



# The Gems of SGC

Before arriving in Singapore in 2012 for a position in a crisis shelter for survivors of family violence, I was a government servant in the Philippines for 10 years. In 2017 I joined the staff team of Ahuva Good Shepherd - Small Group Care (SGC) to care for children who have experienced trauma and abuse.

During orientation at SGC we learn of a typical child's profile. Some staff experience an adrenaline rush thinking of potential challenges while others are filled with trepidation. Working in SGC is not usually a first choice since dealing with children with high needs and behavioural disorders is not an easy feat. I thought that with my experience I was well prepared.

Most children in the care and shelter of SGC have experienced many challenges, including trauma and abuse from an early age. They instinctively cope, however very often, they are adversely affected, resulting in conduct problems and risky behaviours, including self-harm and suicide ideation. Some people may consider them as thorns in society, hopeless, worthless, with bleak futures. In SGC we see each child as unique, worthy of our love. Underneath the tough exteriors they built to shield themselves from the dangers in their lives, and woefully hide their broken hearts, they are capable of

loving others, kind, thoughtful, respectful, helpful and considerate.

To me, these children are gems. I thought that my job is to help them, when in fact it is a journey that I take with each child. Some days it really feels like we are on a roller coaster ride, however we always land safely. My eyes have been opened to the reality that even in affluent Singapore, violence and abuse continue to be inflicted on young children.

2021 was a rough year for me. I lost my father. By the grace of God, my family and I could face our loss and grief. During that tough period, I reflected on what the children in SGC faced in their young lives. They gave me insights to my life purpose. I have grown stronger emotionally and psychologically as a result of journeying with them. I am grateful for the support of my family and friends, and that of the Marymount family.



By **Gilzen Belleza**  
(Senior Social Service Assistant)