

UPDATE LETTER

Christmas 2022, Tagaytay City, Philippines

Dear friends,

HOW ARE YOU?

We hope all is well! With everything that continues to happen around us – the ongoing pandemic, the unsettling war between Russia and Ukraine, calamities, etc. – we are all hoping to escape from these harsh realities and get on with our lives. We would have wanted to enjoy this short life of ours and continue to live in the moment happily without any worries.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. The sad truth is that we cannot run away from these realities because they continue to affect our daily lives wherever we may be and whatever we may do.

HOW ARE OUR BENEFICIARIES FARING AFTER TYPHOON PAENG (NALGAE)?

Just as our beneficiaries in the upland areas finished installing new roofs (thanks to Taal Relief 2.0 project), another severe tropical storm hit us causing mudslides and landslides while submerging in deep flood our beneficiaries in the low-lying areas.

One particular beneficiary of ours residing along the coastal area, Rosalyn Bernales and her family, were already in difficulty even before the recent storm. They barely have anything in their possession and their hut made of light materials suffered from several typhoons leaving them with no choice but to reside in an old boat anchored at the sandbar. It is where they cook and sleep. And to be able to take a bath or do their “business” in other house’s bathroom, they even have to pay 20 pesos each time. When Typhoon Paeng hit their area, they immediately felt the raging winds and the gush of rain. Fortunately they were spared from the typhoon and were relocated to an evacuation center.

Whenever asked how they are, Rosalyn would reply without hesitation: “We are doing okay.” But it is very evident that she and her family find themselves in a miserable situation. They belong to the poorest of the poor without any assurance of earning on a regular basis from selling dried fish. However, Rosalyn and her family are remarkably resilient in front of these challenges in life – a quality that allows them to survive and find happiness even in the littlest of things.

DEAR BENEFACTORS, HOW ARE YOU DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE?

We all feel the far-reaching effects caused by this war, but we are also aware that you suffer more from its repercussions since you are in Europe, near enough to receive the hard blow brought about by this war. Despite this situation, you still manage to hold strong to your commitment of supporting us even if we are more than 10,000 km. apart.

The whole world has endured the pandemic but the Russia-Ukraine conflict is proving to be more perilous in reshaping the world order, adversely impacting energy and food markets and triggering a massive increase in the inflation rate on a global level. The world economy is weakened as nations closely coordinate actions to tackle rising prices and scarcity of supplies to no avail.

We may not be as affected as the people at ground zero but this war has impacted the Philippines as it has the whole world. Everyone now breaks the bank even on basic commodities. Our beneficiaries, who come from impoverished families, are hard hit, especially by the rising prices.

Despite this hard truth, we remain hopeful that one day when we are asked how we are, we could respond in all honesty and content: “GREAT!” Our social center’s name, Pag-asa, stands for “hope” and we promise to continue pursuing our aim to be a beacon of hope to all these children and families, especially amidst these trying times.

In our quest to live the present moment to its fullest, Pag-asa continues to extend your help to our beneficiaries through various activities:

AUGUST

The mother of a beneficiary finished Junior High School education through the *ALS Program**. She will proceed to Senior High School, and hopefully enter the university and finish a degree. Inspired by her teacher, she is now inspiring fellow mothers who, for certain life circumstances, were not able to finish their schooling. Truly, inspired people inspire people.

** The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is a parallel learning system in the Philippines that provides opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult (OSYA) learners to develop basic and functional literacy skills, and to access equivalent pathways to complete basic education.*

- Mental Health Wellness seminars for Pag-asa youth with separate sessions for adults.

- Gender and Development seminar focusing on finding balance and harmony in managing gender sensitivity in the work place.
- Culinary workshop as part of the livelihood program
- Mass wedding as a part of the Cry of Humanity Project*
- Fire drill seminar for fire safety of day-care pupils
- Basic life support and disaster preparation

** In a document written at the conclusion of the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement in August 2021, the top leaders established the following program to be acted on in the next 6 years: “Listen to the cry of humanity, of creation and of the new generations”.*



(From top to bottom)
Feeding Program; Our nutrition-related activities;
Basic life support and disaster preparation

SEPTEMBER

- Leadership Workshop for the members of the Youth Club

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER

- In order to give only the best of care to our beneficiaries, the Pag-asa staff attended a series of seminars and webinars for the protection of women and children and upholding their rights. With the help of government and non-government agencies and professionals, we took a deep dive into the laws that concern them.

OCTOBER

Our Materials Recovery Facility Center, a project for the Cry of Creation, built to ensure an organized disposal of garbage, has caught the attention of *BISIG Pilipinas** (whose membership is concentrated in Tagaytay) to replicate it in other communities.

* *BISIG Pilipinas* is an organization that aims to build a community of volunteers responsive and actively involved in serving the needs of the Filipino community at large, lend an arm in capacity-building by collaborating with a network of volunteer groups, sectoral organizations and NGOs nationwide and aid and support local government initiatives. Specifically, they assist in the areas of Food Security, Health, Environment, Education & Social Awareness, Community Welfare, Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation through community projects.

NOVEMBER

In celebration of this year's Children's month, we pray with Pope Francis for all children who suffer, those who are homeless, orphaned or victims of war that they may have access to education and the opportunity to experience family affection.

- Daycare Community Tour
- Medical Mission in partnership with Theta Lambda Phi Sorority
- Children's month celebration

The past 6 months also saw a big number of medical assistance cases, some of which are either confidential or sensitive in nature that are not allowed to be mentioned here.

FAST FORWARD

DECEMBER

- The children's gift distribution and family gift-giving program will be conducted during our annual Pag-asa Family Christmas Party
- Teatro Pag-asa will be treated to a Ballet Philippines Christmas presentation of The Nutcracker sponsored by Whealth, Inc.

FEBRUARY 2023

As we end our year-long 25th anniversary activities, our BIG THANKS go especially to Teacher Donel Luna, one of our very first beneficiary turned benefactor.

YEAR-END GREETINGS

Our dear beloved friends, with your continued support we are doing well...even greater than expected. And we are eternally grateful to you for that.

We would also greatly appreciate it if you would call or write to us. There are so many ways to get connected to us.

After two years with better measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic, we are excited to wish you all a Merry "face-to-face" Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Your Pag-asa Family



IMPORTANT NOTES:

If you wish to write to us or your child, please use the following address:

Pag-asa Social Center Foundation, Inc.
Focolare Compound, Calamba Road,
Iruhin Central, PO Box 78,
4120 Tagaytay City, Philippines

Or email us at:
info@pagasasocialcenter.org
or pagasacenter@yahoo.com

- When sending a letter, put your address as the sender on the envelope and do not write it anywhere in the text. From experience and respect for everyone's privacy, we know that the exchange of supporter/child addresses is inappropriate.
- If you do not have the opportunity to continue helping the child, it is essential to communicate it before the renewal of your commitment occurs. The report must arrive promptly to our office with an e-mail (pagasacenter@yahoo.com). This gesture will allow us to continue helping the child by entrusting him to another supporter. We thank you in advance for your collaboration.



Visit of Frank Schmelzer, Thomas Mrosk and Thomas Fugel.



VISUALS: FREEMK, THOMAS M. EVANS