



DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

KU LEUVEN

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Little Hands, Big Plans

Illustrated Children's Book for Young
Readers in the Philippines

Individual Portfolio for Sustainable Development

Group Members:

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Masters of Sustainable Development

Learning goal

- *Learning goal: Provide young children in Southeast Asia with disaster education focused on environmental regeneration and green recovery in order to foster emotional resilience and ease climate anxiety while promoting sustainable, collective recovery*

Preparatory learning resources:

Resource 1: Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building by UNICEF (Online Recorded Webinar)

Link: <https://knowledge.unicef.org/resource/engaging-children-and-youth-disaster-risk-reduction-and-resilience-building>

VIDEO

Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building

Geographies: Global

Related Topics: Child and youth participation, Disaster Risk Reduction

Global Alliance For Disaster Risk Reduction And Resilience In The Education Sector (GADRRRES)
Updated 21 Aug 2024

GADRRRES Webinar

Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building

ABOUT US

A CHILD-BASED ORGANIZATION FORMED AFTER A FLASH FLOOD.

- Covers 26 villages
- Supports 52 Children & Youth Associations
- Protect, develop and build confidence
- Partner of ChildFund for 13 years

Figure 1. Screenshots from the online recorded webinar highlighting the Philippines

The online webinar hosted by UNICEF talked about the crucial role of children and the youth in global disaster preparedness and resilience. The session highlighted that while young people are among the most affected by climate change and disasters, they are also powerful agents of change. Interestingly, a youth-led disaster risk reduction program in the Philippines was highlighted, which demonstrated youth-led action across all phases of disaster management, from tree planting and community education to psychosocial support and family preparedness planning, linking school and community efforts. Overall, The webinar stressed the need for sustainable, youth-centered approaches, adult facilitation without dictating solutions, and integration of child protection, civic engagement, and policy influence.

Resource 2: Child-Centered Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management by Humanitarian Leadership Academy & Save the Children (Online Course)



Figure 2. Screenshots from the online course

In contrast to the first learning resource, this online course from Save the Children takes a more grounded, local approach by focusing on child-centered community-based management for local government officials in the Philippines. The module explains children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in clear, practical terms and shows how these rights can be respected or violated during disasters. The course stresses the importance of including child protection in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Adaptation planning and implementation so children remain safe, heard, and supported. Overall, it reinforces that disaster and climate actions work best when they are rights-based, inclusive and accountable, and when children are not just protected but also empowered to take part in decisions that affect their lives.

Resource 3: Nature-Based Solutions for Sustainable Development by UNDP (Online Course)

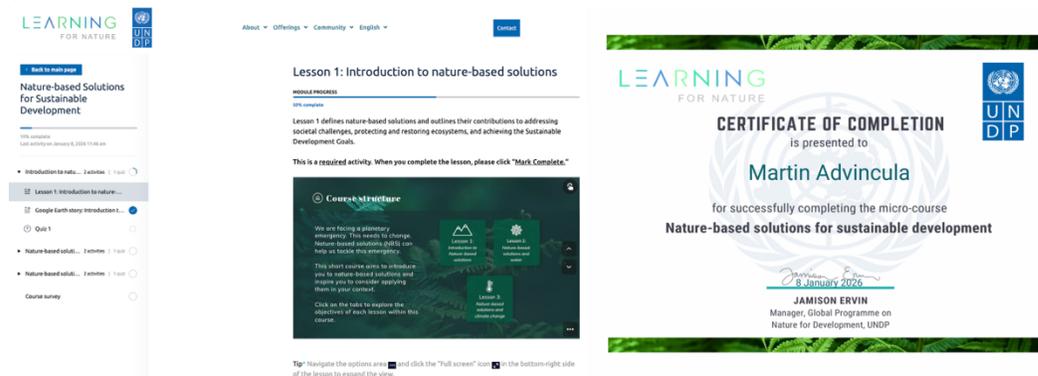


Figure 3. Screenshots from the Online Course

This learning resource explores how nature-based solutions contribute to sustainable development. Taking this course was essential to truly understand these concepts before bringing them into children's literature. The UNDP online course makes the topic approachable by sharing practical, real-world examples related to water management, climate action, and livelihoods. Through its clear lessons and global case studies, I was able to gain a solid understanding of nature-based solutions, see how they connect to the Sustainable Development Goals, integrate

them into national climate plans to support Nationally Determined Contributions. For sustainability practitioners like myself, having this foundation makes communicating science much easier. It allows concepts to be explained clearly, applied effectively, and used to inspire meaningful, context-specific action toward a more sustainable future.

Resource 4: Interview with Professor Liwliwa Malabed (Online Interview)



Figure 4. Interview with Prof. Malabed via Zoom

The next two learning resources explore the writing process in children's literature. The first interview features Professor Liwliwa Malabed, a respected expert in the field and author of numerous children's books. She discussed her work on a commissioned disaster preparedness book for young readers, designed to teach about typhoons, earthquakes, and warning systems in a way that is engaging and age-appropriate. Drawing on research, personal experience, and her background in early childhood education, she explained how she made complex topics relatable through examples and interactive elements. Prof. Malabed also reflected on the challenges of reaching rural and low-income communities, emphasizing the need to empower children, update content, and ensure resources reach those who need them most. The interview highlighted both the potential of disaster education in the Philippines and Southeast Asia and the ongoing challenges in making it widely accessible.

Resource 5: Interview with Teacher Zarah Gagatinga (Online Interview)

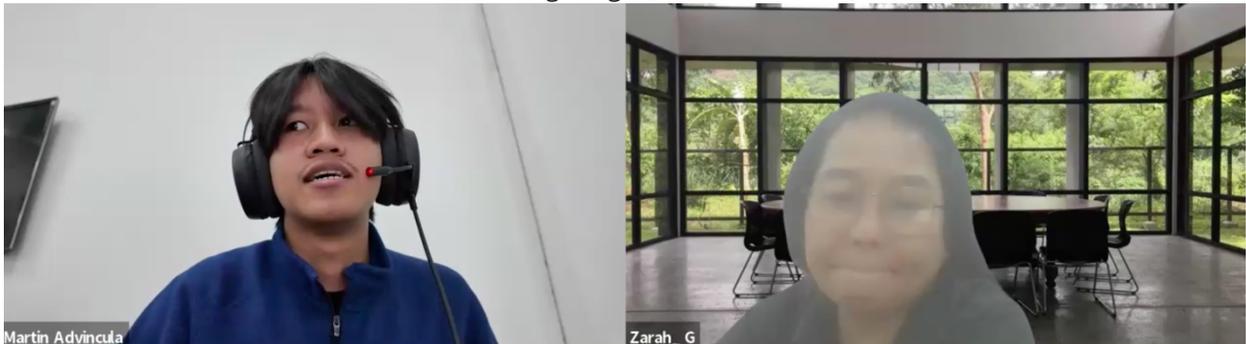


Figure 5. Online interview with Teacher Zarah

Like Professor Malabed, Teacher Zarah Gagatinga is an expert in children's literature and has recently published a four-part series on disaster preparedness. In the interview, she shared that

her personal and family experiences with disasters inspired her to make complex hazards understandable and engaging for young readers through storytelling. She emphasized that disaster education is a human right, ensuring children have access to life-saving information. A key principle of her work is respecting children as capable agents who can think and act, rather than treating them as passive recipients. While adults often provide guidance, the books highlight the family and community as primary sources of support during emergencies. Teacher Zarah also aims to foster "survival literacy," encouraging critical thinking and the ability to verify information, especially online. She envisions to making the series inclusive for children with special needs and translating it into various Philippine languages, broadening accessibility and impact. In exchange for the interview, she requested for a blog article (Annex 1) and a copy of the transcript.

- *Resource Contribution to Learning Goal and Academic Output*

In preparing to create an illustrated children's book focused on disaster education, I intentionally selected learning resources that provide both a global and local perspective on child-centered disaster risk management. This was explored in the five resources I studied where the UNICEF webinar highlighted youth engagement in disaster preparedness and resilience, while the Save the Children course emphasized local, rights-based approaches for Philippine communities. The UNDP course provided a foundation in sustainability and nature-based solutions, linking disaster education to broader environmental action. Insights from interviews with Professor Liwliwa Malabed and Teacher Zarah Gagatinga demonstrated practical strategies for translating complex concepts into children's literature that is accessible, engaging, and contextually relevant.

Given the Philippines' repeated ranking as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, understanding local programs and initiatives is essential for identifying gaps in disaster education and risk management. Interviews with the experts in children's literature confirmed a persistent challenge: ensuring that educational materials reach the most vulnerable communities. Engaging with these authors offered a window into their creative processes and informed strategies for presenting complex sustainability topics. The combination of academic theory from global and local child-centered DRR policies with my professional experience as a forester, and the practical storytelling approaches shared by the authors, enabled me to build a holistic foundation for an illustrated storybook that is both educational and impactful for young readers.

Documentation of the knowledge-sharing activity/academic output: title, format, description (max. 150 words), target audience, collaborators (if any), and outcomes/impact (max. 150 words). You may include images, links to videos, etc.

Project Title: *Little Hands, Big Plans Philippines*

Format: *Illustrated Children's Book & Social Media Campaign*

Description: *Southeast Asia bears a disproportionate burden of climate change, experiencing increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disasters despite contributing minimally to global emissions. Children and youth are among the most affected, facing both immediate physical risks and long-term social and emotional consequences. In response, this initiative delivers child-centered disaster education tailored for young learners in the Philippines, using illustrated storytelling as a core medium. By integrating concepts of emotional resilience, climate awareness, and environmental regeneration into engaging narratives, we aim to make complex ideas about disaster recovery and sustainability both understandable and meaningful for children. Framing topics such as green recovery and nature-based solutions through accessible stories allows young readers to connect emotionally with environmental challenges while understanding practical ways communities can respond collectively. Through this approach, the project fosters not only knowledge but also agency, equipping children with the awareness and confidence to participate in resilient, sustainable pathways for their communities.*

Target Audience:

- 1) **Primary:** *Families and children (aged 6-10) in the Philippines.*
- 2) **Secondary:** *Educators & local community leaders working with children or in disaster recovery.*

Collaborators:

Hajar Yammi - Team Member

UP Oroquieta - Organizational partner

Association of Filipino Forestry Students - UPLB - Organizational Partner

Outcomes/Impact:

The project successfully launched an illustrated children's storybook, an accompanying audiobook, and a coloring activity book. This served as the basis for the social media campaign, where it performed strongly to both social media platforms by reaching new audiences.

Evidence of public dissemination:

Illustrated Story Book

The Philippines experiences more than 20 tropical typhoons each year, making disaster preparedness and recovery a familiar part for the lives of many Filipino children. Building on this context, our illustrated storybook highlights green and collective approaches to recovery, anchored in Filipino cultural practices. In particular, it draws on the tradition of bayanihan, the spirit of communal cooperation in which neighbors help one another rebuild homes and communities after disasters. The story is set in a coastal barangay, where the principles of bayanihan are applied alongside nature-based solutions, such as mangrove planting, to strengthen coastal protection and foster sustainable, community-driven recovery.



Figure 6. Character Studies for the Illustrated Children's Book

Filipino cultural markers were intentionally incorporated into the creation of the storybook characters to enhance relatability and emotional connection for young readers. The main protagonist is named Kaya, referencing the Filipino word for “capable” or “able,” reinforcing the theme of empowerment. Supporting characters include Lola, the common term for grandmother, and Mang Tomas, where “Mang” is an honorific for older men, and the character’s name also evokes a familiar Filipino sauce brand, creating warmth and familiarity. The character studies are shown in Figure X. By embedding culturally recognizable names and references, the storybook connects more deeply with children’s lived experiences.

The illustrated storybook (Figure 6) is set in the aftermath of Typhoon Lando, exploring themes of disaster recovery and community resilience through a child-centered narrative. The story follows Kaya and her Lola as they navigate the destruction caused by the storm, which has severely damaged the mangrove forests protecting their coastal village. Amidst the devastation, Kaya discovers a small but significant sign of hope: baby mangroves sprouting from the mud. Motivated to restore their natural defenses, Kaya, Lola, and their neighbors work together to nurture the seedlings, demonstrating care, cooperation, and the principles of bayanihan and collective recovery. As the community joins together, they learn that recovery requires patience, effort, and collective hope. Through these experiences, Kaya discovers that even small actions can create meaningful change and that, like the mangroves, communities grow stronger when they work together. The narrative frames disaster resilience and nature-based solutions in an accessible, emotionally resonant way for young readers.

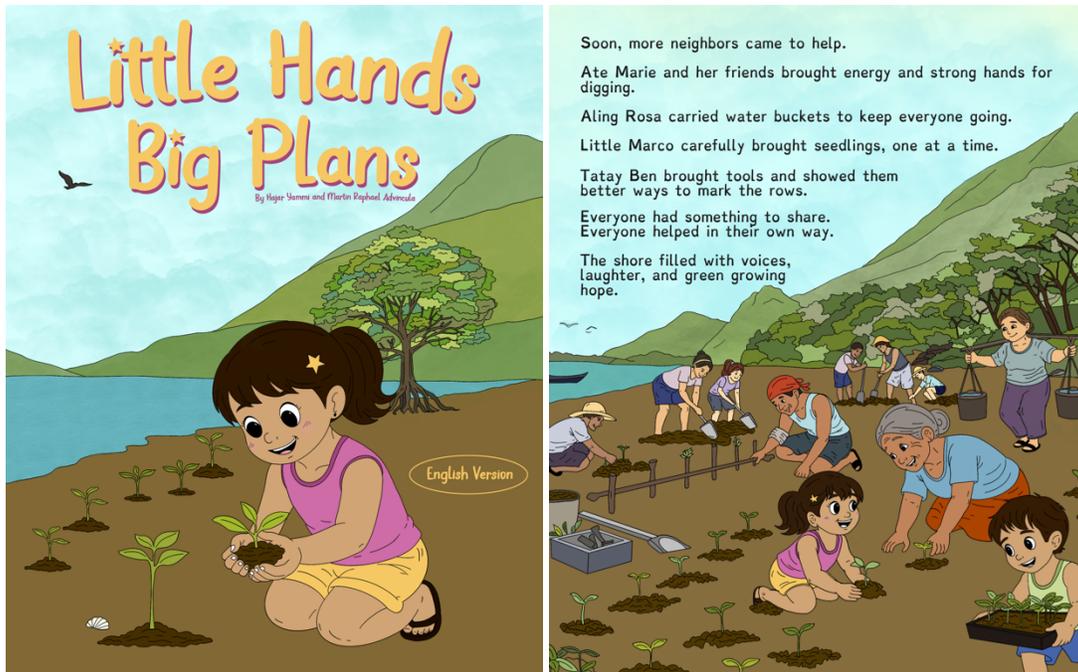


Figure 7. The Little Hands Big Plans title page (left), and a sample page from the book (right)

The Little Hands, Big Plans is designed for children aged 6–10, typically in the 3rd or 4th grade of elementary school. According to the Save the Children online course, kids in this age range are naturally curious but have shorter attention spans. They are generally capable of reading independently and comprehending the messages conveyed in books.

Furthermore, following the insights shared by Teacher Zarah on the lack of inclusivity in disaster education, the storybook incorporates a dyslexia-friendly font to help children recognize letters more easily and read with confidence.

The book is freely available as Open-Access and can be accessed via Flipbook or PDF, making it ideal for teachers, parents, and community leaders to share with children. The Flipbook format allows for interactive reading experiences, while the PDF ensures easy accessibility and transferability. While there is strong interest and support from our network to translate the story into additional Filipino and Southeast Asian languages, time and resource constraints prevented this during the initial project phase. Expanding language accessibility is therefore planned as part of the project's long-term goals to reach a broader audience. Currently, the book is available in English and Tagalog. Access the books via the links below:

PDF Version:

English - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-ENG-PDF>

Tagalog - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-TAG-PDF>

Flipbook Version:

English - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-ENG-FLP>

Tagalog - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-TAG-FLP>

Audiobook Component



Figure 8. Cover image of the Little Hands Big Plans Audiobook (left), behind-the-scenes workflow for audiobook production (right)

To further increase accessibility and engagement, *The Little Hands, Big Plans* also includes an audiobook version of the illustrated storybook. The audiobook is designed to complement the digital format, allowing children to listen to the story while following along with the text, which can enhance literacy, comprehension, and retention, particularly for early or struggling readers. Hajar narrated the English version, while I narrated the Tagalog version. This format is especially useful for children with visual impairments, dyslexia, or limited reading confidence, as well as for teachers, parents, and community leaders who wish to read aloud or play the story in group settings.

Access the Audiobook via the links below:

English Audiobook - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-ENG-AUD>

Tagalog Audiobook - <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-TAG-AUD>



Figure 9. Cover image of the Little Hands Big Plans Coloring book (left), and a page from the coloring book (right)

To complement the illustrated storybook, *The Little Hands Big Plans* includes a coloring book component, designed to extend learning through a hands-on, creative activity. Coloring allows children to interpret the story visually, develop fine motor skills, and reinforce narrative comprehension. By engaging multiple senses, children process the story more deeply, connecting emotionally with characters and environmental themes. Pairing the storybook with a coloring book encourages active participation, imagination, and reflection while making learning playful and memorable.

When paired with the illustrated storybook and audiobook, these three formats work together as a comprehensive, multimodal learning experience that fosters creativity and critical thinking. This approach caters to a wide range of learners, from auditory and visual to kinesthetic, allowing children to process information in a way that best suits their needs.

Access the Coloring book via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/LHBP-CLRB>

All illustrations in the storybook, audiobook, and coloring book were created by Hajar. Recognizing the extensive effort involved in illustration work, I voluntarily took on the responsibility of layout design and the digital production of these formats, ensuring they were accessible and visually cohesive across different media.

Social Media Campaign

The social media campaign for the illustrated children's book "Little Hands, Big Plans" is designed to promote disaster education, with a focus on environmental regeneration and green recovery. The campaign's primary objectives are to raise awareness, promote the storybook, and reach a wide audience while educating the public on the importance of fostering emotional resilience in young children. The target audience includes parents, educators, and caregivers, all of whom play a vital role in shaping children's understanding of climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

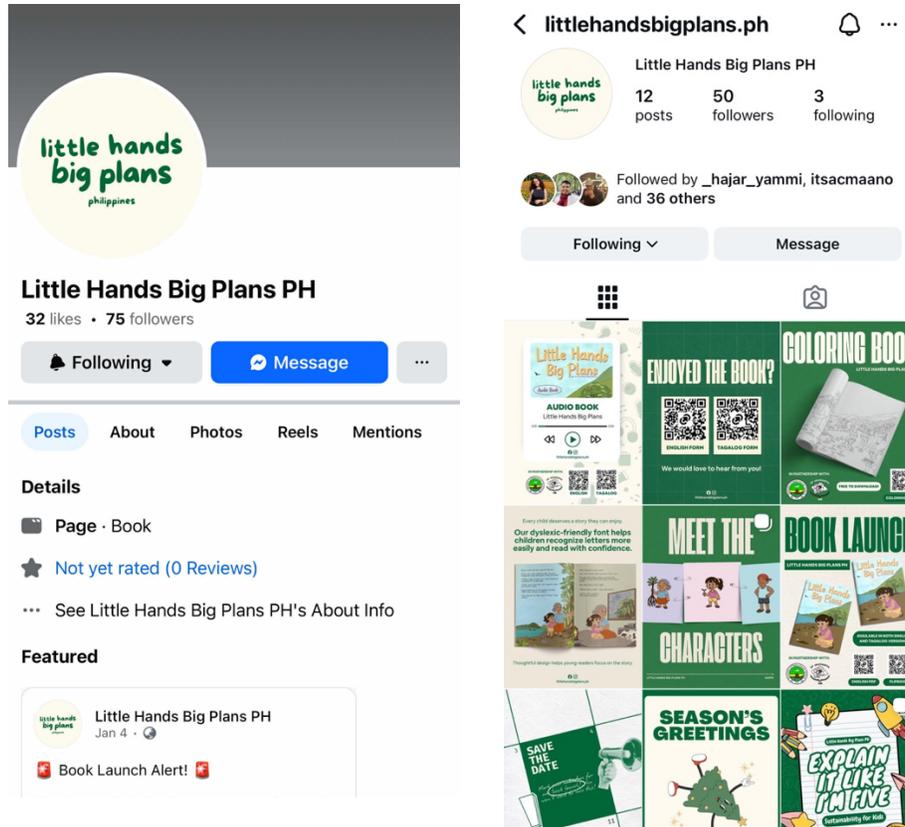


Figure 10. The Little Hands Big Plans PH social media pages as of January 10 PH Standard Time.

The choice of Instagram and Facebook for the campaign was strategic, based on the unique strengths of each platform in reaching and engaging the target audience. Instagram is ideal for showcasing the book's vibrant illustrations through posts, stories, and reels, while Facebook is better suited for community sharing and fostering discussions. Its user-friendly interface and popularity among parents and educators allow for in-depth content, longer captions, and resource sharing, creating a space for meaningful conversations around the book's themes.

Visit our social media pages via the links below:

Facebook - <https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61583647061310>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/littlehandsbigplans.ph/>

Content for the illustrated storybook campaign was curated to maintain visual consistency with the book, ensuring a cohesive brand presence across platforms. The strategy was structured around key social media content pillars, which guided post creation and ensured a balanced mix of engaging, brand-aligned material. By focusing on core themes, these pillars helped avoid random content and supported the campaign's goals while keeping the brand presence unified. The four main content pillars identified are:

1. *All About the Book: Introducing the book's story and characters, providing an engaging, child-friendly overview to help young readers connect with the narrative.*
2. *Explainer Like a 3rd Grader: Breaking down complex topics such as green recovery and climate anxiety into easy-to-understand concepts that are accessible to children.*
3. *Book Launch & Announcements: Building excitement around the book's release, events, and special promotions through behind-the-scenes content and updates.*
4. *Engagement: Encouraging participation through creative challenges, child-friendly activities, and interactive content that invites the audience to engage with the book's themes.*

The content will be visually consistent with a selected branding, cream (#FFFAF0) and dark green (#006838) color palette, ensuring a unified and visually appealing presentation across all posts.

Partnerships and Collaborations

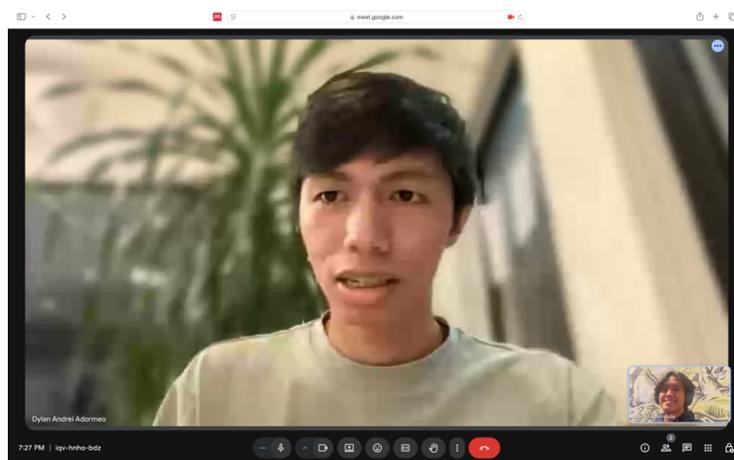


Figure 11. An online meeting with an officer of UP Oroquieta to discuss the partnership

Based on feedback from my coach, strategic partnerships and collaborations were established with student organizations from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) to help amplify the reach of the book launch. UP Oroquieta, a duly-registered varsitarian organization from Quezon Province within the university, entered into a cross-deal partnership as a media partner for the launch. This collaboration was formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (Annex 2), which outlined their

role in supporting the launch. As part of the partnership, UP Oroquieta lent manpower to assist in the event's execution and provided social media support to help expand the book's reach. Their involvement significantly enhanced the campaign's visibility, tapping into the student network and extending the book's online presence.



Figure 12. An online meeting with the executive committee of the Association of Filipino Forestry Students – UPLB to discuss the collaboration

Additionally, another partnership was established with the Association of Filipino Forestry Students – UPLB, a recognized academic-environmental organization at UPLB and a local committee of the International Forestry Students Association. They agreed to a cross-promotional partnership as a media partner for the book launch. In exchange, the organization planned to use the book in their outreach program in February, targeting a coastal community in Batangas province. As part of this collaboration, they would reproduce the materials in printed format and incorporate them into their student-led mangrove tree planting project. This partnership is particularly valuable for the project, as it will enable the book to reach coastal communities, be published in print, and contribute to science and disaster communication efforts. The partnership was also formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (Annex 3).

Campaign Performance

During the campaign, a total of 12 posts were shared across different content pillars. These posts were cross-posted on both Facebook and Instagram between 7:00–8:00 PM Philippine Standard Time, as this was identified as the audience's peak engagement time based on platform insights. The captions for the posts were bilingual, featuring both English and Tagalog to ensure accessibility and wider reach. Below are the links to the individual posts:

Date	Post	Link
11/20/2025	Introduction	https://www.instagram.com/p/DRRruXeEgdH/
12/10/2025	Explain it like I'm Five - Collective Recovery	https://www.instagram.com/p/DSFWQ9GkpA9/
12/17/2025	About the Project	https://www.instagram.com/p/DSXLMzJCfh2/
12/19/2025	Explain it like I'm Five - Green Recovery	https://www.instagram.com/p/DScUz-vFOip/
12/23/2025	Season's Greetings	https://www.instagram.com/p/DSmmR66EzCu/
1/2/2026	Launch Announcement	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTAX8YnDSdJ/
1/4/2026	Official Book Launch	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTFtQE5E3iF/
1/6/2026	Meet the Characters	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTK2uCpk7hZ/
1/7/2026	Inclusivity post	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTNP857DRAH/
1/8/2026	Coloring Book Launch	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTP0sA4gbic/
1/9/2026	Feedback Form	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTSZgPeD73e/
1/10/2026	Audiobook Launch	https://www.instagram.com/p/DTU_6GKEyRF/

*Links for Facebook are too long for the table

Data from Facebook shows the growth in total followers over time (Figure X). As of now, the page has 75 followers. However, due to Meta's analytics system, detailed insights on follower demographics, such as age, city, and country, can only be accessed once the page reaches 100 followers. These insights are still available for individual posts.

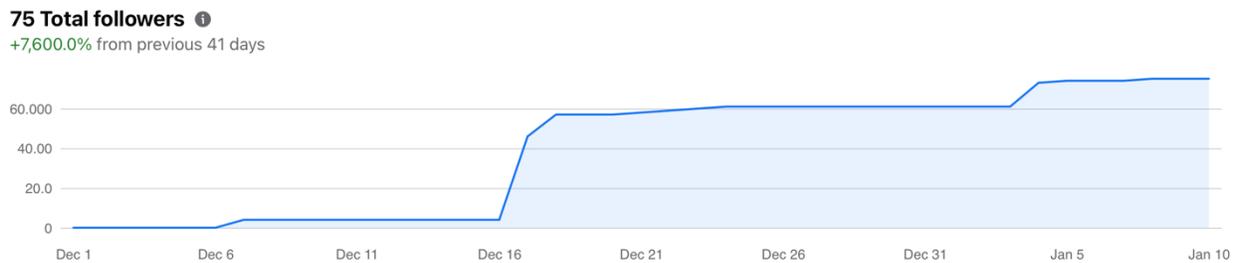


Figure 13. Growth in total followers over time in Facebook

The campaign started at December 1, 2025 and During the campaign period, the Facebook page achieved notable engagement and visibility (Figure X). The campaign garnered 75 followers, which represents the early stages of growth and suggests that the audience is steadily building. The content reached 12.2k views, indicating strong visibility, though the 3.5k unique viewers show that a portion of the audience engaged multiple times. This indicates repeat interest, with each viewer interacting with the content roughly 3.49 times on average.

The campaign also saw 513 content interactions, which suggests that a good proportion of viewers found the content engaging enough to like, comment, or share. This is reflected in an interaction rate of about 14.7%, which is solid for social media campaigns. However, the 46 link clicks and 0.38% click-through rate (CTR) indicate that while there was interest, conversion to external actions (like visiting the website or accessing the book) could be improved. The 486 visits show that the campaign drove some traffic to external links, but the discrepancy between link clicks and visits suggests that users may have visited multiple times or via other pathways. Overall, the campaign achieved strong engagement in terms of views and interactions.

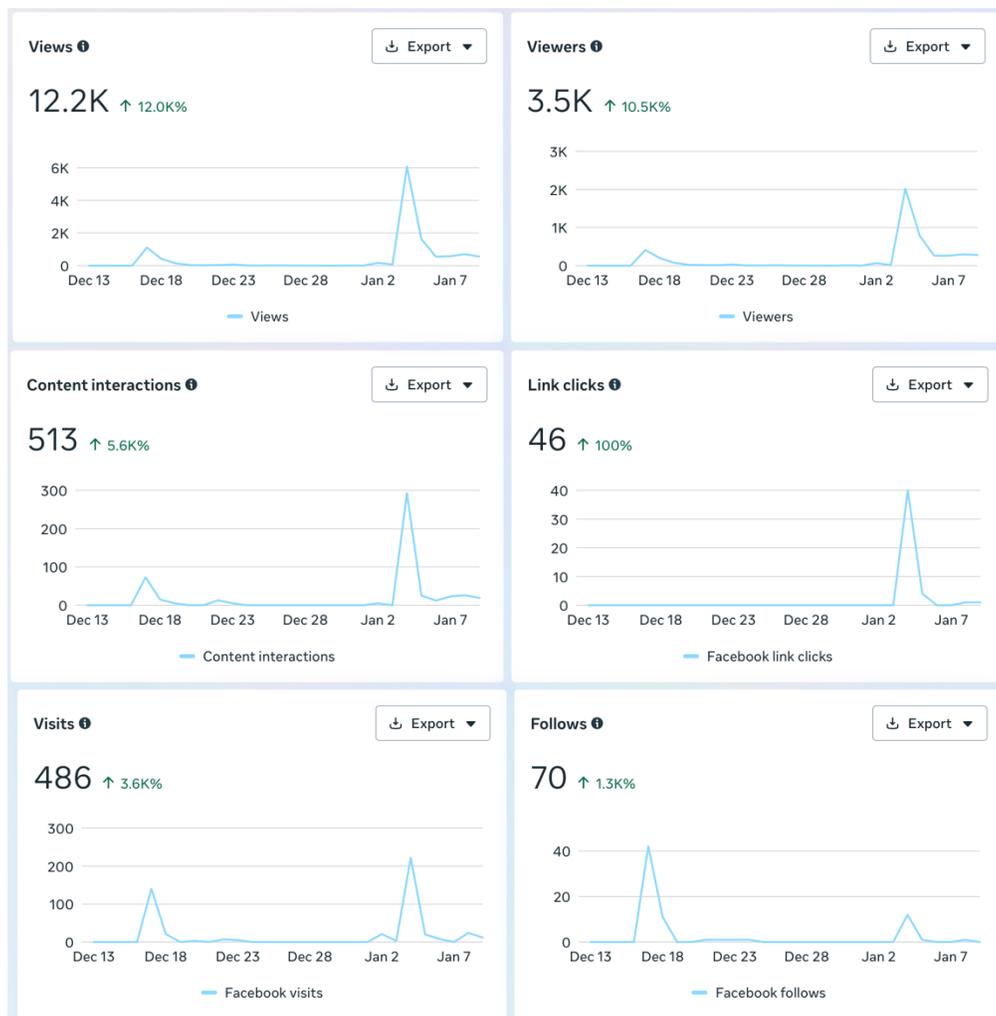


Figure 14. Analytics from the campaign period of Little Hands Big Plans PH Facebook Page

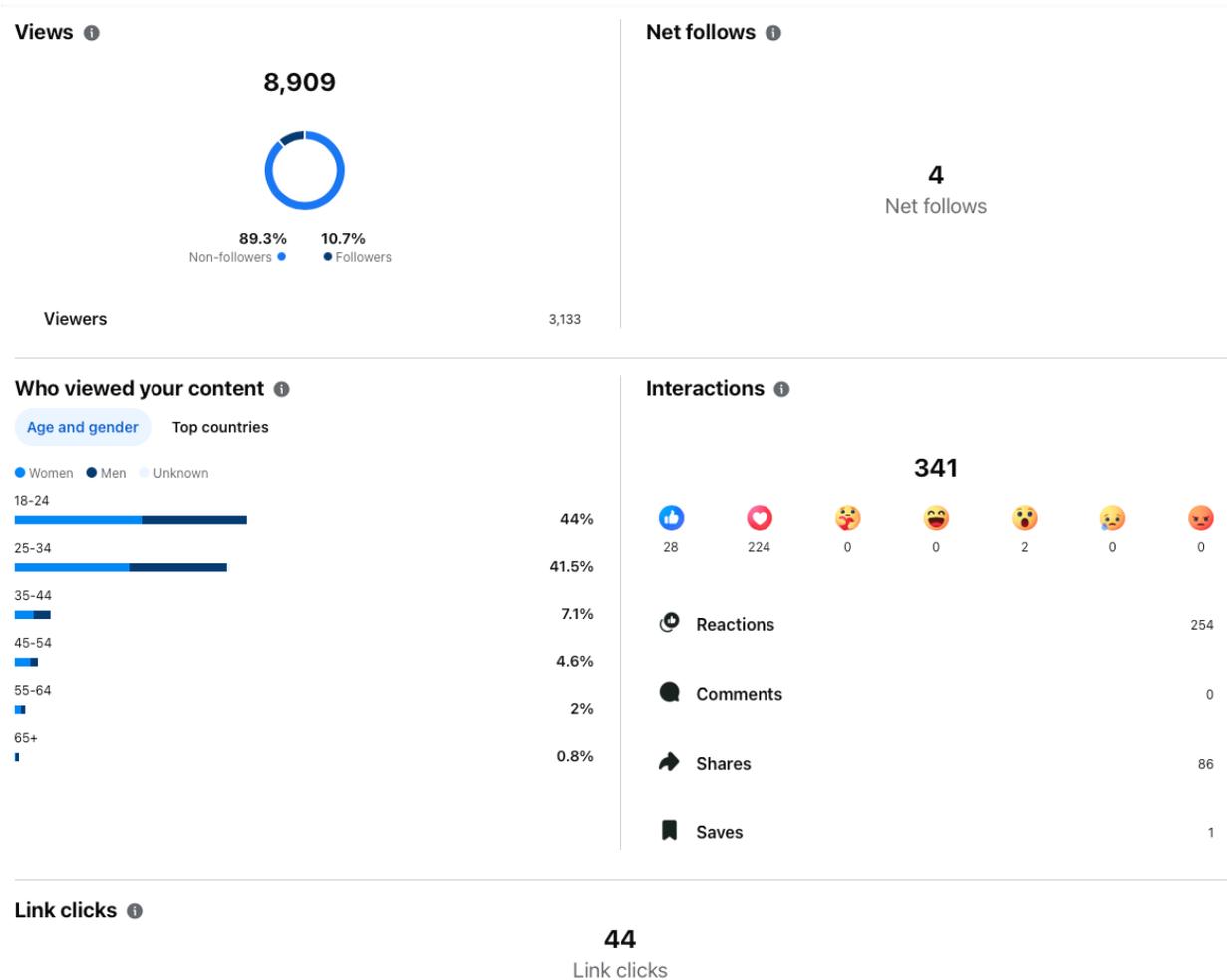


Figure 15. Analytics from the top-performing post of Little Hands Big Plans PH Facebook Page

The book launch post performed exceptionally well, achieving 8,909 views, with 89.3% of those views coming from non-followers, indicating that the post successfully reached a wide audience beyond the existing follower base. In terms of demographics, the post resonated strongly with younger audiences, with 44% of viewers falling in the 18-24 age range and 41.5% in the 25-34 age range, suggesting that the content was particularly appealing to early-career individuals and young adults.

The post also generated 341 interactions, a strong indicator of audience engagement, and 44 link clicks, which points to a moderate level of conversion. The post resulted in 4 net follows, suggesting that the launch post effectively encouraged a small but meaningful growth in followers.

Geographically, the post's reach was overwhelmingly concentrated in the Philippines, accounting for 97.1% of views, while Belgium and Canada contributed a smaller portion of the audience (0.6% each). Overall, the launch post successfully engaged the target demographic, reached new audiences, and contributed to some follower growth.

The Instagram campaign also showed strong performance, with 5,991 content views, of which 68.7% came from non-followers, highlighting that the content was effectively reaching a new audience beyond the existing follower base. This demonstrates the campaign's ability to attract attention from users who were not previously familiar with the account, suggesting good organic reach. The campaign reached a total of 1,053 accounts, indicating that the content was exposed to a diverse audience, while 254 interactions (with 23.6% from non-followers) suggest solid engagement from viewers.



Figure 16. Analytics from the campaign period of Little Hands Big Plans PH Instagram Page

Although a smaller proportion of the audience interacted compared to the views, the 63 accounts engaged point to a meaningful level of active involvement from the audience, as they likely liked, commented, or shared the content. The relatively high percentage of non-followers interacting with the posts is a positive indicator of the campaign's reach and potential to foster community engagement and grow the following base. Overall, the Instagram campaign showed strong visibility, effective engagement with new users, and a good foundation for expanding reach.

Reflexive text

A project becomes truly fulfilling when it presents challenges that, when faced head-on, lead to personal growth and a sense of accomplishment. The creation of an illustrated children's book focused on green recovery and environmental resilience, complemented by a social media campaign, was undoubtedly a large and complex undertaking for a two-person team. While we were successful in developing a storyline that highlighted crucial environmental concepts, maintaining consistency and adhering to the project's original plan proved to be a significant challenge. The limited team size, coupled with the extensive time and effort required to produce the book and accompanying materials, created substantial hurdles. Additionally, balancing this project with our ongoing thesis research and fieldwork further slowed progress, making the execution more demanding than originally anticipated.

Despite these obstacles, this project became a rewarding experience. I recall an interview with one of the esteemed authors, where I was commended for taking on such an ambitious project. Their acknowledgment of the work's uniqueness and importance served as a validation of its value and potential impact. This moment was a turning point for me, as it reinforced the idea that this project was not only meaningful but also aligned with a larger need in the field of sustainability education. The author's feedback reignited my passion for the work, reminding me of the broader mission behind the project: to help foster environmental awareness and resilience in young minds.

The need for such educational resources is all the more pressing given the current disaster landscape in the Philippines. The country's frequent natural disasters are not solely a result of environmental factors as they are also deeply political. Corruption in flood-control fund management, inadequate disaster planning, and weak infrastructure exacerbate the vulnerability of communities, making them even more susceptible to the devastating impacts of these events. In this context, the need for effective disaster education has never been more urgent. During interviews with my resource persons, it became clear that despite the Philippines' high vulnerability to natural disasters, there is a significant shortage of books focused on disaster preparedness and resilience for children. These authors emphasized that the country desperately needs more resources, stories, and books to spark meaningful conversations about disaster preparedness, especially given the ongoing nature of these events.

This is why, as a professional forester and a sustainability practitioner, I feel a profound sense of responsibility to serve the masses, especially when it comes to science communication, and advocating for accountability within the government. The limited capacity of the government to respond effectively to climate events highlights the urgent need for education and preparedness at the grassroots level. Here is where the role of sustainability practitioners and communicators becomes crucial. By helping to equip children, parents, and communities with the knowledge and tools to understand and respond to climate change and natural disasters, we can work toward a future where disaster resilience is not just a response to emergencies but an ingrained part of everyday life. This is the essence of green recovery and environmental resilience, ensuring that communities not only recover but thrive in the face of future challenges.

Contributing to the body of children's disaster literature through this project has, therefore, been an immensely rewarding experience. It allowed me to see firsthand the critical role that creative, child-centered education plays in building resilience. More importantly, it has affirmed that the act of

creating and distributing educational resources, especially those aimed at children, is vital to stimulating wider societal engagement with these pressing issues.

As I reflect on this project, I am reminded of the profound impact that combining education, creativity, and sustainability can have on future generations. It's clear that initiatives like this are not just about providing knowledge, they also spark action and empower communities to build a more resilient world. While the journey was challenging, it reinforced my belief that even the smallest efforts can drive meaningful change, especially when focused on the next generation. Moving forward, I am more committed than ever to advocating for effective science communication and empowering the masses with the tools they need to understand and navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Annexes

Annex 1. Article for Teacher Zarah

When Stories Become Lifelines: Using Stories to Strengthen Children's Disaster Literacy in the Philippines

Written by Martin Raphael Advincula

In the Philippines, where typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions are woven into the rhythm of everyday life, stories have always been powerful tools for survival. For children especially, stories can shape the way they understand danger, resilience, and community.

This is the belief at the heart of Disaster Ready Kids, a children's book series by Teacher Librarian and Author Zarah C. Gagatinga whose work draws from lived experience and a deep respect for young readers. Recently, I had an in-depth conversation with her as part of my preparatory research for a children's book project on green recovery and environmental resilience. The interview discussed not just the creative process behind the series, but also the urgent need for child-centered disaster education in a rapidly changing world.

Rooted in Experience, Written With Purpose

When asked what inspired her to write about disasters for children, Teacher Zarah did not hesitate: her own life.

She grew up experiencing nearly every major hazard imaginable: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and even seasonal bushfires that turned open fields into clouds of suffocating smoke. Her family survived Typhoon Ondoy. She lives only 30 kilometers from Taal Volcano. During college, she felt the violent shaking of the 1990 Luzon earthquake.

These were not abstract events, but formative moments that shaped her understanding of vulnerability and preparedness. "Disasters are complex and systemic. For families and children to understand this, it needs to be told in the level of storytelling," she said when talking about her motivation in starting the project. For her, writing disaster stories for children is not simply educational, but also a matter of rights. A child has the right to safety, to accurate information, and to being part of conversations about the world they inhabit. Children deserve truthful, accessible stories about disasters not to frighten them, but to empower them.

Fighting Misinformation Through Storytelling

The project began during the pandemic, when misinformation and disinformation were at their peak. With fears of "The Big One," volcanic unrest, and severe floods circulating on social media, the author was deeply concerned about the impact of unreliable information on children and families.

She relied on LGU-led disaster information campaigns, government agencies, and community-based knowledge and lived experience to build the stories on a solid foundation. Teacher Zarah recognized that children's literature as part of an information ecosystem where books, teachers, families, and government all contribute to building a culture of preparedness.

Furthermore, one of the strongest aspects of the Disaster Ready Kids series is its visuals, created by comic-style illustrator Juno Abreu. The decision was deliberate: comics are accessible, familiar, and deeply Filipino. However, these illustrations serve purpose beyond aesthetics, they bring emotion back into disaster preparedness. An earthquake drill might seem funny or unreal to a child, but seeing characters frightened yet prepared helps bridge that gap. "We need to feel again. We need to be human again. And when we feel like a human being, I think our relational accountability to each other will return." said Gagatiga.

Instead of sugarcoating, she chooses authentic everyday settings such as children in malls, in neighborhoods, and in familiar spaces so preparedness feels relevant and real. "Children are people. They think, they feel, and they deserve respect." the author said that this is philosophy guided the tone of the books as the stories show children acting with awareness, treating them as capable thinkers than passive bystanders.

Community, Inclusivity, and the Expanding Reach of Disaster Education

Across the series, adult figures in the form of parents,, firefighters, and barangay officials play visible roles, emphasizing that preparedness is a shared responsibility. Children themselves hold agency, and they learn within a web of community care.

The books have found their way into libraries, homes, NGOs, and DepEd events. Some teachers have integrated them into activities; some parents noted that copies quickly sold out online. NGOs even created supplemental worksheets, expanding the stories into broader learning experiences. Feedback has also sparked reflections on inclusivity, for example, how the formatting might better serve neurodiverse readers. This continuous dialogue mirrors disaster readiness itself: always evolving, always learning.

For Teacher Zarah, the goal is not just to publish a series, but also to start a national conversation. She hopes that more writers tackle disaster education, expanding the book by translating into regional languages, and that more families practice critical thinking about the media and information that they consume. Her vision is simple but urgent: "To keep our children safe and for families and communities to be more critical of the information they consume".

As the impacts of climate change intensifies, children will be at the forefront of these disasters. Books like Disaster Ready Kids do more than inform, they also empower as they remind children (and adults) that preparedness is not fear-driven, but community-driven. Most importantly, these children's literature can open door for conversations that can save lives. If what we are doing can help spark even a few of those conversations, then we are already moving toward a resilient and more sustainable future.

Annex 2. Memorandum of Agreement - UP Oroquieta

PAGE 1

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
LITTLE HANDS BIG PLANS PHILIPPINES
AND
UP OROQUIETA
FOR
PARTNERSHIP IN THE
ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK PROJECT

This **Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)** is made and entered into this 4th day of January 2026, in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, by and between:

LITTLE HANDS BIG PLANS PHILIPPINES, represented by its *Project Initiator*, **Martin Raphael Advincula**, hereinafter referred to as the **FIRST PARTY**;

and

UP OROQUIETA, the duly recognized varsitarian organization of Quezon Province in the University of the Philippines Los Baños, represented by its *President*, **Christian Danganan**, hereinafter referred to as the **SECOND PARTY**.

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, the FIRST PARTY is the official organizer/implementing organization of **Illustrated Children's Book Project**, an **illustrated children's storybook** to be launched on **4 January 2026**, which aims to **integrate green recovery and nature-based solutions through accessible narratives**;

WHEREAS, the said **Illustrated Children's Book Project** seeks to engage **children ages 6-10 in the Philippines** and contribute to **child-centered disaster education in Southeast Asia**;

WHEREAS, the SECOND PARTY has expressed its willingness to enter into a partnership with the FIRST PARTY and to provide support for **Illustrated Children's Book Project**, subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement;

NOW, THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the foregoing premises, the Parties hereby agree as follows:

OBLIGATIONS OF THE SECOND PARTY

The **SECOND PARTY** agrees to support **Illustrated Children's Book Project** by providing the following, as may be applicable and mutually agreed upon, free of charge or in-kind, subject to the agreed partnership package:

1. **Media Partnership:** The Second Party shall serve as a media partner for the book launch event.
2. **Social Media Engagement:** The Second Party agrees to provide social media support through the following actions:
 - Sharing the official Facebook post related to the book launch with at least twenty (20) individuals; and
 - Liking the official Instagram post related to the book launch using at least twenty (20) individual accounts; and
 - Following the official Facebook and Instagram pages of the Project using the same minimum number of twenty (20) individual accounts for each platform.
3. **Independent Facebook Post:** The Second Party may, at its sole discretion, create and publish an independent post related to the book on its official Facebook and/or Instagram accounts as part of the book launch of the Project.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE FIRST PARTY

In consideration of the support provided by the **SECOND PARTY**, the **FIRST PARTY** agrees to the following:

1. **Inclusion of Logo:** The First Party shall include the Second Party's logo in the main Facebook and Instagram posts announcing or promoting the book launch.
2. **Acknowledgement in Publicity Material:** The First Party shall acknowledge the Second Party as a media partner in all publicity materials related to the book launch, including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram posts. The acknowledgment shall be in the form of the phrase "In Partnership With:".

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. **Effectivity**

This Agreement shall take effect upon signing by both parties and shall remain valid until the completion of all obligations related to **Illustrated Children's Book Project**, unless earlier terminated in accordance with this Agreement.
2. **No Liability**

The **SECOND PARTY** shall not be held liable for failure to conduct **Illustrated Children's Book Project** due to fortuitous events, government restrictions, or other circumstances beyond its reasonable control that render the event impossible, impracticable, or illegal.
3. **Termination**

This Agreement may be terminated by either party for cause, through written notice served to the other party at least thirty (30) days prior to the intended date of termination.
4. **Entire Agreement**

This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding between the parties and supersedes all prior agreements, negotiations, or representations, whether written or oral. Any amendment shall be valid only if made in writing and signed by both parties.

5. Governing Law

This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Republic of the Philippines.

6. Dispute Resolution

Any dispute arising from this Agreement shall, as far as practicable, be settled amicably between the parties. Should judicial action be necessary, venue shall be laid in the proper courts of the Philippines.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF,

The parties hereto have affixed their signatures on the date and place first above written.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

**BETWEEN
LITTLE HANDS BIG PLANS PHILIPPINES**

**AND
THE ASSOCIATION OF FILIPINO FORESTRY STUDENTS –
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES LOS BAÑOS, INCORPORATED (AFFS-
UPLB, INC.)**

**FOR
PARTNERSHIP IN THE
ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK PROJECT**

This **Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)** is made and entered into this 4th day of January 2026, in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, by and between:

LITTLE HANDS BIG PLANS PHILIPPINES, with postal address at Celestijnenlaan 200, 3001 Heverlee, Leuven, Belgium, represented by its *Project Initiator*, **Martin Raphael Advincula**, hereinafter referred to as the **FIRST PARTY**;

and

THE ASSOCIATION OF FILIPINO FORESTRY STUDENTS - UPLB, INC. (AFFS-UPLB, INC.), a duly recognized academic-environmental organization of the University of the Philippines Los Baños, with postal address at Martin Reyes St., College of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of the Philippine Los Baños, College, Laguna 4031, represented by its *President*, **Earl Justin Catibog**, and its *Vice President*, **Alyna Rei Medina**, hereinafter referred to as the **SECOND PARTY**.

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, the FIRST PARTY is the official organizer/implementing organization of **Illustrated Children's Book Project**, an **illustrated children's storybook** to be launched on **4 January 2026**, which aims to **integrate green recovery and nature-based solutions through accessible narratives**;

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 - Following the official Facebook and Instagram pages of the Project using the same minimum number of twenty (20) individual accounts for each platform.
3. Independent Facebook Post: The Second Party shall create and publish an independent Facebook post related to the book on its official Facebook and/or Instagram accounts. The post must be published during the Second Party's outreach program.
4. Provision of Outreach Program Pictures: The Second Party shall provide pictures and/or media showing the use of the book during their outreach program.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE FIRST PARTY

In consideration of the support provided by the **SECOND PARTY**, the **FIRST PARTY** agrees to the following:

1. Inclusion of Logo: The First Party shall include the Second Party's logo in the main Facebook and Instagram posts announcing or promoting the book launch.
2. Acknowledgement in Publicity Material: The First Party shall acknowledge the Second Party as a media partner in all publicity materials related to the book launch, including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram posts. The acknowledgment shall be in the form of the phrase "In Partnership With:".
3. Consent to Reproduce Resource Material: The First Party agrees to grant the Second Party permission to reproduce the resource material related to the book during the Second Party's outreach program, provided that:
 - The Second Party has met the first three obligations as outlined in this agreement; and
 - No modifications, alterations, or changes are made to the content of the book during such reproduction.

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Effectivity

This Agreement shall take effect upon signing by both parties and shall remain valid until the completion of all obligations related to **Illustrated Children's Book Project**, unless earlier terminated in accordance with this Agreement.

2. No Liability

The SECOND PARTY shall not be held liable for failure to conduct **Illustrated Children's Book Project** due to fortuitous events, government restrictions, or other circumstances beyond its reasonable control that render the event impossible, impracticable, or illegal.

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