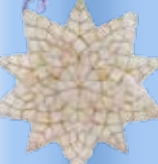


Dear everyone!

New Year is just around the corner again, and who knows what's in store for each one of us?! We don't know what changes there'll be in Pag-asa this year, but we are not afraid to face it, for change is learning, growing, and living. It triggers progress. Things move forward, develop, and evolve because of it. It is no different from the Philippine' traditional Christmas lantern, as it gradually evolves. It has now become bigger, and the designs more intricate.

Today, the simple lantern made of paper glued over a bamboo frame with rice paste, has evolved into spectacular shapes and kaleidoscopic splendor – but its message of light and HOPE remains the same – much like Pag-asa.

Looking back, we realize that all the good things in Pag-asa are the result of changes that have occurred in the past. Although not all changes lead us to pleasant periods in the life of Pag-asa. We do not live in a fairy tale, and sad things happen too, like the departure of Frank Schmelzer for Germany. But we always believe that overcoming the tough period will make us strong to continue and move ahead.



exCHANGE

Pag-asa's humble beginning started with the visitation of a couple of seminarians to the nearby barrios "bringing" ONLY Jesus on their way, smiling and greeting everyone they came across in the area they were visiting. They made themselves one with the others, and like Jesus, TOOK the problems and sufferings of the one they were talking to, or the problem/suffering of the family member, AS THEIR OWN.

They made them feel their love and their compassion. Every time, they asked and offered to the Heavenly Father whatever needs and problems the family they were visiting had. They helped the locals to use their own skills, and to trust in the grace that is present in each family. They respected, esteemed, and took care of the trust that had been accorded them.

They shared their own experiences and skills, which they believe to be relevant and helpful to the recipients. This visitation, which is modeled after Mary's visit to Elizabeth is proudly carried on until now by every single staff of Pag-asa. Recently we named this activity as "Pagbisita" which we shared also to Bukas Palad – La Union during our visit to them.

We exCHANGED ideas and knowledge in running a better social center, and organizing more income generating livelihood programs. It was a visit that has really become very beneficial for both Pag-asa and Bukas Palad. Our realities, although there are many similarities, have also many differences. These things opened our eyes and minds on things that we need to improve, and things that we should continue. All for the benefit of "your" children and their families.

Frank came aboard Pag-asa in 2001, and from then on, Pag-asa rocketed up non-stop. He's made a lot of improvements in Pag-asa. With his network, the number of children supported has tripled. Gaining the trust of sponsors, Providence kept pouring which made possible projects that every member is enjoying now: First of all, the purchase of the building and the land property where it was built, then the Chiara Luce Badano Medical Clinic, our beautiful Dental Clinic, the Computer Learning Center, the Housing Project, and our Favola Silkscreen Printing Livelihood Program, among many others. He leaves us yet another project, the first phase of our beautiful big Gym which is about to finish now. But we know that Frank will never stop to help us even at a distance because Pag-asa has always been and will continue to be in his heart.

Wedding wishes for our dear friends, Laura Rampega & Davide Salvan. Also to Chiara Bassotto & Massimo! We hope your life together will be filled with joy, happiness, and lots of love!

Congratulations also to our dear Sara and Fridtjof Schenkel for their newborn boy Emil Rudolf!

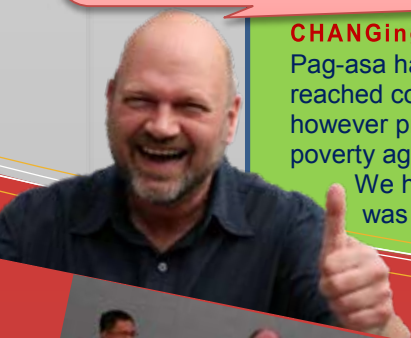
Pagbisita



CHANGing perspective

Pag-asa has 600 parent members, and among them, only 3 % have reached college, 38 % high school, and 59 % elementary. Dropping out is a problem for many. They are however preponderant among the poor. Thus turns the wheels of the intergenerational transmission of poverty against them. It is also the very reason why their children have become beneficiaries of Pag-asa

We have a considerable number of parents who did not continue in school, and most probably, it was not of their own choice. When asked, the most common reason, particularly to those who reached the elementary level, is the lack of personal interest (It may be due to demand-issues such as poor information on the value of education. It may also be that the poor are very impatient and do not



THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR VISIT!

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza, Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer and Bishop Robert Mallari

DR. JOSE FABELLA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

HELPED US ORGANIZE OUR 18TH MEDICAL MISSION



(continued from p.1)

SEE the returns to education [which may only be felt a few down the road] as an attractive proposition). The next most popular reasons – which is not surprising – are economic in nature, i.e., high costs and looking for work, or doing housework. But what is seemingly surprising is that these reasons are common even to those who only reached the elementary school level, despite the fact that there are virtually no school fees in public schools. This highlights the commonly forgotten fact that there are other costs besides school fees, that have been preventing school-aged children from attending school.

Because we want “your” children to have an even better future, we encouraged their parents to participate in the Alternative Learning System: a ladderized, modular, non-formal education program in the Philippines for dropouts in elementary and secondary schools, out-of-school youths, non-readers, working Filipinos, and even senior citizens.

It only requires students to choose schedules according to their choice and availability. We explained to them the importance of education during the execution of our most recent Parents’ Education Program through the help of ALS coordinator Elma Aure. The ALS program follows uniform lesson modules for all academic subjects covering the sciences, mathematics, English, Filipino, social studies and current events, among others.



Focolare Compound, Calamba Road
Iruhin Central, 4120 Tagaytay City
Philippines

For a CHANGE

Just recently, the province of Cavite, of which Tagaytay is part of, reeled from two disasters in a row: after a leak in the underwater pipeline of an oil company terminal in Cavite caused an oil spill that affected some 3000 families earlier in the month of August. Then the southwest monsoon battered and induced heavy to moderate rains for more than a week to the Calabarzon region. Laguna and Cavite were among the hardest hit by flood, displacing thousands of families and residents. For that reason, Cavite was placed under a state of calamity as the off-and-on heavy rains as well as the run –off water brought by heavy rains, from the upland areas, combined with sea water due to the periodic high tide at the lowlands triggered an 8 to 12 feet high flood, submerging more than 150 barangays skirting the Manila Bay coasts and across several barangays from different towns and cities of Cavite.

An 18th century dam in one of the towns of Cavite collapsed. It swept several villages. In Cavite province alone, the flood already affected more than 20 thousand families who have been relocated to various evacuation centers. After the search, rescue and retrieval operations were completed; some towns remained flooded at waist-deep levels, hardly passable to heavy vehicles. According to the residents and officials it was the “widest and longest floods ever” to hit the province in decades.



Having been spared from calamities, we, in Pag-asa Social Center Foundation, Inc, launched “Pag-tulong” to aid children and families affected by calamities. On the way to the place we were about to visit, water-line evidence of the peak of flood marked the walls of the houses and buildings. Sofas, appliances, clothes, and many other things were outside each one’s houses, hoping they can still be saved. Left and right, destroyed things piled up from one corner to another. If there was anyone who took profit of all this devastation, it would be the junk shop operators.

We went to a specific affected area and distributed basic necessities to 100 families and a separate package of candies, chocolates, and wafers to 100 children who were all moved in disbelief at the origin of those gifts we gave them. Who would have thought they all came from the family members that Pag-asa is helping and who are also as poor as them? Well, of course, we bought some rice and noodles, plus new shirts from Favola to add inside the relief bag, thinking of the saying “it’s the thought that counts”, our heaping bags of relief, no matter how simple their contents were, have been more than enough to inspire that community we went to. Truly we will never tire of echoing the quote of Mother Teresa: **there is no one so poor that he has nothing to give, and no one so rich that he cannot receive.**

Before distributing, we met them all together. We created a familial relationship by introducing ourselves and what we do. In turn, we knew them one by one and we asked each one of them how they did during the calamity. To break the ice since it was our first meeting, we had games divided in four groups of parents, and one big separate group for children. Everyone was happy as we have been acquainted first before the distribution of the relief goods. One grandfather gladly exclaimed that the pants from the relief goods fitted him just right. We said in reply, “now you see how God loves you!” We all went home very tired, but also very happy, because we know that that’s how “Pag-tulong” differs from other relief operations out there. We really don’t need big amounts of money to organize such program. We only need our time, our smile, and our beating hearts for our needy fellows.

Dear friends, CHANGE can truly bring something good. Without it, things stay the same and ultimately will stagnate and die. Let us now welcome the change this fresh new year is about to bring. Let us cherish each moment we behold! Merry Christmas!

Your Pag-asa family

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN FUTURE ISSUES OF OUR UPDATE LETTER?

Help us tailor it to make your reading more enjoyable. Email your suggestions or requests to pagasacenter@yahoo.com