

CHANGED

UNLEASHING THE VOICE WITHIN

A student who is deprived of many things
in life, finds herself through spoken
word poetry



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ABOUT THE COVER



Regine Salve Arcenal, a Grade 11 student of Pasay City North High School Main is the cover in this ninth issue of CHANGED Magazine. With the help of her teachers and Telstra Foundation Philippines, she was able to excel in school and discover her talents.

The magazine "CHANGED" features stories of inspiring people in social development whose lives were changed either through their involvement in projects undertaken by PBSP with its member-companies, partners, and donors, or through interventions in the communities we serve. The A in "CHANGED," is represented by the delta sign (Δ) which is also a mathematical symbol for change.

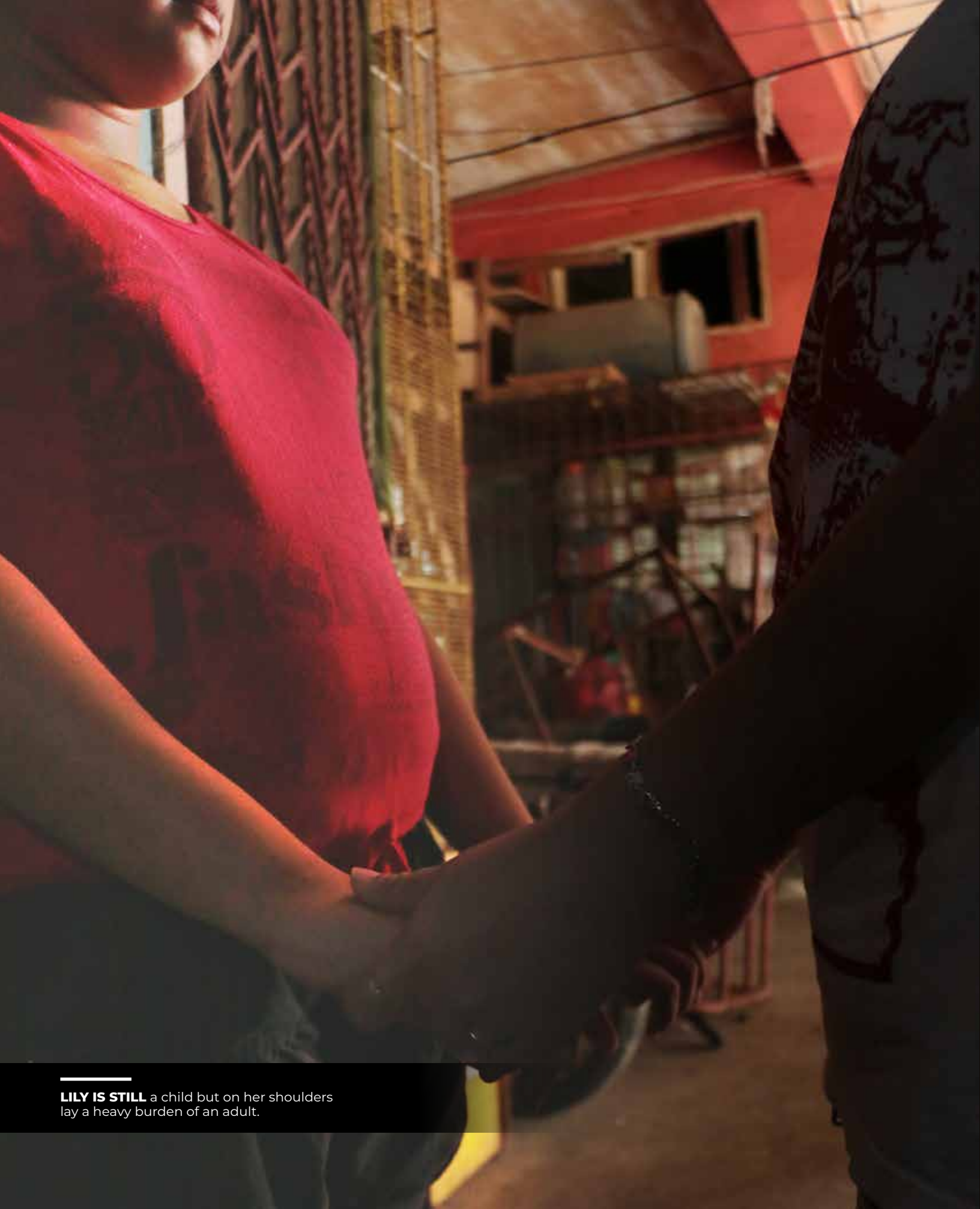
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LILY IS STILL a child but on her shoulders
lay a heavy burden of an adult.

SPECIAL FEATURE

STOLEN CHILDHOOD

A girl from the slums of Smokey Mountain in Tondo, Manila faces the challenge of her life

At first sight, you might be surprised to know that Lily, not her real name, is only 12 years old. Her face would suggest she could be in her late teens but her body is already of a grown woman, although it appears as if it was forced to grow up fast. Her belly is also disproportionately big for her body, and it only tells one sad truth.

Yes, she's not even a teenager yet, but Lily is already five months pregnant.

During the course of the interview, she was quiet most of the time and looking down at the floor, she ignored most of the questions. She was too shy to speak, typical of a girl her age.

Her mother Emma, also not her real name, offered to speak on her daughter's behalf. She said that to this day, Lily remains quiet on the identity of her child's father. All Emma knows is that he is a 16-year-old friend of Lily.

Whether it was consensual sex or not, Lily opted not to say. She just kept on staring at the floor, though she was quick to nod when asked if she knew its consequence.

But Lily, second of eight siblings, admitted, "I am not yet ready to become a mother."

We asked Emma if she has any idea how the girl was introduced to the topic of sex that might led to her early sexual consciousness. Emma could only think of one tragic incident when at the tender age of seven, her daughter was raped.

VIOLATED INNOCENCE

When Lily opened her mouth to speak, it was somehow eerie to hear the voice of a young girl. Eerie in the sense that despite of everything that happened to her, and how grown-up she might appear to be, this soon-to-be mother is still very much a child, after all.

"I loved biking. On that day, I was riding a bike I rented for five pesos with a few friends. We went to the fish port which is near from where we used to live. Then I went by myself to a place I thought I could be alone. But a man grabbed me and dragged me to an abandoned office littered with broken glass. He was holding a bag of glue that he was sniffing. He held me down by the hands, pinning me to the ground.

Although she looks mature enough on the outside, her body is not developed enough to handle the agonizing childbirth.

There, he raped me. At that time, I did not understand what he was doing to me. I could not do anything. I could only scream, but it seemed that no one could hear me," Lily recalled.

Instead of telling Emma what happened to her, she kept it to herself. We asked Lily why she kept it a secret, and in a pleading voice, the girl replied.

"I was ashamed of myself. My friends would tease me, they would tell people I was raped. They knew. They saw the bike and my slippers near the building. They heard my screams. They knew. And I was afraid that they would tell my mother," she said.

Although Lily's mouth was shut on the matter at that time, Emma was already suspicious of what happened to her daughter after seeing traces of blood on the child's underwear.

She shared, "It was Christmas Eve and I asked my children to take a bath. I saw that there was blood on her underwear. I thought that she had menstruation but she was just seven at that time. So, I asked her why she had blood on her underwear. She only replied that it was nothing. But when it happened again, that's when I started to panic. Still, she won't tell me what happened."

But when Emma discovered that there was also blood on Lily's poop, that's when she finally brought her to the clinic, despite the girl's insistence that it was nothing.

"When we went to the clinic, that was the only time she opened up. We reported it to the police and fortunately, her 21-year-old abuser was arrested," she said.

While this traumatizing part of her life is coming to a close, she now has to face another life challenge - motherhood.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Lily does not fully know the gravity of her situation nor is she aware of the dangers of her untimely pregnancy. Although she looks mature enough on the outside, her body is not developed enough to handle the agonizing childbirth.

But it seems Lily couldn't care less. Emma shared that her child still sneaks out at night to go on nightly strolls with her friends. She would carefully take the key around her mother's neck once she's asleep and open the iron gate on their door that Emma securely locked.

As much as she wants to keep her daughter home at night, Emma has other children to take care of. Lily's mind is probably too young to fathom it all. But she promised to become a good mother.

"I will send my child to school and teach him good values," Lily said.



EMMA IS TRYING her best to prepare her 12-year-old daughter for the responsibilities of a mother.

TOP OF THE HEAP

*With the support of Telstra Foundation Philippines,
a teacher helps turn her school into a model Senior High School in Pasay*

Three years ago, Pasay City North High School Main (PCNHSM) was beset with problems such as absenteeism, lack of facilities, equipment, and materials as well as delinquent students who were involved in drugs and rumbles.

Worse, it even became a drug hotspot.

"Pasay North was very far from what it is now before Telstra Foundation Philippines came. About 30 percent of students in all levels were not coming to class. Most of them came from poor families so they did not have money to buy school supplies and other requirements. To make matters worse, many students were drug addicts. Some were even selling drugs inside the classrooms and restrooms! It smelled of it! They would get involved in gang or fraternity wars just outside the school. There was even an instance when a student was killed," revealed PCNHSM Academic Group head and Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) teacher Barbara Feliciano.

The school tried all sorts of campaigns to get the students off on drugs but it seemed that these efforts weren't enough. Armed with an undying passion and perseverance, Feliciano stayed in the school and sought ways to provide quality education amid the setbacks. As a TLE and Home Economics teacher, she struggled with using improvised materials. There

was not a single sewing machine and cloth to be used for dressmaking so she would make them use Manila paper and old uniforms instead.

"The students would make a dress out of Manila Paper or *katsa* (flour sack cloth) and sew it using their hands. Then they would carefully wear it for fitting so it wouldn't get torn apart. Sometimes, we would ask graduating students to donate their uniforms and that's what my students would practice on. They would remove the stitches and re-sew the uniforms," she said.

When the K to 12 Basic Education Program was implemented, PCNHSM wasn't ready for Senior High School at all. Only Feliciano and another teacher were National Certificate (NC)-holders. Because of these, they could only offer Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track which are Bread and Pastry Production, Food and Beverage Services as well as Accounting, Business and Management (ABM).

To be able to teach SHS, all teachers should have National Certifications (NC) and Training Methodology (TM) Certifications. The TM Certification puts them above the student NC-holders and allows them to conduct institutional assessments of their students and of other schools before they take their NC at the Technical Educational Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

ADDRESSING NEEDS AND GAPS

Luckily, PCNHSM was chosen by Telstra as its adopted school. In partnership with PBSP, Telstra's three-year intervention sought to address the school's needs and gaps.

The company, with the help of the local government of Pasay, first funded the NC training and exams of the SHS teachers. Later, when all of them were NC holders, Telstra again helped all the teachers become TM-certified.

Feliciano was the first among nine teachers to get a TM Certification and it wasn't easy. Apart from being costly (Php15,000 per teacher), they had to prepare modules on their specializations and defend it, just like a thesis. If they pass, that would be the only time they can get their TM Certification.

Other interventions of Telstra focused on remedial lessons for slow learners; the setting up of Interest Clubs that harnessed the academic and extra-curricular skills of students and the involvement of Telstra employee-volunteers as mentors; and the provision of a library as well as an AVR.

As the school started to improve, more funders came in to help. The Department of Education provided equipment for Bread and Pastry while another foundation gave funds for the ingredients. To maximize it, Feliciano

and her students sold the bread and cupcakes they cooked and used the earnings to buy ingredients for their next lesson.

During weekends, parents also undergo livelihood training on sewing rags. This project by another foundation has been successful that it pushed the parents to buy their own sewing machine and sell rags as a supplementary income to support their families.

TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

Today, PCNHSM has become a model school for SHS. It is the only school in Pasay City which has a team of TM-certified TVL teachers. Its students bag top prizes in regional competitions for the TVL track. The school has also been the first in Pasay to have all its Grade 11 students NC-certified, and last April 3, all its 82 Grade 12 students graduated with NC.

"The TM Certification enabled us to conduct institutional assessments not only for Pasay North but also for other schools. We were also tapped by the DepEd Division in Pasay to train teachers on how to conduct the assessment. The modules we wrote for the institutional assessment is now being used in the entire division. Our division is also the only one in NCR that has this assessment. All the schools in Pasay were required to have TM-certified teachers in their schools to be able to conduct this assessment," Feliciano shared.

With these competencies and newly-acquired equipment, the school was able to offer more tracks that include Bartending, Shielded Metal Arc Welding, Dressmaking and ICT.

Beyond these, Feliciano is so thankful for the big changes in the school culture and in the behavior of the students. Gone are the drugs and rumbles. The students are now always eager to go to school, even on weekends just to attend their Interest Clubs. In between breaks, they go to the library to read books and research using new computers donated by an IT firm.

Suddenly, the students have something to be proud of. Even Feliciano is still in awe of the changes.

"I did not see myself getting certifications like this and becoming head of a department. I did not see that the interventions of Telstra Foundation Philippines and other donors would make such a huge impact on the students, on the school, and even on the Division of Pasay. Even the other schools were surprised to find us rising to the top, winning competitions and being the ones conducting their training! Before, we were never heard of," she revealed.

Feliciano who was forced into the teaching profession by her parents, now feels destined for this career. And in her more than 30 years of teaching, she could finally taste the fruits of her labor.

"My fulfillment as a teacher is knowing that I was able to give my students the skills they need when they graduate, and seeing them come back to the school and telling me that they were able to use it to achieve their dreams," Feliciano said.



THROUGH THE SUPPORT of Telstra Foundation Philippines and the commitment of dedicated teachers like Barbara Feliciano, the once lagging school became one of the best in Metro Manila.

COVER STORY

UNLEASHING THE VOICE WITHIN

*A student who is deprived of many things in life,
finds herself through spoken word poetry*

Eleventh grader Regine Salve Arcenal is not mute but she seemed to have lost her voice when it came to the way her life has constantly unfolded before her.

An only child, Arcenal grew up without knowing her father. She and her mother used to live in Laguna where the latter would cook and sell fried banana and other local snacks for a living.

One summer, Arcenal was brought by her mother to Catanduanes in Bicol where they initially spent their vacation but later on stayed there with her stepfather for two years. She kept quiet about it and just learned to adjust with provincial life, even excelling in her studies from Grades 6 to 7.

But just when things were working out well, the then eighth grader was again taken away by her mom and they returned to live in Laguna. Arcenal was just starting to resume her life again but they went back to Bicol in Grade 9. She remained voiceless even when her mom, just after a year, packed their bags for the nth time and went on separate ways with her stepfather.

"Every time we transferred, I found it difficult to adjust, that was why I had hard time in my academics. I did not fail but I also did not excel. But when I was in Grade 7 in Bicol, I was second honor. When we returned to Laguna in Grade 8, I did not get any anymore," revealed Arcenal.

SPEAKING UP

Seeing the effect that moving in and out made on poor Arcenal, her aunt offered to take her in and send her to

school in Grade 10 at Pasay City North High School Main (PCNHS). Silent but content, Arcenal has adjusted well in her new school. In fact, the last two years has so far been the best years of her life, as she has finally found her voice.

First, Arcenal has gotten her groove back in her academics. From being a regular student in Grade 10, she managed to rise up in just a year and is now finishing Grade 11 on top of her batch.

The reason for her total transformation is her newfound talent on spoken word poetry which Arcenal believes opened herself up and led her to opportunities she never expected.

"At first, I did not think of joining an interest club because I was focusing on my academics. But eventually, I accepted my friend's request to join her in the Speakers Guild and I realized that it was fun. My mentors from Telstra Foundation Philippines, Inc. taught me how to handle myself during public speaking. They taught me how to put myself in character for the piece I am delivering. We also write our own poems but we haven't performed it yet," she said.

Spoken word poetry is the main activity of the Speakers Guild Club which Arcenal is a member of. This club is just one of several interest clubs set up by Telstra Foundation, at the PCNHS. The clubs are introduced as early as Grades 7 and 8 to enable students to get a glimpse of the various academic and techvoc track offerings that they may pursue in Senior High School (SHS). These clubs are being led by practitioner-mentors who are Telstra employees. They find time to conduct sessions for the students during their days off and on weekends.

Now on its third year, the interest clubs are part of the SHS interventions of Telstra Foundation Philippines in PCNHS, in

partnership with Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), which include incubation (infrastructure development), tutorial program for slow learners, and skills building for students, teachers and parents.

THE JOY OF BEING HEARD

For Arcenal, her involvement in the Speakers' Guild transformed her into a better person.

"It really helped me a lot. Before, I couldn't even recite in the classroom, even if I knew the answer. I was just too shy and I would often get mental block. But when I joined the club, my confidence slowly developed until I got used to talking in front of the class, and interacting with people," she shared.

Arcenal has not only overcome her shyness but also managed to shine through the art of spoken poetry.

"They trained me on spoken word poetry such that I have learned to really internalize a character in the pieces I deliver. So when I am on stage, I am no longer myself. I transform into the character. It's all surreal, I never expected it to happen to me," added the 17-year-old student who has performed solo and in groups in various Telstra events in her school, at Shangri-La Hotel and at the SMX Convention Center.

While Arcenal is looking forward to take up Business Management in college, the sad news of her aunt's plan to work in Hong Kong this year has once again put her future into uncertainty.

But this time, she is speaking up. She plans on becoming a working student to support her school needs. She also has simple dreams for herself and her mother.

"I just want to be happy and have stability. I also want to be with my mom in just one place and live there permanently," she said.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM and the lack of a permanent home hindered Regine Arcenal, but with the help of Telstra Foundation Philippines, PBSP, and her teachers, she was able to excel in class and discover her talents.





JASHIEL CABALQUINTO is grateful for more than a decade of support from Petron which helped her continue studying and hone her leadership skills.

THE BLESSING OF A LIFETIME

A less fortunate student gets a promising future from Petron

Just like any other teenager, 16-year-old Jasheil “Sheil” Cabalquinto dreams of finishing school and living a comfortable life. But with her family’s financial status, pursuing that dream seemed impossible—or so she thought.

Even when her single mother started working abroad, providing for their family’s daily needs remained difficult. Fortunately, help came when then first grader Sheil was chosen to be a beneficiary of the Tulong Aral ng Petron (TAP) scholarship, with its high school program being implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

“I’m very blessed to have been chosen for this scholarship. Because of this, I no longer have anything to worry about. From school uniforms to our daily allowances, everything is being provided for. In fact, when I was still in elementary, we had our feeding program,” the incoming 12th grader shared.

In addition, the program also holds the ‘Best U Can Be (BUCB)’ workshops which aim to further advance the TAP high school scholars’ development. The one-day leadership and life skills workshop teaches the young adults lessons that resonate beyond the classroom, better preparing them for their lives after high school. Throughout the six-year module of the BUCB, the scholars get to interact with each other, sharing experiences and insights. Through these activities, Cabalquinto learned to become more vocal and open about her ideas and learnings with her fellow scholars- no longer was she the shy girl of old.

“I used to be a shy person. But because of the BUCB, I learned to build my confidence. I get to collaborate and share experiences with other scholars, thus enhancing my social skills,” she said.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Cabalquinto believes that since she was given such a huge blessing, it’s important for her to also be helping other people.

A way for her to give back is by joining the school’s student government and implementing projects that would benefit her fellow students.

Serving as student government president of Kasarinlan High School in Caloocan as a 10th grader in junior high school, Cabalquinto helped put together leadership training workshops for her fellow students. She became a speaker for the events, and shared what she learned from BUCB alongside aspiring leaders of her school.

“It’s overwhelming to know that we were able to encourage and inspire others through the work that we have done. They used to think that being a leader is hard, but we were able to show them that it isn’t that difficult,” she said.

As an 11th grader in her senior high school at Martinez Memorial Colleges, she still continued to serve the student body as their year level representative. She strove to become their role model, particularly in maintaining discipline and assuming responsibilities. She also helped voice out their opinions and suggestions on school issues to the Student Executive Council.

NOT JUST A DONOR

Being Petron’s scholar for more than 10 years, Cabalquinto sees the people of Petron as more than just her donors, but her family. If not for the scholarship, securing a good education would have remained difficult.

“I’m very thankful for all their help. Imagine, since elementary they have already been providing me with this scholarship. It feels like they are not just my supporters, they have become my family. Not only were they able to provide my financial needs, but they also provided me with the life skills that I would need to make it in the real world.”



THE MEDALS of Toni Manumbas prove that even a former undernourished kid like her can still rise up to become a succesful student athlete.

HER GAME PLAN

A beneficiary of Mondelez Philippines' Joy Schools program gets the much-needed sustenance, strength and inspiration to excel in sports

At the age of 12, student athlete Toni Manumbas already has various awards under her belt for the sport of badminton.

Her biggest win so far is a Bronze medal from the Department of Education's 2017 NCR Palarong Pambansa. Manumbas is also a silver medalist in a competition among NCR and Luzon competitors; a consistent first-placer in the District and Inter-District Meets in September and October 2016; and a second runner-up in the Muntinlupa City Government Badminton Mini Tournament 2015 for Girls (Doubles), among others.

Before this winning streak though, the seventh grader had taken a long journey to get to where she is, and this includes preparing herself mentally and physically.

EATING RIGHT

Like many children, Manumbas used to be a picky eater when she was a child and would get sick easily because of a weak immune system.

Despite her mother's insistence, she would only eat what she wanted — dishes without vegetables and not enough food with the right nutrients. The only veggies she ate before were the kangkong (water spinach) in sinigang (Filipino sour stew) and tortang talong (eggplant omelet).

While her unhealthy eating habits and poor weight did not affect her studies, Manumbas didn't have much energy to get into strenuous activities. In fact, she would even be absent for two to three days every month.

This was the reason she was chosen to be part of the feeding program in Grade 4 of Mondelez Philippines' Joy Schools program then at Bayanan Main Elementary School (BMES) in Muntinlupa City. The school is a recipient of a three-year intervention through the Joy Schools program which consisted of a feeding program, urban gardening for parents, teachers' training, and remedial program on reading for slow learners. Throughout its run, the feeding program was able to improve the weight of some 400 severely wasted (undernourished) children in BMES.

"At first, I really didn't want to eat because I didn't like the food. Sometimes, we were served adobo (stewed meat), kaldereta (tomato-based stew dish), ginataang kalabasa (squash with coconut milk), and champorado (sweet chocolate rice porridge). Eventually, I learned to like it and also started

eating other kinds of vegetables. My appetite also improved," shared Manumbas, the second in a brood of four.

GETTING INTO SPORTS

Halfway into the 120-day feeding program, she began to gain the strength to be active in sports. Seeing her older sister compete and excel in badminton, Manumbas was also inspired to follow in her footsteps. Apart from learning the basics and tricks of the game from her, her coach and BMES MAPEH teacher Elmier Santuyo also trained her well until she was ready for competition.

Manumbas continued with the feeding program and managed to balance her studies with training. To be a well-rounded athlete, she knew she had to be healthy and fully equipped to handle the pressures of such a difficult balancing act.

THE REWARDS

"The feeding program helped strengthen my body and mind, which in turn, enabled me to balance my studies and sports. Even if I was tired, I remained motivated to attend to my studies," she said.

This was reflected in Manumbas' consistent improvement in her grades, including a Perfect Attendance Award for the second quarter of SY2016-2017, and a Top 8 ranking in class in the first quarter of SY2016-2017.

Her excellent performance in sports also landed her a scholarship at Christ the King School of Muntinlupa Foundation, Inc. where she is playing for its varsity team.

"The highest award I won so far is the bronze medal at the NCR Palarong Pambansa. It was my first time to join so I didn't expect that I would even win anything," she said.

As she gets older and reaches new heights in her sport, Manumbas also learns to stay focused on her game and uses failures and losses as stepping stones to reach for her dream — that is to be part of the Philippine team.

"If ever I do not make it into the Philippine team, I would still remain an athlete. I would also work hard to buy my family a house and lot. I want to be able to help them, and repay them for all their hard work and expenses for me," she shared.

All these, the former picky eater intends to do, with a career as a chef someday as well.



JOY SCHOOLS

Celebrating seven years of creating joyful centers of learning

The Joy Schools program of Mondelez Philippines started in 2011 as the “Adopt-a-School” program. It aims to empower young children to take positive steps towards their overall well-being.

In 2013, after seeing inspiring results in the first school that the Company adopted in Paranaque, the program was aptly renamed “Joy Schools.” The interventions of the program are under three areas: Nutrition Education, Promotion of Active Play and providing Access to Fresh Food. Through these interventions, the program seeks to help empower schools, strengthen their capabilities, create sustainable growth and ultimately create joyful centers of learning.

In the Philippines, the program has a daily nine-month feeding program which provides a full meal of rice, viand and fruit to 400 students (SY 2017-2018) in four schools in Metro Manila. This runs from July to March of the following year and benefits those students who are considered severely undernourished from Kinder to Grade 6. The schools which have been adopted through the program also benefit from donations of active play materials such as sports equipment to supplement their school's academic programs and play materials. A nutrition education day facilitated by employees of the Company also provides informative and enjoyable games for students.

MODEL PROGRAM IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

The results and structure of the program also made it viable to be implemented in other countries within Mondelēz International, starting with Thailand also in 2013. Other countries in South East Asia have since implemented the program including Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. In fact, the program which was Philippine-made is now the flagship community program of the whole Southeast Asia cluster of Mondelēz International.

Across South East Asia, Mondelēz International has invested close to US\$ 1 million since 2013 in community partnerships to

promote healthy lifestyles in five countries under the Joy Schools program.

Since its inception, the program has benefitted approximately 11,500 students in 25 schools in Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Over 2,000 employees have contributed over 16,000 volunteer hours to make a difference and to create joy for the underprivileged students in the communities where the Company operates. The Company has also galvanized its people to take time off from work and engage in activities that contribute to the schools. The program has also won seven awards and accolades across countries to date.

In the Philippines, the program has helped between 74%-84% of 3,272 improve their nutrition, from being severely undernourished to having a normal nutritional standing (2013-2016). While other factors may be in play, our program has also helped encouraged more students to be present in class, with between 92%-99% average attendance of beneficiaries every day. The students who have benefitted from our local feeding program have also tracked a grade average of between 79%-80%.

“We feel joyful about having contributed to these great results for our adopted schools. The results have only inspired us to be more focused on making a real difference to children through our Joy Schools program,” said Shanahan Chua, Mondelez Philippines’ Head of Corporate and Government Affairs, Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

According to Chua, the Joy Schools program will continue to expand in Southeast Asia this 2018. In the five countries where it is present, a total of 16 schools will be adopted this year.

Locally, with the Philippine Business for Social Progress as program partner, three more schools are planned to be adopted in Metro Manila this school year 2018-2019, making the total number of adopted schools in the Philippines at 16 by the end of 2018.



IMPACT BY NUMBERS

IN SOUTH EAST ASIA:

Close to
\$1 Million
 worth of investment by Mondelez International in 5 countries since 2013 were poured into the program



Over
2,000
 employees
 contributed
 over **16,000** volunteer hours



Benefitted
11,500 students
 from **25** schools in
5 ASEAN countries



IN THE PHILIPPINES:

400 students
 are being provided with full
 meals for school year
2017-2018



13 public schools adopted
3 more schools to be adopted by end of 2018



80% to 84% of 3,272
 beneficiaries achieved
 normal nutrition standing
 from being severely
 undernourished
Contributed to 92%-99%
school attendance

TEACHER OF THE TRIBE

A B'laan gives back to his community by helping them embrace the benefits of education

When Melbert Baran learned that he was going to be assigned at Calay IP School in Malapatan, Sarangani to teach his fellow B'laans, he just couldn't contain his happiness and excitement to be able to give back to his own tribe.

But upon arrival, his excitement turned to pity and hopelessness upon seeing the plight of his students.

"I was shocked and I felt pity for the pupils because we only had makeshift classrooms that had ruined walls and holes on the roof. When it was raining, the pupils would just had to move to avoid getting wet. During heavy rains, the earthen floor would get flooded and muddy. The pupils could not focus in class anymore. They would just play in the rain and in the flooded floor. So sometimes, we would hold classes at the church," shared the 33-year-old Baran, the Teacher-in-Charge of Calay IP School.

He also didn't expect to be rejected by his fellow B'laans – the parents who preferred to send their children to another school with better facilities.

Baran almost quit and left the school but his desire to share his own journey to literacy and become a full-fledged teacher prevailed. Like many from his tribe, he did not know how to read and write. He just took ladderized education to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills. In college, he was able to get a scholarship assistance which enabled him to graduate and pursue the teaching profession. With this experience, Baran hoped to encourage other B'laans to also get an education.

HOPE FROM PARTNERS

When ICTSI Foundation and PBSP arrived and offered to construct a two-classroom schoolbuilding, Baran got the courage to tell the residents that Calay IP School is for real. He urged them to support the project because it is for the future of their children.

ICTSI Foundation and South Cotabato Integrated Port Services, Incorporated (SCIPSI), an affiliate of ICTSI, funded the schoolbuilding because they wanted the community to become an inspiration not only for business but also for others to value education as a way to end poverty.

The two-classroom building comes complete with facilities and amenities like 90 student chairs, gender-sensitive toilets (one for boys and one for girls per classroom), ceiling fans and lights.

Fortunately, the developments in the school attracted other stakeholders such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) which offered to construct two more schoolbuildings. When completed, this will bring the total number of classrooms in Calay IP School to six.

"I am happy because the project really helped the school. Before, the pupils were just contented with makeshift classrooms. But when they saw the new schoolbuilding, they were really happy and excited to occupy it. They were jumping with joy. When they were touching the blackboards, they were imagining that they were already using it. They could now say goodbye to the days where they were writing on the floor made of soil. They can now foresee themselves sitting and writing in an armchair," Baran said.

THE WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE

As a result of these interventions, big changes are happening to Calay IP School. At present, it serves pupils from Kinder to Grade 5. But for next schoolyear, the school will add another level, Grade 6 and will finally become a complete elementary school.

Baran has also seen a steady increase in enrollees from 66 in 2016 to 145 during its early registration. This practically covers all children in their community. But there are other children in adjacent communities that need to be served. With the

new classrooms of Calay IP School that is located near their residences, they do not need to hike for hours anymore just to reach the school down the hill.

Apart from the positive feedback from the community, the new classrooms also helped change Baran's perspective in life.

"The setbacks made me more humble. Sometimes, I really wanted to get angry but I always say to myself not to give in. I need to stay calm and patient. There is a time for everything and now is the time for harvest. The ICTSI Foundation school donation is the fruit of our labor. The project is a wonderful and unforgettable experience because it helped me develop my skills as an administrator," he said.

Baran has even bigger plans for Calay IP School and there is no stopping him now that has the support of both the government and the private sector.

"I want to make Calay IP School an integrated school that follows the K to 12 curriculum. It will serve elementary and secondary classes. I am also encouraging the parents to support me because they also want their children to reach high school. Perhaps, the school can offer agriculture courses in Senior High School in the near future," he said.

For Baran, one only needs to be patient, persevering and focused on his goal, and things will surely happen at the right time.

AMID ALL the challenges, Melbert Baran never gave up to help bring the gift of education to his people.





THANKS TO THE HARDWORK of local leaders like Virginia Bañaga, the Marikina Watershed is regaining its former glory.

GUARDIAN OF THE FOREST

A community leader transforms “enemies” of the forest into its protectors

In 2009, more than half of the metropolis was turned into a vast ocean as Typhoon Ondoy paralyzed Metro Manila and affected five million people. Hundreds lost their lives, thousands were left homeless.

The loss of forest cover on the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL) or Marikina Watershed was blamed for the severe flooding caused by the storm. Barangay volunteer Virginia Bañaga who lives at the watershed knew she had to do something.

“Much of the water that flooded the lowlands in 2009 came from here and we were receiving the blame because a lot of people here clear forest areas for charcoal and additional agricultural land by burning them down through a method called kaingin. That’s what they do for a living,” said 51-year-old Virginia Bañaga, a resident of Calawis in Antipolo City, Rizal which is part of the UMRBPL.

She shared that those who practice kaingin would even burn down virgin forests in order to exploit its rich soil which is perfect for agriculture. What took decades and centuries to grow only took days, even hours, to destroy.

“Their excuse is that finding work elsewhere was difficult since they did not finish school and could not meet the requirements and qualifications. If they would apply for a construction job downtown, their employer would still ask them for government clearances which they have to pay for. They’d rather use the money to buy rice,” Bañaga said.

THE BATTLE PLAN

In 2010, Bañaga and fellow barangay volunteers decided to embark on a peaceful battle to save the forest. They organized themselves to form the Tulungan sa Kabuhayan ng Barangay Calawis (TSKC) which she now heads as president. With the help of non-government organizations including PBSP, the

group aims to make environmental protection a livelihood for the locals.

Their battle plan? Recruit the kaingin practitioners themselves!

She said, “During our first years, some of our members still practice kaingin even if they were already active with the reforestation project, but they eventually decided to quit and became protectors of the forest. How? Through their involvement in the project, they saw that it is easy to cut or burn trees but replacing them takes a lot of effort. They really developed a sense of care and responsibility towards the forest.”

ON THE WINNING SIDE

While there are still non-members who still conduct kaingin, Bañaga said that the reforestation activities by TSKC already overtook the rate of destruction, thanks to the support of PBSP and other organizations.

As part of its Marikina Watershed Program, PBSP has been rallying its member-companies and partners to join in the conservation of the UMRBPL. They send employee-volunteers every year to participate in tree planting activities.

Through PBSP’s program, TSKC was able to cover a total of 66 hectares of denuded forest land. Aside from native trees, fruit-bearing tree seedlings were also planted for agroforestry to provide additional income to community members. In fact, some of these trees are already bearing fruit!

“Members can have potential annual income ranging from PhP40,000 to PhP100,000 as caretakers of the reforestation sites and we aspire to increase this each year. We continue to reach out to the community to recruit people who still do kaingin, not only to give them alternative livelihood but also instill in them the love for nature,” Bañaga said.



PAULINA LABAY no longer has to climb uphill just to fetch water as her community received a potable water system that has drastically made life easier for them.

THE END OF HER CLIMB

*A mother of five finds relief in the potable water system
donated to her community*

“It was torture, every time.” That was how 64-year-old Paulina Labay described her 60 years’ experience of fetching water at the nearest uphill spring she used to call the “bane of her existence” as a child.

Born and raised in the mountain barangay of Pamutan, Cebu City, Labay would walk more than three kilometres of unpaved and sharp uphill tracks with her containers every day just to reach the spring and get water to use. At night, when there was no light at all, she would stumble around rocks and return home with scratches and containers with slightly spilled water. She would often cry and lament at her misfortunes. But with a big family as theirs, each one of them must do their share of the load if they want to have water to drink and bathe in.

When she got married and had kids, the situation got harder: her new home was located even farther from the spring, which takes a longer trip for fetching water. Her husband was away from home most of the day, doing farm work, so she was left at home to take care of their needs. As her family grew in number, so did the number of times she would return to the spring to get water to meet their needs. One time, in her 20s, she would carry her baby son while bringing her five-year-old and four-year-old along as they went to fetch water.

“Sometimes, we would arrive at the area and already see a long line of people waiting for their turn to fetch water. This experience would have been tolerable if I was still young. But now that we’re already old, our children have their own families, and my need for water does not stop so I still continue going up that hill. Sometimes, if my body is too tired to do it, I would pay PHP100 to any person who could get water for us. It really is an agonizing experience but I have no choice. I have to make sure we are safe and clean by giving them water they need,” Labay said.

In their remote area, project assistance from both the barangay and city is scarce. Their community is small, and with their barangay mainly reliant on farming for their income source, the funds were not enough to get water

from springs closer to their homes. She eventually accepted these odds as a permanent part of her life—until a group of strangers came and turned their lives around.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Labay was among the first residents who heard that a new potable water system might be built in the area. It came through the arrival of foreign individuals who went to the spring and checked the area.

These strangers turned out to be managers of Dow Chemicals Ltd. from other countries who helped design a water system that is safe and effective for the community. Through the funding support of the Aboitiz family led by Jose Antonio Aboitiz, the long-held dream of Labay and her community came true.

The first time she saw the tap stand that was finally built, she did not hesitate to get all the containers she could acquire to store water. After all, with water so close to her home, she can save up water more than twice as fast with less the effort.

“There was even a little commotion because all of us were just excited to taste the water from this system from the first time. When it was my turn, I immediately went and drank water from the faucet for my first taste. All I could think that time was ‘finally!’” she exclaimed.

It was the first water system of its kind that was ever built in the community—a fact that Labay and the rest of the residents take pride in. To help maintain the water system, the farmers’ association they belong to implemented a policy that regulates the use and ensures the repair and maintenance of their system so it can still be enjoyed by future residents.

“The water tanks on the spring are the biggest that I’ve seen... it is the most impressive system we saw. And we now own it, so we really have to do our part in taking care of this system. Imagine, I am already in my 60s and I never thought I could see a faucet so close to our homes...and yet, here we are. We really thank all the donors who gave us this blessing.”

WEAVE AND LIVE

A livelihood project helps a housewife and mother fulfill her hope to be financially productive even at home

Marlene Nares used to plant crops in a farm with her husband at the Riverside community in Porac, Pampanga. Due to the nature of her livelihood, she had to leave her eldest daughter, Jonalene, a child with special needs, to the care of her elderly mother.

"I used to plant and sell bananas and vegetables. I had to leave home to work under the heat of the sun. Income was unstable but it was able to get us through," said the 48 year-old mother of four.

While the income was not much and irregular because she still had to wait for her crops to grow, at least she had something to call "work" and was able to help with the family's needs.

However, Nares had to give it up and stay at home when they had to relocate to the nearby Barangay Hacienda Dolores. The decision was mutual because her husband found a regular job as a carpenter. This meant she would be able to focus more on looking after Jonalene and her other children. Still, a part of her wished there was something else she could do at home to help with the household's finances.

NEW OPPORTUNITY

Thankfully, a livelihood project which aims to help housewives like her earn a living was introduced to their community by Leonio Land Holdings, Inc. (LLHI). The project, which is now being handled by PBSP, has taught 28 stay-at-home moms the art of basket weaving.

"I was really interested to join the project and learn to weave baskets because it will add to my family's income. With this,

I am able to help my husband with the kids' school needs," said Nares.

She earns up to PhP2,500 per month by weaving various kinds of madras baskets. But more than the added income, she is grateful for the opportunity to become productive even at home.

She said, "At least now, after I'm done preparing the kids for school and doing other chores, I can just sit down and weave even while watching TV. Also, I am now able to look after Jonalene while working, compared before when I had to go out and work under the sun."

EMPOWERED WOMAN

Now, Nares enjoys being a full-time mom and a provider at the same time. In addition, she relishes that basket weaving has brought the family even closer since it became a bonding activity for them.

She said, "I really love weaving. My children have also gotten interested with it just by observing me. In fact, they would help me on weekends. Even my husband learned how to weave baskets!"

Nares is a good example that regardless of your gender, socioeconomic status or age, one can still make better versions of themselves and become productive members of society.

"I learned the skill of weaving even if I am already in my 40s. As long as you live, you have to keep learning new things," she said.



MARLENE NARES proves that even stay-at-home moms can still help provide for their families.

STITCHING HER FUTURE

A young woman learns a new skill and finds better employment through Accenture's Corporate Citizenship Program and PBSP

Wrapping bread at a local bakery was the only way 19-year-old Angelica de Jesus knew how to do to make a decent living. As the eldest of four children, she feels a strong sense of responsibility to help with the family's needs.

However, her PhP8,000 monthly income was barely enough to cover the household's expenses and there was nothing she could do. Just like many young people in her community in Porac, Pampanga, de Jesus never got the chance to go to college and instead had to find a job after graduating from high school.

For this reason, she did not have the opportunity to acquire relevant skills that could have made her fit for a better-paying job.

A CHANCE SHE COULD NOT MISS

In a favorable turn of events, she heard of the Vocational Skills Training and Employment Facilitation program made possible through Skills to Succeed, an Accenture in the Philippines' Corporate Citizenship Program and implemented by PBSP. She knew that this could be her chance to learn a new skill and be able to find better employment.

She wasted no time and soon signed up for it. To her delight and excitement, she was accepted.

"I really wanted to try a new job. I thought, 'Should I just pack bread forever?' So I did not hesitate to quit my job at the bakery because I wanted to focus on the training. I was confident that I'll have a better job after that even though I did not have any knowledge on sewing before," she said.

Indeed, de Jesus proved that she is a fast learner.

"Although it was my first time to study Dressmaking, I had no difficulty because I can learn fast even by just observing. Eventually, I was able to master it," she said.

Aside from Dressmaking, the program that equips individuals with training and skills to land a job or start a new business also offers Welding, Electrical Installation and Maintenance, Beauty Care, Hotel and Restaurant Services, Automotive, Refrigerator and Aircon Repair, Industrial Sewing, and Call Center Training.

And because the courses offered are being given by the accredited schools of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the trainees also receive a National Certification (NC) II that many employers desire. This means de Jesus will have a greater chance to find work once she is finished with the Dressmaking track.

MORE INCOME FOR THE FAMILY

True enough, de Jesus did get a job easily!

After finishing the course, she, together with other people who were part of the training, applied for a position at a garments factory in nearby Angeles City.

Just a day after applying, she immediately received a call from the company which offered her a job as a sewer.

"All the things I learned during the training, I now apply with my job," said de Jesus who now makes pockets at the factory.

Not only did she receive all the benefits of an employee she never had before, de Jesus also gets a monthly take-home salary of PhP12,000 — a big increase compared to her previous work. She also gets to do a more fulfilling role that allows her to use her talents and creativity.

She said, "We now have more money to buy food and I can now help my father, who is a fruit seller, with the bills. I can now also buy household items. That's why I am very grateful to Accenture and PBSP for giving this opportunity."

De Jesus is just one of the almost 200 young people from economically-disadvantaged families whom Accenture and PBSP have given a second chance for a better future. As the program continues, more young people like her discover and hone new skills that enable them to help their families and reach for their dreams.

FROM WRAPPING BREAD

at a local bakery, Angelica de Jesus now works as a sewer and is earning a bigger income to support her family.





Give a Gift of **SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING**

1 in 3 Filipino children under 5 years old are malnourished.

Undernourishment causes irreversible damage in a child's physical and mental development. It does not only deprive a child of a brighter future, but also the country of a healthy workforce in the future.

You have the power to change this.

Give a gift of supplemental feeding for only PhP45 per child, per day.



Give a Gift of Change Supports PBSP's **"NutriSapat, Batang Angat"** **Supplementary Feeding Program**

The program will provide 120 days of supplemental feeding to every malnourished child. It will also provide learning sessions for mothers on food preparation and backyard gardening (including food plant items) to ensure food is always on the table.

Give to a pooled fund

PhP550.00
per employee (at 300 employees)

Sponsor a batch of 30 kids

PhP160,000.00
for 120 days

Sponsor a kid

PhP5,300.00
per child for 120 days

For donations, companies or individuals may deposit to Philippine Business for Social Progress or PBSP, Peso Account no.: 4480-0968-79, BDO-Dasmarinas St.-Binondo Branch. For online / mobile banking, please use the account number 004480-0968-79. For international wire transfers, SWIFT Code is BNORPHMM.

Please email the deposit slip or any form of confirmation of deposit to health@pbsp.org.ph

All sponsors will receive schedules of feeding programs and may participate as volunteers. Report on funds raised and beneficiaries reached will be shared on our online platforms.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

This section features inspiring expatriate business and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) leaders in the Philippines. In this issue, we bring you Citi Philippines Chief Executive Officer Aftab Ahmed who talks about leadership by example.

Ninth Issue

CHANGED

MAY 2018

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: CEO



WALKING THE TALK

*Citi Philippines CEO and PBSP Trustee shares
his thoughts on life, work, career, and success*

For Citi Philippines Chief Executive Officer Aftab Ahmed, leadership is not just about leading people to achieve goals and deliver results, it is also about mentoring and contributing towards the growth and development of his team members, and about walking the talk.

With a banking career that spans 40+ years and covers 10 international assignments across North America, Europe, Middle East and Africa, and Asia Pacific, Ahmed has had quite an extensive background and experience in various disciplines and in managing multi-cultural environments.

In every stint, his leadership style follows this tried-and-tested formula consisting of high engagement but not micro-management, high accountability at the personal and team level, high involvement in problem solving, a strong bias for action and for getting things done. His leadership style includes having a strong focus on goals and high commitment to achieving deliverables, extensive formal and informal mentoring, and strategic mapping of growth objectives.

"From a philosophy standpoint, it starts from learning from the past, living in the present with an eye on the future and ends with walking the talk. What lies in between is the need to be pragmatic, positive, curious, and have the ability to handle change. This, coupled with a "play to win" approach and a life lesson of encouraging people to point fingers at the problem and not towards each other, encapsulates my philosophy of what it takes to be a successful professional," explained Ahmed.

LOOKING UP TO HIS INFLUENCERS

At an early age, Ahmed already knew too well the importance of respect, kindness especially to less fortunate people, commitment and giving one's best in everything. He learned to be passionate and thankful for life and all its blessings. In every endeavor, he gets involved with high energy and maintains a positive outlook and attitude. No task is impossible to do as his mantra is "it can be done."

Ahmed credits these deeply ingrained values and life lessons to his role models – no less than his parents, teachers and close family members who contributed towards making him who he is today.

"I am exceptionally grateful to my parents, especially to my mother who continues to be an inspiration, for the love and affection they gave, and for all the lessons they taught me through being deeply committed to living by these values themselves," he shared.

Ahmed strived to apply these values in school and while pursuing his interests in a broad range of competitive

sports (cricket, hockey, tennis, table tennis, track and field and boxing etc.) in his Primary, Secondary, and High School days. Later, his extra-curricular interests expanded to include writing poetry, exercising, travel, and reading.

A VETERAN 'CITIBANKER'

Ahmed's journey at Citi began after he completed his Master's degree in Business Administration from Tulane University in New Orleans, U.S.A. From an executive trainee, he rose from the ranks and assumed various roles in Consumer Finance, Consumer Banking, Commercial Banking, Corporate Banking, Correspondent Banking, Operations and Technology, Distribution and DE NOVA expansion, and later, multiple CEO roles in Egypt, Hungary and the Balkans and Baltics, including Service Center Management.

"Citi is the only Firm that I've ever worked for and if I had to do it again, it would still be the only Firm I would want to be a part of. Citi has an unmatched global network which, in addition to providing exceptional mobility opportunities, also provides the opportunity to be exposed to and learn from world-class

bankers. It is a best-in-class meritocracy and is an exceptional environment to grow and develop in," he said.

SHARED ADVOCACY

Giving back to less fortunate communities is an advocacy that Ahmed personally shares with Citi, which is an outstanding global corporate citizen. Through the support of Citi Foundation, the company provides grants to seven social initiatives on an annual basis in the Philippines.

Ahmed is actively involved in these, including the Citi Micro-entrepreneurship Awards (Financial Inclusion) and Global Community Day events, presentations to school and college students, PBSP directorship, engagement with RIMANSI (micro-insurance), and BAYAN Academy.

Whether in these initiatives or in fulfilling his CEO role, Ahmed wants to be able to lead on an impactful basis. For him, it is important to successfully achieve established and assigned goals by making a material contribution to the top-line, bottom-line, as well as on the people development front.

This, he believes, is the standard of success.

"Success is defined both in terms of the degree of achievement against a given task, goal, or objective and, equally importantly, the manner in which it was achieved. Success should not be defined as a 'flash in the pan' but should be something that has achieved a sustainable state. It is when you have both contributed and learned from the initiative while ensuring that this also holds true for others engaged in the endeavor. Success is about creating value both in tangible and intangible terms," Ahmed said.

“Success should not be defined as a ‘flash in the pan’ but should be something that has achieved a sustainable state.”



STORIES OF **BRAVERY, HOPE AND RESILIENCE**

Survivors of the Marawi siege recount their harrowing ordeal and share how they are rebuilding their lives



A DIFFERENT KIND OF SOUVENIR

A teen survivor finds a creative way of coping with the trauma caused by the Marawi siege

The survivors of the five-month-long Marawi siege had various ways of coping with the trauma. Others are rebuilding new lives in a different place while many returned and saved what was left of their homes.

For Abdulbare Maribuya, a 15-year-old sidewalk vendor in Marawi, his way of coping is by making miniatures of battle tanks, helicopters and speedboats out of recyclable materials he collected in their evacuation site. He has been giving these miniatures to fellow evacuees and to the military in appreciation for rescuing him and his family.

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

"At 3 p.m. on May 23, my cousin and I were on our way to the Mosque to pray when we came across people who were shouting 'Run', referring to the ISIS-inspired members who began wreaking havoc in the city. We run back home and allowed some people to seek shelter in our house when we heard gunshots. At night, they burned some buildings. I got so scared. The next day, I heard people saying that the military helicopters might drop poison on the ground so we escaped and ran towards the house of my elder sister in Lilod Mapandayan," recalled Maribuya who sold corn delicacies to support his family.

He and 25 relatives stayed in his sister's house which shook everytime bombs exploded. They could not sleep well. The lights of military aircrafts would illuminate the roof in red.

"We were trapped in my sister's house. Good thing, we had enough food. But we didn't have formula milk or breastmilk for the two babies who were with us. They only drank water with sugar," he added.

Maribuya was scared of the military and the rebels because of their firearms. He had many apprehensions: the rebels might recruit him to fight with them just like what happened

to the prisoners; and the military might mistakenly identify him as an ISIS supporter.

RESCUED BY SOLDIERS

After nine days, Maribuya, his family and other evacuees were rescued by the military during clearing operations to free the area from ISIS elements.


Before we were rescued, the military interrogated us. They asked if we had firearms and if we had seen ISIS-inspired members. They were also getting our names and our residence. We explained to them why we were at my sister's house. We just cooperated with them. Later, they gave us a white flag and instructed us to run towards the rescue team with their military escorts. The run towards the other side seemed too long as I was assisting my sick father who could barely walk due to diabetes. When we reached the Provincial Capitol, the rescue team checked our condition. From that time, I felt relieved," revealed Maribuya.

Maribuya's family was given a "green card" or Disaster Assistance Family Access Card (DAFAC) to enable quick identification and monitoring for whatever intervention they needed and received. His family received psychosocial support and relief goods from various organizations.

Maribuya was one of the beneficiaries of Jollibee Group Foundation's (JGF) donations to Amai Pakpak Central Elementary School.

"I was happy because of Jollibee. I even sang during the activity. They also gave us reading materials, toys and hygiene kits. The hygiene kit was very useful," he said.

The gift-giving activity of Jollibee was in partnership with the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). Some PBSP personnel also donated art materials to Maribuya so he could continue making miniatures. Others also raised funds to purchase insulin for his father.



Because he couldn't sell corn delicacies anymore, Maribuya has chosen to focus for now on making miniatures which are not only helping him cope with the trauma, but have also served as a reminder of the heroism of the soldiers who risked their lives to save survivors and liberate the city from terrorists.

"The Marawi experience made me realize that I should be content with what I have. Amid everything that happened, I remain thankful because the war ended without leaving any casualty in our family," he said.

ABDULBARE MARIBUYA expresses his gratitude to everyone who helped him through his creative artworks that he makes from scraps.



ALTHOUGH THE MARAWI SIEGE has been a grueling experience for Farhana Diampuan, she is still thankful for the valuable life lessons it taught her.

A TEST OF FAITH

A pregnant mother manages to escape with her child during the Marawi siege

Sittie Farhana Diampuan clutched tightly her one-year-old daughter and seven-month-old unborn baby in her tummy when she heard gun shots getting closer and louder. They were holed up in their house in Marawi when the siege erupted and it was already surrounded by the ISIS-inspired rebels.

Her husband, who was trapped somewhere, couldn't rescue them because the military already cordoned off the area. The men were firing their guns but were not aiming at the residents.

She heard in the radio that several men clad in black already killed people near Dansalan College. They also burned Marawi City Jail. The prisoners were given guns but those who didn't join were executed.

At night, Diampuan saw her mother who was also trapped outside, finally arriving and running towards their house. As soon as she got in, she told her to immediately lie down on the floor as there was a constant exchange of gunfire outside. The situation was so difficult for Diampuan because she was pregnant, her husband was nowhere to be found, and there was no electricity which made it even harder for them to move around the house.

SEEKING REFUGE

The next day, Diampuan and her family escaped to safer ground, along with her other neighbors.

"We thought the situation would get better but it got worse. There were additional killings on the streets. So my father-in-law advised us to pack things just good for one day so we could still run in case of emergency. If not for our safety, my father-in-law would not have fled with us. He was hoping that the siege would be over soon. He was worried about our belongings because our house might be looted if we leave," said Diampuan.

On the way to the house of her in-laws in Cagayan de Oro City where she was to be reunited with her husband, traffic was heavy with evacuees.

"Some people, including children were only walking. Some senior citizens were carrying big baskets on their heads. My heart was broken seeing them like that," revealed Diampuan.

Houses along the road were closing doors but some gave bottled waters. Other bakeries gave away their breads which were packed in cellophanes and distributed to passing vehicles.

"We left our house at 9 a.m. and we arrived in Cagayan de Oro City around 2 a.m. We were five families in a small house. There were a lot of children. We were like sardines when sleeping. I was worried of my daughter because she needed space when sleeping. So I just moved my body sideways so she could sleep well. I could feel back pains because of our cramped space. It was difficult but I was able to cope," she recalled.

GETTING HELP FROM STRANGERS

Diampuan did not stay long in Cagayan de Oro City. Three months into the siege, she gave birth in Iligan where hospital services were cheaper. She and her family transferred in Balindong, Lanao del Sur after giving birth. Because the situation was not yet stable at that time, she and her family managed to survive with help from strangers.

"I received relief goods from DSWD such as canned goods, coffee, rice, toothbrush, toothpaste and other basic commodities. I also received non-food items from other organizations like the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). They provided me with hygiene kits and kitchen utensils," she said.

The relief goods played an important role in addressing their basic needs since supplies were still scarce. Sometimes they need to travel to Iligan City to buy supplies. Transportation was expensive.

With her experience, Diampuan has learned a lot of lessons that made her look at life in a different way now.

"The Marawi experience changed how I view life. Before, I was happy-go-lucky. Now, I realized that a single centavo counts. I need to save resources for the future of my family because we do not know what will happen next. There are no permanent things in life. Everything is temporary. While I have the chance, I want to save resources," she said.

Diampuan also learned to be content with her situation. Despite losing her house which was destroyed during the siege, she remains thankful because nobody died in her family.

"Humans by nature are hopeful. We need to be content and thankful to God for all the things He has given us. Sometimes when we receive something like relief goods, we are happy but we forget to thank God. The Marawi siege is like a test of faith," Diampuan said.



AFTER WITNESSING the brutal truth about armed conflicts, Noralden Moscara returns to school to achieve his dreams.

REAL LIFE IS NOT ANIME

A boy who lost his house and belongings during the siege learns to see beyond material things

When the Marawi siege began, 11-year-old Noralden Moscara felt a bit excited to see fightings – the things he watched in anime television shows come to life.

But when he saw that his parents were sad, he knew that this is no longer cartoons but the real thing. He better understood the situation when some 30 people suddenly sought shelter in their house.

Without any electricity, their house was so dark but filled with people who were mostly sleeping on chairs. But later, they learned that they needed to evacuate as well.

“I was worried when I heard that we needed to evacuate. I could not watch anime anymore. My things in our house might be lost. I was also worried because I might not see my friends in the neighborhood anymore,” said Moscara.

At 6 a.m. on May 24, 2017, they fled the house onboard a pick-up truck that was driven by his uncle. They did not pack their things anymore because they were in a hurry to leave.

SURVIVING THE SIEGE

When Moscara’s family evacuated, there were ISIS-inspired rebels doing inspection on the streets.

“They told us that Muslim women should not remove their veil and not expose our aurat (intimate parts in Islam). It was also forbidden for Muslim men to wear shorts. But that time, my father was wearing shorts. They told my father not to wear shorts anymore, then they let us pass. Some were polite but they were still our enemies because they destroyed our belongings,” said Moscara.

When they arrived in the house of their relative in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur, they could not buy relief goods because there were so many evacuees. Fortunately, there were relief goods that helped them survive.

“We received relief goods such as rice, noodles and canned goods. At first, the distribution was done daily. Then, it became weekly and monthly when the war was almost over. Because of the relief, my mother was able to save money. Others also provided us school supplies. I used the notebooks,

ballpen and pencil in writing whenever I attended classes in temporary learning spaces in Saguiaran,” he shared.

Moscara was among the recipients of the student kits provided by Jollibee Group Foundation, in partnership with PBSP.

STARTING ANEW

Moscara’s family lost their house and all their belongings which were burned down during military air strikes. But they were lucky enough to have another house in Guimbal, Marawi which was far from ground zero or the site of the battle. His parents were funding its construction even before the siege began.

“I felt happy because our new house was not affected during the conflict. But I also felt sad because we lost our old house and television. I could not watch anime anymore. My mother cried because all our belongings were lost, including her cash and jewelries,” he said.

Coming from such an experience, Moscara has become more helpful, respectful and obedient to his family and other people now.

“Before, I was crying because I wanted my mother to buy me a new phone and television since I was not doing anything at home. I had all these things in our old house before. My mother told me that we do not have money anymore. Our remaining resources were all spent to finish the construction of our house. My parents’ income were prioritized to pay debts. My mother told me not to worry about it anymore because we could still earn money and recover someday,” said Moscara who wants to become a civil engineer or a scholar that memorizes Quran someday.

These days, Moscara is no longer insisting to buy a TV and watch his favorite anime shows. During his pastime, he is busy feeding chickens now and watching its eggs. His family are planning to go into the poultry business. He is also helping his grandmother plant squash in the garden.

Like many other resilient Maranaos affected by the siege, Moscara and his family are rebuilding their lives with newfound hope and a constant prayer for lasting peace in their communities.

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