



25TH ANNIVERSARY

Twenty-five years of ACAY!



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

Editorial

"Restorer of breaches".

This is one of the Old Testament titles for all those who desire to work for justice and peace. It resonates so well with our mission that it went straight to my heart.

A breach means two sides leaving a gaping space to be restored, to be reunited. We will never be finished diving deeper into the meaning of our missionary life to understand the wound and the progressive manner of bringing together its two sides. A Japanese concept, Kintsugi, recently discovered, evokes this by speaking of the art of repairing a broken vase with a mixture of lacquer and gold powder. Beauty in imperfection. The damage to the ceramic is no longer definitive but the beauty is enhanced with the fragments of both sides.

These two resonate in a very particular way in these days.

If the heart of our mission is to work on the two sides of youth in distress: youth who are victims and youth who are offenders; the heart of our listening has led us to address the gaping hole in the human heart. Recently, I was with a girl whose story is a tapestry of abandonment, physical and sexual violence. She was crying, sobbing as she opened up her story for the first time of being "beaten in the morning and raped at night". And yet, during this time of sharing, she was at one point able to articulate the impact of her abuse on her daily life: she herself had become violent with the children at her former center. With a disconcerting coldness, she told me that she had beaten a multitude of little girls between 10 and 12 years of age and remained unmoved when they cried... Her former educational teams no longer knew what to do with her. A breach with two sides, of tears and coldness, which is still perpetuated and cries out for restoration.

Restorer of breaches.

Listening to a mother, addicted to drugs and solvent, navigating between violence to her children and submissive silence in front of her abusive husband.

A few years ago, she put so much pressure on her daughters already in a center to withdraw the case they had filed against a father and a brother, both abusers. To see the formidable and dangerous side of this mother and her feverish and skinny body, her smile "with one lonesome tooth" and to hear her say to me: "Sister, I have nothing left". Two sides of the same breach.

Restorer of breaches.

Then, coming to my beloved country, listening to the lives of young French people who are forced to disguise their arrival in France with a lie about their roots. "I am the son of..." they were told to say if necessary. The reality is quite different. The "of..." has stayed in their homeland or in the islands and the separation is dramatic in the child's heart. For these young people, the adults' desire for a better future for the child has imposed itself in their hearts like a wound. Their "being a son" has been masked by "being the son of another", the son of an uncle or a distant family member... How then can they love France? The gap is not on the outside, it is first of all inside. "Sister, I spent three days on the balcony of my apartment building with my suitcase, crying for my mother. Why do we separate a 5-year-old child from his mother? Why me?" The abyss of these inner journeys in which so many dilemmas and paradoxes are intertwined. To be faced with delinquency and the heart of the child still in tears.

Restorer of breaches.

To accept to see the breaches face on. To accept the discomfort and the pain.

Understand the cause and the source. Then restore it. Choosing not to be inactive but to set out again on the paths of the deserts and gaping holes of human hearts and systems. Restorer of breaches. Let's be this... together! Let's put lacquer, professionalism, and gold dust, listening and patience, prayer for those who believe, between the parts of life held in the heart.

Sr. Sophie de Jésus - ACAY founder

ACAY'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY: WE DID IT!

This coming October 1st, ACAY will be celebrating 25 years of transformation and success in fulfilling its mission and beyond.

We look back to our roots, remembering how it began in 1997:

Sr. Sophie de Jesus Renoux arrived in the Philippines and started the ACAY Missions Philippines Inc. Two years earlier, during the World Youth Day in Manila, she had felt called by the Lord to begin a mission in the Philippines at the service of youth in difficult circumstances. Once in Manila, she discovered that few non-government organizations focused on teens and young adults. Since then, ACAY has been journeying with youth at risk to give them a second chance in life. **Over the years, we have enhanced the development of innovative strategies and pedagogical methodologies to provide the youth with effective and life-changing interventions of recovery and self-sustainability.**



Back when it all started, the creation of ACAY was like planting a seed in the soil. Despite not knowing whether this seed would grow or thrive, we continued to nurture and provide for our beneficiaries. With gratitude and joy, we are looking back and seeing how our efforts have taken shape over the years, giving substance and direction to many youth and even our benefactors.

As part of our celebration this year, ACAY Philippines and France will be gathering the fruits of its labor, of 25 years of development and innovation. **We shall compile stories and testimonials from two groups: the ACAY beneficiaries (current and alumni) and then our long-time donors and partners.** The 25 stories from our beneficiaries will feature stories of change and of overcoming one's personal mountains.

In addition, we are also celebrating a few more special occasions this year: the 20th anniversary of the Second Chance Program, and the upcoming launch of the Skills Hub building. It's a truly exciting and milestone moment in the organization's journey. To capture ACAY@25, we will be producing 2 short films, in collaboration with Association Mondiale des Amis de l'Enfance (AMADE). We look forward to sharing all our initiatives with you in the coming months!

WANT TO MAKE A DONATION FOR OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY?

You can make a single donation or commit to a monthly bank transfer, both to the amount of your choice.

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METAMORPHOSIS: CHANGE STARTS FROM WITHIN

For every youth-at-risk in ACAY, we have seen countless incredible experiences of restoration and transformation. That is why in the foundation's 25th year, the way forward is clear: Promoting the Metamorphosis methodology. It is a product of all of ACAY's pedagogies and methods for healing and transformation, which is now being piloted at the School of Life, and will soon be available for other organizations to further grow their own programs.



To be transformed into the best version of one's self, it takes much introspection and reflection. Jane, the Metamorphosis Program Officer shares, **"I personally experienced this kind of transformation journey while in ACAY. I have been a beneficiary for 6 years, and have stayed in ACAY as a volunteer and staff member for almost 10 years and counting."**

As her way of giving back to the community, she facilitates the Metamorphosis process with the beneficiaries.

"I am grateful to have this methodology where I can personally accompany them and be a partner to these girls. We can create a fluid and regular means of communication and dialogue, that they are no longer afraid of opening up and speaking from the heart," said Jane.

Overview of Metamorphosis methodology



Metamorphosis aims to evaluate the journey of the beneficiary using indicators and that can help them define and plot their progress.

Just like Jane, many beneficiaries have found genuine hope through Metamorphosis. She recalled how at first, the youth were intimidated to learn about the process, but soon realized that everyone grows at their own pace. **"They began to appreciate the processing as an opportunity to hear positive feedback and areas for improvement, because this helps them understand themselves more deeply."**

To hear someone tell you that you can overcome your challenges, it inspires you to strive and focus on self-improvement," said Jane.

In ACAY, we see these youth very eager and looking forward to the upcoming Metamorphosis sessions. By getting-to-know oneself and being equipped with the tools to spark change from within, they are preparing to reintegrate society and become agents of change in society.

Metamorphosis' spark of hope is growing each day, and it will continue to bring light to all those in need.



LAUNCHING THE SKILLS HUB: A BRIGHTER FUTURE TO THRIVE (AND NOT JUST SURVIVE!)

Community Quarantine, online classes, webinars, Facebook marketplace- these are the main words that have been trending in the past months. The pandemic has brought us to face many vulnerabilities, especially economic ones. It has put us, in one way or another, into a survive or thrive mode.

How can we equip the youth to take ownership of their lives, with skills to face these challenges? Now, as part of our next steps in the ACAY journey, we are soon launching the ACAY Skills Hub where the beneficiaries can acquire new skills in creativity, technology and entrepreneurship.

The idea for our Skills Hub came about when we saw our soon-to-graduate beneficiaries struggling to find possible job exposure. Requirements during the pandemic had evolved: a higher competency in I.T. technology and entrepreneurial skills. ACAY realized the need to augment its programs to provide the beneficiaries different ways to acquire technical and creative skills. With this, we conceptualized the E-Hub and I-Hub, as part of the exciting and initial launch.



Entrepreneurial Hub (E-Hub)

The E-Hub stands for Entrepreneurial Hub which will help develop the youth's skills in creating and managing a microbusiness. This includes skills for the youth to strategize, to develop a business plan, to contact customers and to market their business on digital platforms. One of the concrete examples is the "MoM Delices" project where the beneficiaries are part of a team making French and Hungarian sausages and selling them via online marketplace. SOL beneficiary Marie said, "I am happy I learned how to make authentic sausages using the production machine. I developed the skills and growth mindset to be a young entrepreneur."

Information Technology Hub (IT-Hub)

The IT-Hub or Information Technology Hub, will help develop the I.T. skills of the beneficiaries. By exposing them to more I.T. applications and skill-sharing, they will be able to join the future workforce and eventually lead to wider potential job opportunities in the digital space. It's the start of many projects to come!

The Skills Hub is just beginning, and will grow more in the coming years. There will soon rise a 2-storey building dedicated for the Skills Hub - to create this environment of nurtured growth and adaptable competencies. On the first floor: a room to welcome the public and to exhibit the youth creations (jewelry, sewing, culinary preparations...). On the second floor: a computer room and a room for training and production workshops. We envision a future where our beneficiaries can - and as much as possible, parents as well - choose the life they want, and be able to cope with whatever challenges the future may bring. ACAY wants to instill in its beneficiaries that, "If you have the skills and mindset, you can reach your dreams." Nowadays, we need not only to survive but also to thrive. We live in a fast-changing world, and the change we want to see is in our hands. Let's continue to support one another's dreams, be it the beneficiaries', the parents' and the working professionals'.



Recently, the Charcellay family climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to help raise funds for the Skills Hub. Christine Charcellay said "It was a chance to transform it into a solidarity project for an association which does formidable with the youth and which we have supported for a long time." A big thank you to the Charcellay family, Bouygues and also the Masalina Foundation for helping us raise 77% out of the €80,000 needed for construction of the Skills Hub Building. **If you would like to donate to help our ACAY community face an even brighter future through the Skills Hub, contact us today.**

We still need to raise €18,400 to reach our goal!



MY FIRST DAYS AT THE PENITENTIARY ESTABLISHMENT FOR MINORS

by ACAY Marseille volunteer Baptiste

The Penitentiary Establishment for Minors (PEM) of Marseille is a very particular place. There are gathered youth and young minors in detention from Marseille. A volatile climate that can almost seem like a family, as the staff and the people involved meet, get to know each other, and interact together. **On the one hand, one can feel a great deal of mutual aid, but on the other hand, one can sometimes be exposed to a real climate of tension, a heavy atmosphere, especially in the relationships that the young people have with each other.**

I was quickly able to understand the privileged place that ACAY occupies within this ecosystem. We are always very well received, especially by Mrs. Sonia Mahdid (PEM Referent Educator), or by the PEM staff. A unique place also in the eyes of the young people who see us differently from the other organizations. We are regularly greeted in the "arena", a courtyard at the center of all the units, by youth shouting behind bars 'ACAY', 'Hubert' (ACAY staff), or my name being called out along the weeks as they get to know me. The place ACAY holds is also reflected in the relationships we have with these youth, in the sharing we have with them: some open up for the first time. Of course, this is not the case for all the youth. If trusting is not easy for most people, for the that youth ACAY is serving, it is ever more complicated.

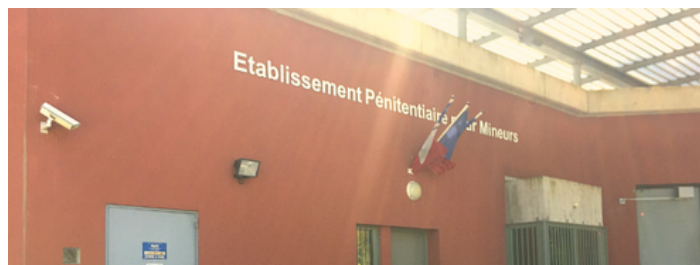
« I quickly understood that trust is a complicated notion for them, to trust the other, to inspire trust... I think that this is the first challenge of our interaction with them, they must feel that they can trust us. »

I was lucky enough to arrive at the "right" time, my first week at the PEM was at the same time as the youths' vacation. As they didn't have school, we were able to intervene every day. The "Second Chance" workshop that we set up during this week allowed us to go to each unit, to work with a group of 4-5 youth, so that we could meet as many of them as possible.

We made them aware of life in the Philippines, especially the poverty and precarity wherein the youth are usually growing up and the conditions of detention there. The objective? That they would take their focus of themselves, to shake them, through inspiring life stories of young Filipinos who managed to change their lives, to give them keys for success, as a kind of springboard for the individual sessions we would have with these youth over the coming months.

These workshops were far from easy to conduct because in a group, you have to capture their attention and help them to focus. And sometimes all it took to reach their attention is reduced to nothing by one little troublemaker to lose them all and end up with a session ruined by regular little outbursts among themselves. **But this is also what made my week so rich. I learnt to adapt to all types of groups: some hard to manage, others more open, or even more attentive; in addition, a very formative week, which allowed me to get my bearings.**

Then came the time for the individual sessions. School having started again at the PEM, we can now only intervene on Wednesday afternoons, finding a slot between the other activities planned for the youth by the PEM, such as sports, animal mediation, garden maintenance...



It is in these individual sessions that my first week "Second Chance" made complete sense to me. I really appreciate these sessions, these times of privileged exchange between the youth and us, face to face. For the moment, I am with Hubert for these sessions. He guides me and every day I learn from his experience: how to help the young person to see himself in a different light, to value himself all the while addressing his difficulties. Especially since my position with the young people is different from that of the rest of the team. Indeed, being 21 years old, I am much closer in age to these young people and many think that I am their age. So, I also have to find my place with them. This is where I feel I have a wild card to play: I can try to understand their feelings, talk to them from another point of view, understand their mindset, have common interests.

It's up to me to adjust myself as the weeks go by so that I can then get a message across, that of ACAY, to lift them up in the best possible way. So, **I am very happy, very proud to be part of the beautiful mission of ACAY, to have the opportunity to try to contribute to the edifice, I find many reasons to hope.** Time goes by too fast here...



ACAY MISSIONS PHILIPPINES INC.

2021 OVERVIEW



KEY MILESTONES



PCNC Certification achieved



Metamorphosis methodology piloted



Driving on the Go Program launched



Awarded **financial grant** from French Embassy in Philippines



Signed **MoU with Bahay Pag-Asa** Youth Center

School of Life Program

30

beneficiaries supported

106 individual sessions on Psycho-Social Support

112 individual sessions Towards Self-Sustainability

5 successful graduates from Grade 12

16 beneficiaries participated in Crossroads for Youth (CR4Y)

Second Chance Program

90 Beneficiaries from:

- Aftercare Program
- Interventions in Court
- Interventions in Centers
- Interventions in Barangays

155 Trainings & formation sessions

Family Program

34 Family Visits conducted

23 Family Dialogues conducted

90 food packs distributed in Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Tanuan City, Leyte, with the support of Phil. International Aid

Skills Hub Project

E-Hub:

The Entrepreneurship Hub offers first hand experience and **basic business skills** needed to become an entrepreneur.

C-Hub:

The Creative Hub provides the youth a creative platform to develop and enhance their creative skills through **handicrafts and product creations.**

IT-Hub:

The Information Technology Hub develops the youth's IT skills through **trainings and virtual job exposures.**

ACAY MISSIONS FRANCE INC.

2021 OVERVIEW



PREVENTION

424

students attended the conferences organized

57%

of the students participated more in class, became more daring, spoke in public

22H

hours worth of activities given

60%

of the students were involved in planning their direction, compared to 15% in 2020.

REHABILITATION: ACT ON YOUR LIFE

97%

of target youth participated in the workshops

55%

of accompanied youth are better able to express and control their emotions

94%

of the youth accompanied in detention accepted to enter programs offered by National Education, the Judicial Protection of Youth, and the Penitentiary Administration

94%

of the youth who took part and completed in the "Act on your life" self-discovery trainings and received a certificate of participation (between 25 and 30 youth per year)

REINTEGRATION: TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

7 of 8

youth learning to drive got their Driver's License

40%

about 30 youth participated in detention program per year, and 15 in the aftercare on their release from prison

12 in 15 youth

have achieved academic or professional success (training, employment, driver's license)