



August 2015

*Dear friends,*

Missing much business? Perhaps not. After all it's the summer holidays and we're sure most of you escape the heat by going to the mountains or the beaches. It is the opposite here though (well, not quite) because here we are now in the "wet season." It rains a lot this time of the year and so the temperature cools down a bit but the humidity could still be high as we are in the tropics.



Now going to the news of the first half of 2015, we are sure that you have followed the **visit of Pope Francis to the Philippines** in January of this year. His presence and his words not only brought inspiration and HOPE to everyone but also validated the things we have been doing in **Pag-asa's 18 years of existence**. And so, this edition of our newsletter will revolve around his beautiful and inspiring messages touching on social justice, poverty and the family, topics which have much to do with the activities and programs we have done for the past 6 months.

After a year, we have finally finished the **repair and rebuilding the houses of a hundred of our families** who were adversely affected by super Typhoon Rammasun that hit Tagaytay in July 2014.

*"To be really compassionate and good Christians, it is not enough that we give. We have to stay with the poor, feel how they feel, we must weep with them in order to really understand their lives." (Pope Francis)*

...and that's exactly what we (you, our dear friends, and Pag-asa) have been doing. Yes, we did it together! We are your hands that utilize the money you give specially for this purpose. Bringing you with us in spirit, we listened to their worries and put ourselves in their situation. With our foreign visitors who were here with us during that

time, we rolled up our sleeves to help in any way we could. Indeed, the pope said: *"Only by becoming poor ourselves, by stripping away our complacency, will we be able to identify with the least of our brothers and sisters."*

With your kind and generous donations, we were also able to finally finished **rebuilding the Favola building** as well as the broken part of the **Pag-asa attic**. Thanks so much to all of you for your donations although we know that you had to sacrifice some things to give them to us. The economy drop has really affected us all and we are well aware of its cause: the failure of global capitalism to create fairness, equity and dignified livelihood for the poor. In the past couple of years, that awareness led us to do something to compensate the "losses" by taking seriously our venture to create livelihood through our **Pag-asa One Family Multi-Purpose Cooperative**.

Pope Francis encouraged the growth of co-operatives as an economic model that serves the common good.

Co-operatives are "enterprises based on the principle of solidarity and social relations," that act as "the lever that raises and develops the weakest part of local communities and civil society," and provide "new welfare solutions" that support, facilitate and even encourage family life, because "money if it is well managed, can be used to promote the common good."



We also turned the yard around the building of Favola into a **Vermiculture** or Vermicomposting (the use of specially bred earthworms, especially to aerate soil and convert to organic matter into compost) farm. The other part outside was made into a **Materials Recovery Facility**. We see all



these as beneficial in the long term not only as a source of livelihood but also for the good of our environment.

As it is becoming too difficult for us to handle more livelihood projects, we made a **partnership with TESDA** (an agency of the Philippine government under the Department of Labor and Employment responsible for managing and supervising technical education and skills development in the Philippines) in giving **livelihood trainings** to both members and non-members of Pag-asa Social Center naming this project **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**. So far we have given training on **hair cutting** and gave certificates to 40 students who completed the training modules. Moreover, the training for **housekeeping** is ongoing.

Dear friends, we imagine that some of you had a firsthand experience of the launch of the worldwide campaign **#obiectivo15mila** of the AFN, on May 24, 2015. It was an opportunity to present the activities of SAD, to highlight the projects already carried out and those still in progress, to **promote the international adoptions** in different venues and in different points of the world. Our desire is to **increase support for our projects**. From 13 thousand children supported at present, we wish to reach 15 thousand children (**#obiectivo15mila campaign**).

We have heard about groups of families organizing dinners, theater performances and various other initiatives. They have been able to give a start to new projects of Support at a Distance.

On our part we organized a **concert: A SONG OF HOPE for 2,000 MORE** which was attended by 300 people, majority of which were youth. We sent the proceeds of the concert to AFN. Though we are also in need of financial help, this is not a reason



for us not to give. Yes, we receive help, but we can also give.

*"This is what helps you mature in your commitment to give to others: Learn how to open your hand from your very own poverty." (Pope Francis)*

Like a contagious virus (of solidarity), an **international volunteering program POTA in Slovenia** held a **charity concert** entitled **"The Music of Hope"** for us. Imagine our joy when, even without talking about it, we both held a charity concert with almost the same title at almost the same time. And while we gave our proceeds to the AFN, we received POTA's concert proceeds as six of their volunteers came here to hand them to us personally. It is clearly a hundredfold reward for our efforts to support #obiettivo15mila.



Carrying out their mission to "Be the change you want to see in the world" by Mahatma Gandhi, the Slovenian volunteers decided to spend this year's holidays a little differently by acquiring new knowledge, finding joy, and doing acts of love to the children and families of Pag-asa.

\*The POTA program was created in response to a search, and the desire of many volunteers from Slovenia: how to build a better world, based on an intercultural, interpersonal and interreligious dialogue. Each year, through a program organized by them, they go to different countries to interact, cooperate, learn from each other and build community so that after returning home they will share their experience to their home environment. Therefore, they will bring the "treasure" of their three-week stay with us in the Philippines to Slovenia.

The members of **SPES-Associazione** who came here last year to give a hand in the **reconstruction of the roofs of the houses of several families** in different barangays who were devastated by Typhoon Rammasun was featured in [focolare.org/famiglienuove](http://focolare.org/famiglienuove). They shared saying that their most beautiful experience was the time spent with us here in the

Philippines. They experienced the reality of the situation of the typhoon victims that they usually see only on TV. They saw that these people live in this state every day of their lives, and this has changed the way they think after their experience. Now they have committed themselves to a long-term support at a distance to a little girl in a wheelchair, Princess, who, according to them, smiles like a little sun.

As we have promised in our last issue, we now tell you about the visit of the German and Slovenian representatives of the **Young People's Business (YPB)** for a one-week entrepreneurship workshop in Pag-asa with some youth of Favola. YPB is a project of the German organisation Starkmacher e.V. and financed by the European Union. It also refers to a wider project which aims to create a network between different civil society associations worldwide working with young people, and young entrepreneurs developing their own business ideas and start-ups. It aims to improve knowledge about business-related topics among youth workers and young people – thus enabling them to increase their participation in civil society. It broadens the horizon of organizations working in the youth field and shares examples of good practice in non-conventional fields of youth work. It creates a sustainable network among those civil society organizations and aims at improving their cooperation for a long time. Mrs. Agnes Santos, Managing Director & Partner at Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting, Inc facilitated the workshop of youth work. It creates a sustainable network among civil organizations.



On the **third national meeting of Focolare Social Centers in the Philippines**, we discussed about "Sustainability of Our Social Actions". We reviewed our vision-mission and asked ourselves: Is our vision compelling enough? Is our mission focused enough to be consistent with existing needs and strategic plans? We also discussed our conviction about what we want to do and how we want to do it. We also evaluated our capacity to address real problems of a community as well as collaboration with other actors and agencies. Finally we talked about how we can sustain our programs. We all agreed that we can achieve sustain-

ability by building relationships founded on reciprocal love: by helping each other in our work for the development of funds and livelihood, programs, community, organization, administration and staff.



For the 4th time, **Natalina Pellizzari** visited us to see the progress of the children that she and her group of sponsors back in Italy are supporting. She was once again welcomed warmly by the families and the children. Before she left, each of the children asked her to bring small tokens of appreciation and gratitude for the support they have been receiving for so many years now.

A local paper in Germany featured **Drs. Agnes and Diether Schenkel** as they were presented a cheque by the **Board of the Catholic German Women's Federation**. The Drs. Schenkel made a lecture about Pag-asa to the Federation last year. The members of the Federation liked the lecture so much that they gave a big donation of money to Pag-asa for the victims of Typhoon Rammasun last year.

Dear friends, we have finished yet another edition of our newsletter. With your help, we hope to accomplish more for the needy children and families we are assisting and share the news for the joy of everyone.

Now that the holidays are over, we hope you are refreshed as you go back to work!

Your *Pag-asa* family

