



NOVEMBER 2021

NEWSLETTER

Editorial



24 years have passed... A long journey of encounters, the weaving of lives intertwined, of programs developed, of innovative and creative pedagogical concepts to support our young people in the Philippines and in France who have been through abuse and violence at a too young age.

And yet, this morning, after these 24 years of mission, here I am sitting in a barely swept room of the barangay, a kind of neighborhood town hall, where those endless colonies of insects ready to squat on our religious clothes are swarming, and I find myself with Jhaym* and Jhayv* spelling out L.U.M.P.I.A = lumpia ("spring rolls" in Filipino). With them, I am deciphering each letter and helping them understand how to associate sounds with letters. Aged 15 and 16, they can neither read nor write. Very quickly exposed to a difficult family situation, absence of imprisoned parents, they learned to survive by themselves, on theft and delinquency. Survival cannot be achieved in the singular, so we discovered with amazement that there are 58 of them in this neighborhood gang. 58 kids wandering around and being brought back regularly to the police station or the barangay (neighborhood leader), depending on their age and the crimes committed.

Since the pandemic made our visits to the youth homes impossible, we adapted to the new reality by listening to the needs that were within reach. When a door closes, a window opens... so we seized the opportunity to share our program with neighborhood youth in alternatives to jail. The need is so great! There are so many youth to support...so many unbelievable situations. The local government personnel welcomed us with gratitude and kindness because they don't know how to stop this relentless delinquency.

From the first meeting, the team had to adapt. Training on emotion management, anger management, etc. had to wait, as well as preparation for any job interview, because of the reality in front of us; some of them needed to know how to read "mami, lumpia, lugaw", others needed to know how to add, subtract, divide, and to be able to speak basic English at their request. So, while those lucky enough to have had a few years of schooling went ahead with our team, I sat with my two young guys.

**Names are changed*



A second chance for
youth at risk

Seeing Jhaym* hold up his pencil with clumsiness and pride, struggling to recognize the letter "T" in a word, taking glory in recognizing a few letters! His motivation was sheer delight. To encourage, to give confidence, to lift up... Our vocation. After eight months of accompanying these young people, the neighborhood "mayor" told us that the delinquency associated with this group had decreased. The youth have decided to change!



Not looking at the years wasted wandering... but focusing on the life to be gained for the future. Not looking at the vertiginous gap... daring to move forward, step by step, learning to extract the essence of each small victory, and courageously developing one's own store of life intelligence made of constant learning and new discoveries.

This dynamic of constant learning and questioning enables us to be creative and innovative, whether in the Philippines or in France. This year, the participation of the ACAY Marseille team in a program dedicated to justice-related projects on a national scale has allowed us to see that we are also pioneers in the French context. As far as we know, there is no other association today that offers continuity in the follow-up of minors incarcerated in prison and upon their release, using a holistic approach.

Your involvement and support at our side are a true source of creativity and inspiration. For this, we are deeply grateful!

Sr. Sophie de Jésus

Sr. Sophie de Jésus - ACAY founder



WHEN PANDEMIC OPENS NEW HORIZONS!

Staying up past curfew hours, wandering around, begging everywhere, selling fruits stolen on fruit trees of neighbors, stealing iron or clothes, and getting into fights with other youth, are the common daily issues that the Barangay (local governmental unit) authorities strive to solve with groups, often turning into gangs, of street children in their areas. One of these groups is called Star Margarine. Made up of a group of more than fifty kids who wander around this area, searching for ways to earn money for their daily bread, challenging the energy of everyone in the Barangay where they are apprehended so often.

How to help these youth? How to give them new hope for their lives and the government staff a hand to see that a change is possible? This is the challenge ACAY decided to embrace in extending its services to these youth.



While the pandemic closed some doors, others opened. The Second Chance Program grasped these opportunities and began reaching out and understanding Mark, Jhun, Beverley & Co's situation a little more. A new priority opened before our eyes: while helping detained youth, we needed to develop a program of prevention for these ones to end up in youth homes or jails. A group of ten kids arrived and attended the first meeting, with tattoos on their arms, necks, or faces. With tee shirts longer than their small bodies, they were fixing our eyes with wide in expectation. Everything was put into place to create a quality bond with them, make them feel that they are part of ACAY and that their lives are a treasure worth saving. This first meeting was a test. We let them talk and share their dreams. Listening, analyzing the situation, and starting to assess where to start and where to go with them. The most important: hearts would be moved, desire of learning would be awakened and their lives will transform. The surprise for us was huge and unexpected: if some kids needed the usual ACAY Life-Skills training, the reality that knocked us was when we realized that some of them did not even know how to read and write!

So, "pulling up their sleeves", the team got to work reaching out to their needs: grouping kids per level of needs, educational augmentation for some, life skills for others, and home visits for all! In ACAY, contact with the families is crucial. As expected, poverty was "au rendez-vous". Parents drained by life's realities, pandemic exacerbating the difficulty to find funds for the daily needs, some of them had been in detention and some others left for the province leaving their kids. All trying to cope with a lack of educational background. They discovered ACAY, and we embarked them into discovering our program but above all into this hope that things will change for their kids. We also invited them to join us for a monthly sharing and training for them as parents.

Since then, about twenty youth attend the program regularly. ACAY staff, together with the Sisters, volunteers, and alumni have conducted Self-Awareness and Life Skills training once a week while one of us spent their time with two of them learning to recognize letters and learning how to write.

The barangay staff also noticed the changes in the behaviors of the youth. They proudly shared to us that recidivism has already started to decrease noticeably these past months and thanked us warmly for this. Life and Hope have not said their last word!

Despite the hurdles, the first half of the training has been extremely rewarding. Joy is tangible among the youth.



"I feel happy, did you see that my friends started to change?"

"I have been in the program for four months. I have had to report to the Barangay many times for all my offenses in the past years. After joining the training program, I've noticed a change in myself. I've learned how to set boundaries and choose better friends."

"I learned my limits and no longer join in negative behavior such as stealing. I still hang out with them as friends, but I go home early. The greatest lesson I have so far from the training is how to manage my anger, which has often led to violence. When I'm triggered, I take a step back and try to keep my anger under control so I won't hurt others."

"I realize that I am getting older and what my future will be is the consequence of my actions now."

"DRIVING ON THE GO" PROJECT: NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH!

"I am the first one in our family to get a Driver's License!"

exclaimed Ed*, one of the beneficiaries of the Second Chance Program when he told us this great news after passing his driver's license!

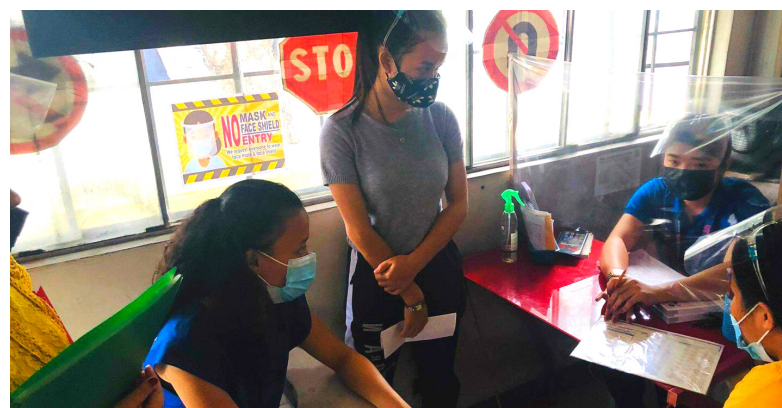
"I am so proud of my son getting his license that I will send a copy of his license to all my family in Mindanao"

Tatay (father of Ed)

One of the most recent skill sets offered to the beneficiaries of School of Life and the Second Chance program, preparing for their Independent Living is learning how to drive!

Aside from the funds that were offered, each of the youth had their counterpart as we encourage them to take ownership of their lives, to appreciate the help given them, and to become responsible.

For these youth to complete their financial participation for the driving course, they applied the knowledge learned from their entrepreneurship training in ACAY. Using the knowledge acquired from this training they were able to come up with a variety of small businesses, such as making homemade nuts, chili sauce, reselling pastries, and cooking snacks. They do everything themselves, from purchasing to cooking to selling.



" Having to contribute, even in a small way, to this training was challenging. However, it finally helped me to feel that this driving course is my own project. I worked hard and I was able to get my contribution. Today, having my driving license, I am grateful to ACAY for encouraging me to go beyond, to believe in my skills and in myself."

All the youth were excited and motivated as they started to process their individual papers required by the Driving School. After having attended the theoretical classes, all of them passed the exam successfully. Then came the time to apply the theoretical learnings as they set out for practical driving! One by one, the youth had a series of actual driving sessions on one of the main roads of Manila. **"I was so scared at first, but as I continued practicing, I became quite confident and enthusiastic."** Lea* recalled her experience driving along the highway.

Today Andi* is able to earn his living being part of a delivery company: **"I'm finishing my Senior High School online course while simultaneously working part-time as a Jeepney driver (the Philippines' most common public transportation). I am now able to earn a little and cover some of my expenses. I no longer ask my parents for money to pay for internet load for my school's online class; instead, I pay for it myself."** Loyd* is now working as support staff in the kitchen in a Formation Center and drives to buy their groceries.

Living with the pandemic is a big adjustment for a lot of people all over the world and much more for these youth who are still trying to fix their lives and their reintegration into society. Pandemic has definitely changed the world but **thanks to all of you, ACAY can adjust and be agile enabling the youth to find job opportunities!**

CELEBRATING MILESTONES

ACADEMIC GRADUATES 2021



For more than 20 years, the School of Life program has allowed girls and women to graduate from High School, vocational schools, or university. More than 80% of the beneficiaries have completed their schooling. So this year again, celebrating the academic victory of our four “dalagitas” (young women in Tagalog) who graduated from Senior High School with honors, and three others who graduated from their Junior High School (still one year to study) was a must! Celebrating it is; celebrating the accomplishment, celebrating the many years of hard work but also celebrating that fate will never have the last word.

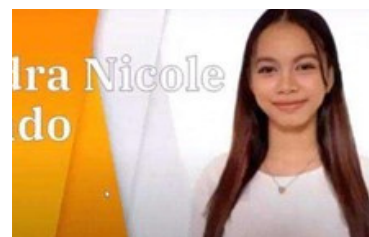
“It has always been my dream, from a little girl begging in the street to becoming a young woman academically accomplished. I believe that education will help me have a better living and will open doors of opportunity. It is always a dream for me, but I never imagined that I'd be here at this moment holding my certificate. As the first in our family to have graduated from Junior High School, it means so much to me.

I have two takeaways from all these experiences. The first is to keep courage; dreaming is not enough; if I sleep on my dreams, I will never pass my exam... Dreaming alone is not enough; it must be accompanied by action: taking action and steps in the pursuit of my dreams. Second, patience. Being patient because everything has a process, and that process can be difficult, challenging, and painful at times, but it is up to me to be patient and persevere through it. Not everything I want will happen with a single click of a finger... It takes time. ”

Today, the academic journey continues... Some will go into universities taking Information Technology System, BS Accountancy and Office Management and Services, others will finish their Senior High school or enter the professional world. How can we not take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors who faithfully support the academic journey of our young women – your generosity has become a lever for success!



“My graduation was really important for me because it was the time to celebrate and recognize all my accomplishments and the hard work that got me here. The problems and obstacles only made me stronger thanks to the help and support of those around me. I am very thankful to ACAY for granting me a 4-year scholarship. Now I am in my third month studying for a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy. This is my dream! Therefore, I will challenge myself by doing a lot more reading and self-study. I hope to pass my Board Exam and become a Certified Public Accountant. ”



ACAY MISSIONS PHILIPPINES IS PCNC ACCREDITED

The recognition of PCNC certification received by ACAY last July 28, 2021, summarized 24 years of tremendous work! After the virtual assessment, the PCNC Board of Directors released their decision that ACAY was granted a three years accreditation!



ACAY received the 3-year certification which is the highest certification granted to new applicants.

The Philippine Council for NGO Certification, Inc. (PCNC) certifies non-stock, non-profit Associations that meet the established criteria for Good Governance, Management and Accountability of NGO's serving the disadvantaged Filipino people.

When certified, the Bureau of Inland Revenue grants a "donor institution status" to qualified non-profits, which allows their donors to be exempted from 30% of donation tax.

Every part of the Association was scrutinized – the presence and involvement of the Board of Trustees, the Policies and Practices in the Admin department, the Finance audited and unaudited financial reports, Program documentation down to the Helping Plans of the beneficiaries, and an interview with the beneficiaries to assess their knowledge of the Vision and Mission of ACAY!

The accreditors encouraged us through affirming the radiating happiness coming from the program teams and the fantastic testimonies of the undeniable transformation youth have lived in ACAY: new hope, new direction, and the courage to lead others to change!



FROM THE CONFINED SOLIDARITY RACE TO THE SOLIDARITY CHALLENGE WITH MINORS IN DETENTION IN MARSEILLE

Do you remember: last spring, we organized a solidarity challenge: a run or walk in solidarity (and confined!) rallying the ACAY galaxy. The objective was to run or walk, at home or outside during the authorized time out, and to run as many kilometers as you could. It was an opportunity to create a sense of purpose to the lockdown. The success of this operation inspired the ACAY Marseille team: why not organize a Solidarity Challenge in detention to raise awareness for a cause?

With the authorization of the management of the Juvenile Penitentiary in Marseille, the first Solidarity Challenge in detention took place in July 2020. And it was a great success!

The three activities on the program were a film discussion, an interactive workshop, and a run. After having been made aware of the difficult situation of the lockdown in the Philippines through testimonies and stories, the young people were given the opportunity to question themselves on their own experience of detention by verbalizing their experiences and identifying their resources mobilized during this period.

«The documentary motivated me to do the run in order to help them. I feel that I have done something good for these people and for myself.»

Following these discussions, a dozen minors joined the run for the benefit of the young people and families of ACAY in the Philippines in need. This sports challenge consisted of running laps around the gym (15 laps were equivalent to a food basket for a family in the Philippines).

276 laps completed. 8 participants. The record by one of the youth was 50 laps. This first edition of the solidarity challenge made it possible to distribute 14 baskets.

The ACAY teams in the Philippines then distributed the food baskets to the youth and families, accompanied by messages from the youth who wished to write to them. The beneficiaries of the baskets also sent photos and testimonies to the participants which they received during the official closing of the challenge which took place in the presence of the Penitentiary management. The Penitentiary staff were pleasantly surprised by the excellent involvement of the youth.



A second Solidarity Challenge took place in July 2021 at the Juvenile Penitentiary in Marseille, Argie, a young Filipino accompanied by ACAY in the Philippines, now reintegrated into society, gave his life testimony to the youth.

« Our words are few to thank you but they come from the bottom of our hearts. »

The first event in 2020 at the Juvenile Penitentiary in Marseille spread to the Vaucluse in 2021. The management of the Avignon-Le Pontet penitentiary center wanted the youth section to take part in Solidarity Challenge. It is thus in September 2021 that the young people and also some members of the staff of the penitentiary center of Avignon-Le Pontet set up a circuit of cross-fit (body-building) and showed generosity to support the young people and families in the Philippines. This challenge with 10 participants in Le Pontet enabled the purchase of 18 food baskets.

During these three editions of the solidarity challenge, all the young people surpassed themselves by going to their limits. Something that is not generally a habit of theirs.



Putting oneself at the service of others is one of the main principles of ACAY.

After working on the concept of our initiatives since the beginning of 2021, it seemed important to us to further anchor this dimension. In addition to the challenge in prison, the challenge is also to develop volunteering for youth recently released from detention for people with difficulties (disabled, elderly...)

Through these initiatives, we hope to open the horizons of the young people, to bring them to surpass themselves, and to move to help others in need. Living these experiences will allow them to see a bigger future and will make them happy. There is no barrier to solidarity whether in detention or outside.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO OFFER INSPIRING PERSPECTIVES TO OUR YOUTH IN MARSEILLE.

The year 2021 will have marked a turning point in relations with ACAY's partners in Marseille. The evolution of our programs, both in prisons and schools and after release from detention, is the result of the quality of our relationships, the same vision, and mutual trust with partners who have been committed to us since the beginning of ACAY France in 2015. These partners, in the associative, educational, or penitentiary sectors, allow us to further anchor our intervention with youth in difficulty. Some of them have shared their testimonies with us for which we are very grateful.

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Emmanuel Roy, talents coach, manager of the project "avecGrandir" "grow with" (La Varappe) in Marseille.

Emmanuel Roy worked with ACAY for several months and supported the launching of our association in Marseille. Today, he works with the association avecGrandir which aims at finding jobs for 700 unemployed people. He contributes to the development of extraordinary projects which are short-term, paid work experiences carried out by professionals from the world of culture, sports, and art. The goal is to create encounters, develop talents and change the way people look at companies. This year, three young people from ACAY have successfully participated in three short 15-day training courses as a springboard to professional integration. Conclusive first experiences!



What does ACAY bring to the Grandir project?

Among the many partners of the Grandir project (associations, companies, institutions), ACAY brings an expertise in the accompaniment of young people that enriches us in addition to the methodology provided by another association, Massajobs. This allows us to touch young people with a heavy past that we would not necessarily be able to accompany otherwise.

On a personal level, the experience acquired with ACAY in the Philippines and in Marseille is very beneficial to me on a daily basis. I accompany a large number of young people with a criminal record, which I had not really anticipated, as our selection took place in the housing settlements and through door-to-door visits.

What does ACAY bring to the young people we both accompany?

During the first extraordinary project organized by Grandir on the theme of cinema, we were able to integrate two young people from ACAY who proved to be driving forces within the group. The care taken by ACAY to guide young people who were interested and motivated by the proposed projects, and the motivational support provided by the team enabled them to stay on until the end despite complicated personal situations. This experience served as a springboard for one of them who was able to land a job contract a few days later.

How would you define the quality of the partnership with ACAY?

I believe that the quality of the partnership is based on a similar vision of support for young people that encourages them to take responsibility for their behavior, and on the complementarity of our fields of intervention. The objective of "Development of the Power to Act" of the people targeted by Grandir is similar to ACAY's vision in certain aspects.

What stands out for you in the ACAY approach?

The relationship of trust developed with the young people, the faithfulness in the presence at their side despite the ups and downs, and the in-depth work done with them which is made possible by a wholistic accompaniment.



Nadia Catalan, Head teacher, and Children with Special Needs teacher of the 9th grade SEGPA class at the St Vincent de Paul High School in Marseille where ACAY France works.

Every week, our team works with a class of 9th Grade SEGPA (Section of general education and adapted vocational training) of a high school in Marseille through a formation module for these academically fragile students. This project aims to develop self-esteem, interpersonal skills and to accompany them in the discovery of their potential for a chosen orientation.

How would you define the quality of the partnership with ACAY?

The people who work with ACAY are extremely kind, positive and generous. They are present and attentive. They share their knowledge and experience. I would therefore describe this partnership as a "great opportunity".

What does ACAY offer to students?

The students of the SEGPA have in common that they have had a painful school career. This may have damaged their self-esteem and their relationship with others. ACAY allows them to get involved in projects that are rewarding and in which they become protagonists. ACAY helps them identify their strengths and actively participates in the development of their career path.

What does ACAY contribute to teachers?

The speakers allow us to have another perspective on our students. To see them in a situation of sharing, exchange and free expression.

The projects initiated by ACAY are interdisciplinary. This encourages interaction between teachers of different disciplines. We also benefit from their knowledge and know-how. Finally, they bring us a message of hope through the testimonies of the people they have accompanied.

What is it about ACAY's approach that stands out for you?

I am struck by their calmness. They are faced with difficult situations but always seem positive, confident in their actions. That's an inspiration.

Sonia Mahdid, Head Educator at the Juvenile Penitentiary (EPM) in Marseille.

Sonia Mahdid coordinates all the interventions of the external partners of the Judicial Protection of Youth (PJJ) at the EPM. Having been working at the EPM for over 10 years, she has accompanied the ACAY Marseille team since it was launched in 2015. The strong cooperation with the PJJ has allowed ACAY to establish a unique position with young people incarcerated in the Bouches du Rhône.

What does ACAY bring to the EPM and to the youth?

ACAY allows for an encounter with others. They value young people who have low self-esteem. They allow them to work on their emotions. They make the young people aware of juvenile justice in the Philippines and also meet people from different backgrounds, former minors incarcerated in the Philippines and in France, partners Through all these testimonies, they lead the youth to desistance (a process of getting out of delinquency). Furthermore, they allow the young people to have a follow-up inside and outside the Detention Center.

How would you define the quality of the partnership with ACAY?

ACAY is an essential partner of the EPM. They are a partner that is well identified and recognized by all, both the staff and the youth. They are available and their partnership is of high quality.



What stands out for you in ACAY's approach?

What stands out for me is their commitment, their investment and their availability. They have a very educational approach. They don't rush, they go step by step, with gentleness. They have the ability to captivate these young people.

IMPROVING THE SUPPORT OF OUR YOUTH



This year ACAY Marseille was selected by the Associations: Possible and Ronalpia (Lyon region) to be part of the 3rd batch of Act'ice, a support program for structures that are developing in the field of criminal justice. With 7 other groups that promote the reintegration of offenders, the ACAY Marseille team attended 8 days of workshops in Lyon between January and October 2021, with the aim of being trained in 3 main areas:

1.) To become more professional and equipped:

Specific support to better understand the functioning of the justice sector and its challenges, to strengthen the support of its audiences and to consolidate its project.

2.) Collaborate and innovate:

Facilitating exchange between project leaders to develop complementary responses to the needs of the people they support, meetings with public and private sectors to break out of isolation and establish relevant and innovative collaboration.



3.) To develop visibility and networks:

Meetings with patrons, local and national sponsors by justice sectors, and access to the networks of Possible and Ronalpia.

This 9 months nationwide program also included an individual long-distance follow-up (monthly personalized advice) and networking (justice sector), associations for integration, and potential donors.

The professionals of the Act'ice network underlined the strong human dimension of the project from the Philippines, the relevant methodology, and the coherence which emanates from all the employees of ACAY with this capacity to work as a team to carry the young people with serenity and compassion.

This training has been beneficial for ACAY, especially for the improvement of the evaluation of the impact of our interventions and for the development of new partnerships. Thanks to this, we are now trained in psychosocial skills by the association Prismes, which will enable us to accompany our young people more effectively.



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