



Director's Letter

2020-2021

Samar Sponsor Site, Philippines

"A kind gesture can reach a wound that only compassion can heal." -Steve Maraboli

Dear Sponsors,

May the blessings of our Omnipotent Lord be with you all!

My gratitude goes to all of you for bringing hope to our people by allowing your love to flourish and continue to grow within them. This is a great opportunity for me to share with you how our site navigated this unfamiliar and alarming new landscape and pondered how each can take action and reap the fruit of healthy relationships. We build bridges towards each other concerning relationships, whether with children, family, or community.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to undermine people's progress. Your sponsored children were extremely affected, since the pandemic dramatically reshaped the education system and led to the closure of educational institutions. Children were forced to study through distance learning. This was difficult because of our very unstable internet connection. Through your selfless support, Samar Sponsor Site continued to assist our children by ensuring they were all enrolled in school and had access to necessary learning materials. Field workers connected with the respective schools and class advisers and served as para-teachers to children identified as having difficulty in studying their lessons and doing their learning activity sheets.

When classes stopped from February-October 2020, the site established a cluster tutorial system for younger sponsored children which involved teachers, field workers, our college students, and graduated sponsored children all teaching reading comprehension, numeracy, and some psycho-social activities. As for our youth, the site has been grateful to the Local Government Unit's Youth Development Council for youth development activities and awareness programs. A music ministry with sponsored youths was also formed. They now serve in the church choirs and as altar servers.

Our children are very aware of the effects of COVID-19 and its prevention. 98% had their regular medical and dental check-ups. Their rate of sickness was reduced by this, along with their improved immune systems due to the school feeding program supported by Chalice nutrition funds. 430 elementary-aged children had a free lunch daily and breakfast three times a week. During the pandemic, when schools are closed, cooked food is brought to their areas. This became possible with the full cooperation of their families. We always pay careful attention to our sponsored elders, as well.



Site operations became limited due to government restrictions, including cancelling regular meetings, family monitoring, and even inperson bank transactions. Families, on the other hand, suffered due to the lockdown and resulting unemployment, which caused a lot of distress. The site responded to the needs of our sponsored people in every way we could.

Family circles increased their collaboration with their elected leaders. Thankfully, every family had already learned to use sponsorship funds for their most important needs: they focused on nutrition and health. The site partnered with parents to manage adverse health crises and provided accurate and reliable information in order to keep families safe. Moreover, families became each other's shoulders to cry on in this time of great need.

Our communities, as a whole, faced unprecedented challenges in public health, trade restrictions, and decreased livelihoods. Delayed shipments of goods coming from the big cities, travel restrictions, and strict border controls all contributed to uncontrolled price hikes and shortage of raw materials. The spread of African-swine fever and hog cholera worsened the prices of meat in the market by almost twice. Small businesses suffered great losses.

Thankfully, circle groups with small businesses recovered and even increased their earnings. This was because they supported each other. Circle groups who raised hogs and chickens, egg producers, bakers, and vegetable stall merchants became the vendors where sponsored families shopped: they knew they would buy safe and fresh food products and contributed to the increased profits of the businesses. Inspired by their progress, more groups are now exploring opportunities to prosper by engaging in livelihood training programs offered by our site. With funds from Chalice's gift catalogue, other circle group members started their own poultry, rice retailing, feed store, and garden businesses. Sponsorship and gift catalogue programs also made a great difference for families and the community, as a whole: 6 families built their own home toilet, and in the coming year, we plan to help create a better environment for those very fortunate families in this small island of Laoang, Northern Samar.

Thank you, dear sponsors, very much and may your loving efforts lead our people to genuine happiness and holistic development. We salute you all!

Respectfully yours,

Maricel A. Abangan

Director, Samar Sponsor Site, Laoang Island, Philippines

Please note: this letter is written and translated by our overseas partners and may contain different terminology than that of native English speakers. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office and we would be happy to speak with you.

