



UPDATE LETTER

Dear friends,

We are in the monsoon season as we write this update letter to you. Due to worse typhoons that have hit the country in recent years, we have coordinated with the city government three months earlier and invited them to provide an interactive seminar for our center. The seminar on **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT (DRRM)** discussed the need to lessen the environmental impact of disasters like climate change, and promote the involvement of communities concerned, especially our communities in Pag-asa Social Center. The speakers who came stressed the implementation of actions and measures relating to all aspects of DRRM, which includes risk assessment and early warning, information awareness, the reduction of underlying risk factors, and preparedness for effective response and early recovery. By knowing what to do in these situations, people can then better cope with various calamities.

Three months after the DRRM, we have tried to deal with another kind of 'disaster'. After noting how some parents talked to their children in a negative way, we have decided to offer a talk about **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN**. Verbal, physical, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, are all crimes of violence which involve emotional anguish, public humiliation for the woman or her child

and denial of financial support or custody towards minor children. These women understood that they can always avail of protection to prevent further acts of violence from happening again and have access to necessary relief. The relief granted under a protection order serves to safeguard them from further harm, to minimize any disruptions to their daily life, and to give them the opportunity to regain control of their own lives. Since then, we have continued this series of education for our mothers.

A big number of Pag-asa families still have infants and we were very grateful to learn that the objective of this year's celebration of **NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH** is to encourage all sectors of society to help in promoting the proper practice of **BREASTFEEDING**. By organizing a half-day of activity, we offered a small lecture to the mothers. We explained to them that breastfeeding not only saves their babies from sickness, but also provides them with long-term benefits. Studies show that breastfed babies do better in school cognitive tests. There is also a positive correlation between breastfeeding and children's educational attainment, according to surveys.

In between those series of seminars, monthly meetings were held in 8 different communities. The meetings were organized and conducted by Irene de los Angeles. She is a lawyer at 80, and one of the founders of the 7 social centers

linked to the Focolare Movement in the Philippines. Topics in this year's meetings focused on God's will and how to always love Him through the neighbours nearest to us. The monthly 'Word of Life' was also read and deepened with the sharing of experiences from the participants. The 'Word of Life' is a chosen sentence in the Gospel by which the Focolare members try to live. In addition to the meetings, some topics concerning the environment and nutrition were also discussed.

Irene was so impressed with one particular group with whom she commented was really **"a community in the making"**. Coming from far places, the communities comprised of families and the youth, all showed up at the venue despite strong rains. The venue became very quiet during the talks. The speaker thought that the number of participants was lesser because everyone was listening intently for fear of missing a word of information. Almost everyone was so moved by the meeting.

In about three months that you would be receiving this update letter, the graduation ceremonies for our children would also be held.

GRADUATING IN A RECESSION

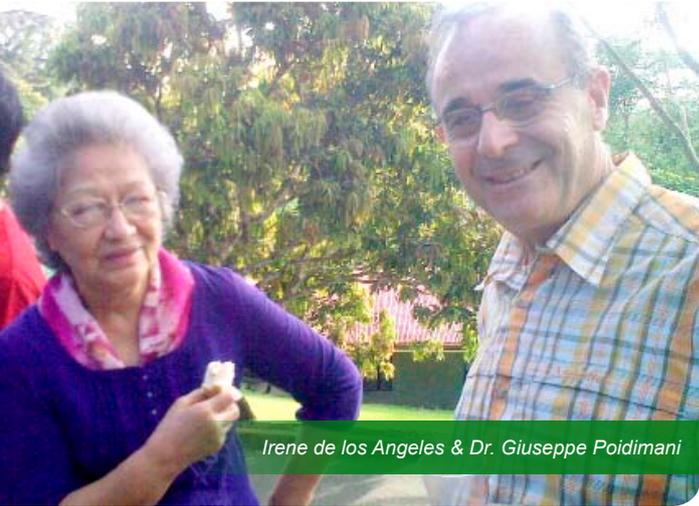
We have several students whom you have helped up to their college graduation. They are all graduating in the midst of a global recession. It has been a difficult year for the economy as there is a very stiff competition between graduates, laid-off employees, and job-switchers vying for just few available jobs. Global outsourcing, smaller wages and smaller career growth give the jobseekers very limited options. They are either forced to get underemployed by taking a job out of their own field or just take any offer even if it does not give them the salary and the career that they deserve.

Today's economy and job market are both presenting discouraging situations to find jobs. There are simultaneous layoffs and forced resignations from big companies and a lot of unexpected scenarios. Unfortunately, a jobseeker would just always find himself spending a lot of time attending interviews and online applications. Hundreds or even thousands could be competing for just one vacant position.

After two and a half months of jobhunting, our graduate students considered taking an internship in their field—believing that this was a good way to get their feet on a company and a step which may lead to a full-time position. Subsequently, our very first **graduate, a nursing student**, fortunately landed a job in a famous clinic that provides accessible, affordable and efficient quality healthcare. Also, two of our **Information Technology graduates** are now working in the central business district of Makati City on their own chosen fields.



Dr. Giuseppe Poidimani dedicatedly helped us in medical consultations of children and families for 3 months. In between the consultations, he also helped us in the Italian translations of our children's letters where he confessed that oftentimes he gets teary-eyed for reading the letters.



Irene de los Angeles & Dr. Giuseppe Poidimani

One is a web designer and developer at an ultimate one-stop online bookstore in the Philippines, while the other graduate works as a System Engineer in a leading company that provides equipment and systems to the retail industry.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Periodically, we have a number of children who bring home a bad report card. This may not be too alarming, but after having seen a pattern of poor grades and teachers started notifying us that some of our children are struggling with specific subjects, we again considered offering tutorial services.

We know that children's lives at home can be much easier if the bulk of their homework has already been done or at least discussed before dinner time. For those who have studying problems, a neutral homework coach with knowledge of what is being covered at school is a great ally and who else better fit to be coaches but the students themselves. Together with our three graduate teachers who are all currently teaching in our day care center, we organized a **LEARNING CAMP** for 15 high school students who were willing to help around 20 slow learners of Grades 1 to 3 elementary students.

However, considering that non-participation during school lessons by these slow learners might also be the reason for their low grades, we taught them how to socialize by building a good relationship with their tutors. Later on, the students realized that their teachers can be their friends

too and that they shouldn't assume their teachers are traditional teachers who are unapproachable.

One of our graduate teachers expressed desire to leave classroom teaching. He explained that he didn't want to teach on the standard setup, but that he intends to pursue teaching in **ALS program** or **Alternative Learning System**. ALS is a free education program which benefits those who cannot afford formal schooling and adapts to their available schedule. There are only two ALS teachers in Tagaytay and he hopes very much to be the third one, and to make a difference.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Our future SPED (*Special Education*) teacher, **RONALD MANGUIAT**, the very first beneficiary of Pag-asa Social Center, is blind and currently doing 'practice teaching' for blind children. He has been making a difference for many years now and this year he surprised us again! Just about to graduate next year, he has already received public recognition as one of the three **BAYANING GURO's (a hero teacher)** during the commemoration



Ronald Manguiat, our hero teacher.

of **World Teachers' Day and National Teachers' Month**. The event was aired on local TV last October and inspired all our children, even those without disabilities—to work hard and study well (see also <http://channel11.gmanews.tv/front-row-presents-bayaning-guro>.)

For the second consecutive year, **Joshua and Daryl**, our two children with special needs, competed once again in the **9th SPED Olympics**, a sports contest for children with disabilities. Thirty-one schools joined in this competition whose primary goal was to make these children feel that they can also live and share with their communities like normal kids. Some of the games were badminton, gymnastics, track and field, and other sports that would reveal their athletic prowess, despite their

Special thanks goes to **RITA ZANON** for her donation of **€ 800,00** for the benefit of our center.

condition. Joshua and Daryl joined the **track and field division**.

Before ending this update, we are happy to announce to all of you that finally, we have our own website, designed and developed for free by our friend Henry Angeles. Please take a look at it! We hope you'll like it! Please see our website and new e-mail address on the footer.

Now Christmas is fast approaching and we leave you with this message:

THERE ARE MANY MILES BETWEEN US, BUT THIS SEASON'S GREETING IS FOR YOU, TO WISH YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES A WORLD OF HAPPINESS ON THIS BLESSED CHRISTMAS DAY!

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM DEEP DOWN IN OUR HEARTS AND A BIG "THANK YOU" FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!!!

Frank, Jr.

and the entire Pag-asa family

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