Hay Nako Kids.

No child learns on an empty stomach.

I went to the Philippines in December 2018 because I needed a holiday. I had worked too much and wanted a break. In Cebu I met Dannica, a friend from my exchange year in Canada.

One evening, we saw two children asleep behind a garbage bin. The older girl had her arm around her little brother. Dannica said, "Hay nako!" We left some food for them, and I went back to my room and started reading.

I wanted to help, but I knew I could not feed every child who needed it. With Dannica, I began working on a small programme that combined food with learning.

We rented a room, hired teachers and bought paper, pencils and colours. Then we went into the neighbourhood to find children who wanted to join. The first twenty places filled in about ten minutes.

I sat with the kids, drew, sang and played. They called me Kuya Christian: big brother. What had been a holiday became three months of building Hay Nako.

After I returned to Denmark, Dannica and the local team kept daily life going. I worked on the budget, funding and the Danish association.

We began with an art club and a hot meal. Listening to the children, their families and Dannica helped us understand how much belonging and joy mattered alongside education.

That became our four pillars: basic needs, community, education and childhood.



Without Dannica, there would have been no Hay Nako. She knew the people and the place. The teachers and local volunteers turned the idea into daily life for the children. This is their story, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Christian Katzmann'.

Christian Katzmann, Founder