

JULY 2020



# NEWSLETTER



A second chance  
for youth at risk

## EDITORIAL

By ACAY Executive Director

Such a strange time!

Subject of so many controversies, in France as in the Philippines, it was a time out of time and out of the ordinary and yet for ACAY a time of incredible fruitfulness.

Certainly, our mission in Manila was initially shocked by this forced quarantine that cut us off from our usual external missionary reality. Impossible to meet our young people in detention, or even those in the reintegration stage and those at work, and the almost immediate setting up of an environment with drastic sanitary rules to guarantee the safety of our girls and our teams.

Once the shock was over, the missionary momentum gradually regained its predominant place as we adjusted to the present reality. What to do when nothing can be done? Well... make do with it! Like everyone else, online contacts were intensified. In collaboration with the employees of the government detention center for minors, we established daily contact with our young people and lived a daily time of sharing with them from a distance. Connected to the general sound system, the entire center could hear us. Training online was started with those in the Aftercare program.

In our neighborhood, with the permission of our Bishop and the Homeowner's Association, our community of sisters animated an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every Sunday evening from our terrace so that all those who wished to join us could come while maintaining the compulsory distancing.

For their part, the team in Marseille worked from home and continued the accompaniment of the young people. For those released from detention, they were coached remotely by telephone or via social media. The objectives for monitoring the young people were achieved even if at a slower pace. The team also had the brilliant idea of starting a fundraising race for ACAY, which enabled us to help about 200 families by offering them food baskets and financial support. The needs were real: the stories of people in working-class neighborhoods who live from day to day and in the slums are heartbreaking!

How many families were not on the government lists and were left without support. If by misfortune a case of Covid suddenly arose, the neighborhood was completely barricaded with a formal ban on going out. So, many thanks to Laurent, Christine and Inès in Marseille and thanks to all of you who have run for the Philippines!

Finally, supported by a large majority of our employees, the work within the School of Life has intensified. As I write this editorial, our girls are still obliged to be in quarantine. The last three months have brought a rare quality to our relationships. We had just celebrated the 20th anniversary of the School of Life, and this quarantine has definitely been a return to the roots for me. I felt as if I was reliving the start of the School of Life twenty years ago with the 15 girls present (including three former girls as support).

The slowing down of our exterior activities has refocused us on the quality of our relationship with the girls and a deeper path has opened up for them. "Living the moment", was how Glenilyn, our very first girl in the School of Life, described this quarantine. Yes, "living the present moment" and dwelling in it with presence, sharing, and training that transforms from within.

While this "new normal", as it is called here, is setting itself in motion with its share of activities, let them no longer rob us of this taste for the deep.

*S. Sophie de Joly*

## IN THIS NEWSLETTER, YOU WILL FIND:

Editorial of Sister Sophie  
Lockdown in ACAY: A difficult time overcome by solidarity  
Driving License Grant for Young People  
in France  
Looking back on 2019  
How to Help us





# Lockdown in ACAY: A Difficult

As in France, quarantine was decreed in the Philippines mid-March. More than 60 million people live in Luzon, the largest island of the archipelago where Manila, the capital, is located. For three months, a curfew was in place here between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m., and all access to the metropolis was controlled by the army. As Sister Sophie, the founder of ACAY, said, *"In the absence of tricycle engines, the silence of the workers was combined with the silence of televisions, karaoke's and radios. Manila has come under an astonishing silence."*

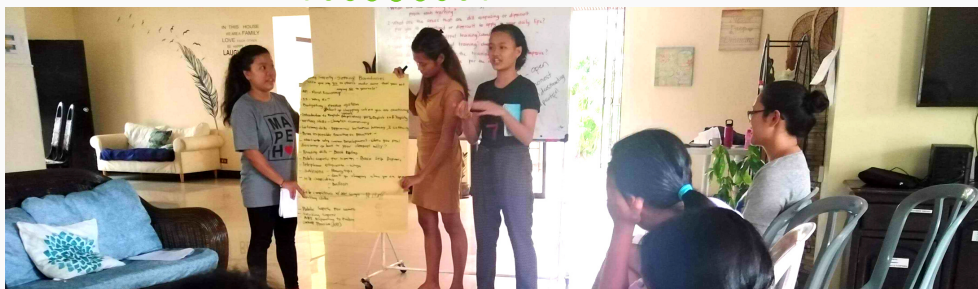
As I write this, the inhabitants of some neighborhoods are still being confined in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In the Philippines, the health crisis has had a huge impact on the population, making it impossible to go to work or to buy provisions. Lack of work means lack of income. The poorest are the most affected by this dramatic situation. And no unemployment benefit in the Philippines comes to the relief of its inhabitants. Arlene, wife of Raymart, both former youths from the ACAY programs told us: *"My husband can no longer go to work because of the onset of quarantine. We have only one option: to stay at home which means we will live off our savings."*

As a result, a large part of the population no longer has an income to simply buy food. The government has tried to provide, as has the Department of Social Welfare, but there have been inequalities. Annabell, a former girl from the School of Life told us: *"In these times of crisis, we were among those most affected. It is a double pain for families like ours: living with the fear of the virus and hearing the sound of our empty stomachs."*

Besides, people are crammed into the squatter settlements. So little space to move around. Poor families in the capital find themselves locked in 4m<sup>2</sup> houses where the situation is untenable, in addition to the heat. The local government of Manila's neighborhoods has authorized three outings a week, solely to get out of the squatter areas and for one person per family to buy food and basic necessities. *"For the first few days, everything was fine, but as time goes by, the situation gets worse. We're starting to run out of food and other necessities,"* says Jessica, a former beneficiary of the School of Life.

## ACAY TEAMS INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH THE SITUATION



While the entire Manila region came to a halt because of the virus, ACAY employees maintained their activities with young people. Some staff worked from home, while others stayed with the twenty girls from the School of Life to ensure a presence. No one was allowed in or out of the School of Life, except for two people designated to do shopping. Sr. Sophie chose to confine herself to be with the girls. The other sisters, except for Sister Rachel who cannot return from New Zealand, have obtained permits to join them and be present every day at the School of Life: to handle changes and absences, to keep up the morale of the young people, to avoid an anxiety-provoking atmosphere... These were the main concerns of the ACAY teams.

The quarantine took place during the summer school holidays. During this time the girls devoted themselves to various training and activities. The School of Life (SOL) was trained in "5s" a methodology taken from the business world to be adapted in SOL Homelife. They also sewed masks for nearby hospitals. *"With this small gesture, I am happy to to help in these difficult times."* said Genevive, a SOL beneficiary. Not only were they able to be creative and learn how to sew, they also put into practice one of the core values of our association: being at the service of others.

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*What I loved the most was to have the presence of our staff and sisters who chose to stay with us even in these challenging times.*

*There was never a day that I felt scared even though I know that it is a different and difficult situation outside our shelter.*

- vive sol beneficiary



“

*During one of the training I was facilitating, we were all laughing and having fun together and I suddenly realized just then that this spontaneous joy had freed me from my worries for my family linked to Covid. I was finally able to endure this lock-down because the girls were with me, they needed me, and I chose to be with them.*

- ate Jam ACAY staff





# Time Overcome by Solidarity

The teams in our **Second Chance Program** have kept in touch with the young people in prison by mail, telephone or through social networks.

In France, many young people accompanied by ACAY at the Penitentiary Establishment for Minors in Marseille were released. Our team worked from home and continued to accompany the young people. The interventions in detention were of course suspended, as well as the family visits. This period was a difficult time for the minors, who felt isolated, and for their families, who were worried about not being able to visit their children. In order to reinforce this sense of connection, we sent regular letters to the young people we accompany in the different penitentiary establishments in the Southern Region so that there is continuity in the follow-up. Contact was also maintained with the families.

## " SOLIDARITY RUN OR WALK: FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES OF ACAY"

In France, in the Philippines and around the world, more than 60 people took part in the challenge, between Friday 1st and Sunday 3rd of May.

Quarantine has enabled us to be more supportive to one-another. The ACAY teams joined forces to launch a challenge to all the members and supporters of ACAY. The run or walk in solidarity was an opportunity for all to give meaning to this quarantine! The goal was to run or walk, at home or in the backyard, and to complete a maximum number of kilometres in order to raise funds. A launch video was produced, thanks to the participation of former volunteers and members of the ACAY teams in the Philippines and France.



*In Paris, in the living room of their apartment, Arthur and Quiterie organized an obstacle course for Noah. At each corner, he could shoot at a basket with paper balls. With each successful shot Noé was raising funds to help young people and families in the Philippines!*



*In the Hérault, Irene motivated her grandchildren, Lalie and Max, to run at home, "so that the children of the Philippines will be as happy as we are."*

More than 192 people (families and former beneficiaries of ACAY) were able to benefit from this aid in two forms: food baskets or financial support. After receiving the money transfer, Jessica thanked ACAY but also all the donors:

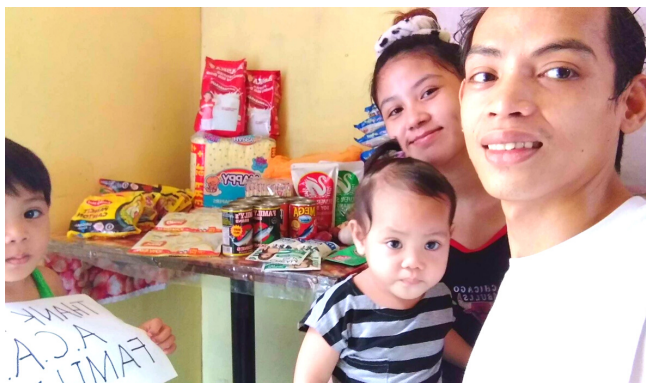
*"We received financial help to buy food, milk and diapers for my daughter. I was able to smile again, and we were finally able to eat three times a day. Many thanks again to ACAY and to all the people who thought of us".*

The funds raised from this initiative also covered the food costs of the School of Life for a period of three months. Priority was given to the purchase of fresh products.

## THE SOLIDARITY RUN IN EPM

The ACAY France team resumed its work at the beginning of June at EPM (Établissement Pénitentiaire pour Mineurs) a Penitentiary Establishment for Minors in Marseille. The young people were made aware of the difficult situation of quarantine in the Philippines.

Some of them took part in our solidarity run challenge, adapted to their context. Beside running, they also wrote messages of encouragement to the beneficiaries of ACAY in the Philippines.



*Edwin (one of the former beneficiary) and his family thankfully received food package from the fund raised.*



# ACAY in 2019



## STRENGTHENING OF PARTNERSHIPS

- **With the Pillars of Justice** : In the Philippines, 2019 marks the 1st anniversary of the Second Chance formation as an alternative to prison, in partnership with the judges.

In France, it is the presentation of our support plan for the Bouches-du-Rhône's Regional Educational Services for the Judicial Protection of Youth that is increasingly anchoring our action with the institutions.

- **With the Corporate world** : The M6 Foundation, which supports our actions in France, and the Terre Plurielle Foundation of the Bouygues Construction Group, l'Oréal and Décathlon, which support our actions in the Philippines, reflect our desire to create bridges between the associative and professional worlds. This in order to offer inspiring perspectives to our young people.

- **With schools** : More than 2,500 young people attended the testimonies of 4 youths from the Philippines this year. All these young people were touched by their testimonies of hope and are now involved in initiatives to help others. More and more organizations are also requesting our involvement for 2020.



## ACCREDITATION OF SECOND CHANCE PROGRAM

We are very proud that the Second Chance Program in the Philippines has been awarded a Level 2 Accreditation by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. This level 2 indicates the high quality of service we offer the youth of the program.

## TESTIMONIES OF THE YOUTH FROM PHILIPPINES

4 alumni: former beneficiaries of the School of Life and the Second Chance programs of ACAY Philippines, came to France in order to share their experiences and to talk with the beneficiaries of the ACAY France programs in schools and in jails.





# ACAY in 2019

## IN THE PHILIPPINES

### SCHOOL OF LIFE PROGRAM

88%

of the girls received educational assistance enabling them to finish their primary, secondary and / or higher education.

### SECOND CHANCE PROGRAM

127

youth between 15 and 21 years old were catered to in the Second Chance Program.

### FAMILY PROGRAM

76

trainings were conducted with families through the Parents Advocate Meetings.

## IN FRANCE

### PREVENTION PROGRAM

32

students took part the program for kids in danger of drop-out.

### REHABILITATION PROGRAM

85%

youth who attended the training sessions gave a 1 on the evaluation form, on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 = very satisfied, 4 = not satisfied).

### REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

7

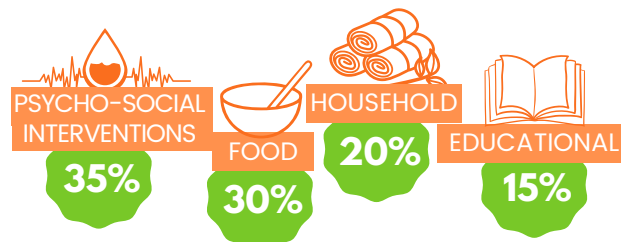
young people out of 9 accompanied by ACAY have been greatly encouraged by their positive reinsertion.

THIS 2020, SUPPORT US TO CONTINUE OUR MISSION OF GIVING SECOND CHANCE TO MORE YOUTH IN THE PHILIPPINES AND IN FRANCE!

## MAKE A DONATION

Your generous gifts made it possible to continue our mission. With your continuous support, we can help transform the life of more youth who have been exposed to traumatic experiences recover and become self-sustainable.

 1 expenses  $\times$   1 day = € 6.66 or P 333



YOU CAN MAKE A SINGLE DONATION OR COMMIT TO A MONTHLY BANK TRANSFER.  
For more details regarding donations, or if you wish to contact our mission, visit our website [www.acaymission.com](http://www.acaymission.com) and go to "TAKE ACTION"



# GETTING A DRIVER'S LICENSE, A STEPPINGSTONE TO PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION.

Most of the young people accompanied by ACAY in Marseille, inside youth center, have been out of the school for some time. According to the study by M. Mucchieli, "82.5% of the youth have had problems during their school years: whether they were problems in understanding, learning or behavioral problems and/or problems with attendance and attention in class (...). In 25% of the cases, the young person is not at all concerned about the school leaving project". Their involvement in a training course, or a return to school is therefore not easy to envisage. For these young people, it is a question of investing in a motivating training, allowing them to go beyond the feeling of failure they retain from their past experiences.

## "Having a driver's license is like being free"

Based on this observation, ACAY has applied, thanks to the M6 Foundation's project to finance driving license scholarships. Young people are very attracted to the driving license. Obtaining the precious prize as a first diploma can motivate them again, as they are often in a situation of academic failure. Lockdown was not an obstacle as they develop regularity in their learning and along the weeks they were able to memorize the rules. In a second phase, following driving lessons and obtaining their license exams allows them to regain self-confidence, which can be a springboard to invest in further training. This is the case of one of the beneficiary, who has already passed his license: He works now as a construction worker (structural work, carpentry). "This will from now on allow me to advance in my professional life. The driving license will help me to be able to go to work, and it will encourage me not to fall back into illegality. Thanks to the help of ACAY and the M6 foundation, change is possible, You made it possible and I hope to have it to move forward in my business".



Bilal, a youth from Marseille, got a scholarship for the driving license.

## "Feeling useful in my family is important to me."

A driving license is also a key to professional integration. Difficulties of mobility can also be an obstacle to access to employment or vocational training. As Yanis, who has benefited from this grant, says:

*"I applied for a B driver's license because I can't afford it. It's important for me to have it because I decided to move away from Marseille, to a provincial place. In this small town, there is not much public transport."*

Nowadays, without a driver's license, it's a nightmare. It's difficult to get around in everyday life. For one of the beneficiaries, the driver's license is more than just a way to get a job:

*"I have an older brother, three older sisters and three younger brothers and nobody has a driver's license... Having a driver's license would allow me to help my family, to go to school in my own car, to do the shopping for my mother, to take my younger brothers to soccer. **Feeling useful within my family is very important to me.**"*

## EMPOWERING THE YOUNG PERSON

In the spirit of ACAY's pedagogical approach, which aims to empower the young person, they agreed partly to finance their driver's license, up to a minimum of 50 euros. The young person must also justify the use of the driver's license as part of his or her professional project, and therefore undertake not to stop in the process of obtaining a driver's license.

Six young people accompanied by ACAY have now obtained grants to finance their driver's license. Two of them have already obtained it, making it easier for them to get a job.

We would like to thank the M6 foundation for their initiative and support in the implementation of this project.