



# UPDATE LETTER

## DECEMBER 2016, PHILIPPINES



Teatro pag-asa with other students of PETA.

Dear friends,

*The Christmas count down is starting. It is getting closer. For Pag-asa though, no count down is necessary as its spirit is felt all year round. Your constant sharing of your love to our children and families make us feel every day is Christmas. We may have said it too many a times but we will never get tired of thanking you for that. In this edition, let us share to you bits of news on how Pag-asa has helped in many ways by putting in communion our TIME, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND TALENT, and how through all that, we can slowly eradicate poverty if we only change our approach to it.*

### SHARING OF TIME

In this age when mobile gaming is keeping most children from traditional physical games and physical activities, seeing some getting involved in the latter is a delight. Andrei Jade Domamay, one of the children we are supporting, started his journey in taekwondo and is full of hope to get promoted to the next rank as yellow belter. Andrei Jade wouldn't have this eagerness had his coach did not take on more responsibility and coaches even after his working hours.

### SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

Our daycare teachers were invited to give a lecture to the parent members of our sister social center (Bukas Palad Cebu) about Early Childhood Care and Development\*. After just a month, they were invited once again to facilitate the Parent Effectiveness Service (PES)\*\* seminar to four barangays of Tagaytay. The city government of Tagaytay is looking forward to them to be able to facilitate the same seminar to the rest of its 35 barangays.

\* It is a full range of health, nutrition, early education and social services development programs that provide parents the knowledge of the basic holistic needs of young children from age zero to four years, and to promote their optimum growth and development.

\*\* PES is the development and expansion of knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes on parenting. It consists of three modules, with 13 topics focused on early childhood

care and development, health care, behavior management, parenting rights and duties, and husband-wife relationship.

### SHARING OF SKILLS

Two members of Teatro Pag-asa, in order to deepen their knowledge, took up an introductory course on Theater Arts at the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), the Philippine's pride organization of creative and critical artist-teacher-cultural workers committed to artistic excellence and to a people's culture that fosters both personal fulfillment and social transformation.

Along with 25 other participants, they spent their weekends with breathing, movement and vocal exercises. They were challenged to be creative, be out-of-the-box as well as over-the-top. From creative writing to dramatic improvisation, they learned the basics of theater arts in the most holistic way possible. Then, they had mini performances where they had to incorporate their learnings. They learned by doing. They created by mounting.

Their final activity was a showcase – written, directed and staged by their own class. In their last five sessions, they went through all the nitty-gritty of a theater production.

Now they are the ones directing the rest of Pag-asa's theatre group, sharing what they have learned from PETA.

### SHARING OF TALENT

In hopes to be able to make a new video presentation of Pag-asa but not spend much on its production, we conducted a Film Making Workshop with the help of a professional film maker Greg Rodriguez, who offered his talent free of charge. This workshop introduced selected students to motion picture and prepared them to participate in a world where audiovisual communication plays an increasing role in the production, distribution and reception of ideas and knowledge. They learned to understand the world of moving pictures and soundscape in relation to society, technology and aesthetics. They encountered the diversity in audiovisual storytelling and learned the vital skills that make them engaged citizens, creative and critical thinkers.

As we keep on cultivating and sharing with others our gifts of talents and skills, we also keep on seeing that there is nobody so poor that he has nothing to give, and nobody is so rich that he has nothing to receive. If we keep on sharing and live in communion, poverty will cease on existing.



(Left) Andrei Jade exhibiting a fighting stance. (Right) Back to back Medical and Dental Mission with Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital and Sathya Sai International Organisation, Philippines (October 2016) serving a total of 850 patients.





Film making workshop.

On the recently held 4th National Congress of the Focolare Social Centers, the same topic was brought into discussion and at the end of the congress, we concluded that if we live in communion or sharing, our family members (or other people) will no longer be just a recipient. The other (poor or not) is our reason for our being and therefore becomes part of us. We should always invite ourselves to redirect our mindset to conform to the true nature of man – that of wanting to share. So instead of just “teaching how to fish”, we go “fish together” and “eat the fish together”.

Through our Skills Development Program in Pag-asa, we are offering specific skills training (how to “fish”) to interested parents (unemployed or not) and students. After finishing the training, the students, who did not only acquire new knowledge but also new relationships among themselves and their family members, help each other in finding jobs (thus “fishing together”). Their relationship towards their batch mates and Pag-asa continue to flourish through constant follow up and communication as to how they are now spiritually and financially, sharing their success stories and at times still meet specially when there are occasions and share stories over dinner or snacks (literally “eating fish together”).

For Pag-asa, we always try to put the human person at the center of our social activity. Our primary reward is the satisfaction gained from transforming the social activity into a close-knit community.

Dear friends, the major crisis of the world today maybe broken down to agriculture and food security, economic growth and social inclusion, climate change, and environment and national resource security among many others, but we see above all of these a crisis of VALUES, and communion is the first response to various situations of all crises, more important than any economic wealth.

### ERADICATING POVERTY WHEN WE COMMUNE

The Culture of Communion is not simply between the rich and the poor. Rather, it is a TOTAL giving of self to the other, to a group, to humanity,

to a person of equal dignity. It is a culture of love where all give and all receive. The first communion is that of souls, of life, of hearts. Everyone has a life and soul to give and share with others.

Part of every single program of Pag-asa, including the Skills Development Program, is the School of Life (spiritual formation program), where every participant is encouraged to share something about them and their lives, what is in their hearts. Once they share, we discover treasures, and we discover the richness of every single one of them.

When we looked closely, we saw there is poverty but there are no poor people.

We have many members in Pag-asa who have great dignity and potential, which at first was hidden or buried within the traps of poverty and misery. With the help of our different programs, we were able to pull them out and made them flourish. These members can always love, always have a gift to give and receive from others, but admittedly at first, we didn't have the eyes to see them.

Oftentimes in general, most people are so focused to the poverty of those around us, even to our members, and because of that they lose their richness and become doubly poor, thus entering into a circle of which makes them dependent on us and from which they cannot get out of because they think themselves incapable.

Communion arises when there is an exchange of poverty and wealth and in communion, we can transform and multiply them.

By learning from each other, we grant each family member before us the ability to give us something. We give the chance to the other person to feel he/she is important to me... I need him/her. We should be ready for an exchange... I give help but do I accept to receive?

The secret of communion is that whoever receives a gift must first make the experience of being welcomed as a gift! The value of things is a mystery. It is only in the relationship of brotherhood that we can find out... or guess.



Pag-asa teacher during lectures in Cebu and Tagaytay.

Goods are only symbols that tell the dignity and value of things we are being given. The search for belonging and communion is nothing else but the search for LIFE. And though we have problems of poverty, unemployment, human rights, the environment...and are called to respond to these challenges – we cannot look at poverty in an anonymous, sociological, economic manner.

### ERADICATING POVERTY WHEN WE RECIPROCAT

Even the poor must learn to give their own poverty – wealth. Slowly, we are teaching our family members in Pag-asa that getting out of poverty does not mean to stretch our hands and depend on the help of the other. We must give, and give together.

Dear friends, we want our social center to become a laboratory where all talents are used, where differences are recognized and resolved, where ideas and resources are generated as a means to bridge the gap between those who have more and those who have less. This is a path that leads to universal brotherhood and to the fulfillment of the last testament of Jesus: “That all may be ONE.”

To give up one's very self, to think only of others, how to bring the greatest happiness to others. Aren't those the things that God did when He gave us His only Son? What better example of sharing and communion will there be than those? If we live like this all year round, every day will be like Christmas and every day will be a step forward to erase the word poverty in dictionaries.

Happy Christmas everyone!



Your Pag-asa family

**Note:** If you wish to write to us or to the child, please use Pag-asa's address, not the address of SAD office of Grottaferrata in Rome.



Teatro Pag-asa, with other students of PETA.



Pag-asa scholars assisting patients during Medical and Dental mission.