

# **Remembering Gary and the beginning of our street children project**

On July 23, 1993 at 3:00 a.m., street children Gary Dalayhon (16), Alexander Ladao (15) and Johnny Ucat (15) were arrested on Licoan Street in Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao, Philippines for the alleged theft of a karaoke machine and were brought by police on a flatbed truck just outside Cagayan.

The three street boys were beaten and threatened with pistols. Gary was then shot in the face, chest and forearm, he died instantly. Alex was shot in the thigh, stomach and forearm, Johnny was shot in the neck, forearm and back. Since it had rained lightly that night, the police car got stuck and people from nearby houses came running out amid the noise of the shooting.

Alex and Johnny were admitted to a hospital with great difficulties (as you have to pay in advance for treatment). Gary came to the Cagayan mortuary.

Since the beginning of 1993, I have been in Cagayan de Oro together with my wife as a development worker. When I found out about the incident, I went to the mortuary and agreed to pay for the funeral expenses and the grave. I had contact with the spiritual at St. John Vianney Seminary, where I taught exegesis for a few units. Father Sanchez and a few seminarians took care of street children on a voluntary basis at the weekend. We decided to make the funeral public, laid out the body in the main square and marched through the traffic to the cemetery, celebrated the service and buried Gary.

We discussed the possibilities of setting up a permanent street children project. On November 24, 1993 the time had come and we received the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) registration certificate No. HN093-000087 in our hands. The story of our project began with the murder of Gary.

The trial of the three police officers can be read in our book *Never Catch a Butterfly\**. Amnesty International also took up the case.

GARY Dalayhon would have been 46 years old this year.

(Thomas Wendl)

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\*Never Catch a Butterfly : The Struggle of Street Children in the Philippines / by Ellen Red and Thomas Wendl. - Cagayan de Oro City : Cagayan de Oro Pub., c1995  
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...also available as PDF (Email to [info@gugma.org](mailto:info@gugma.org))





