

Badjao Bridge

Annual Report 2020

Programs

Child Sponsorship Program

For less than a dollar a day, we provide quality education, nutritious meals, basic healthcare, and spiritual nurture through our Child Sponsorship Program. Through the years, children from these less-privileged communities have benefited from this initiative. Last year, there were 274 children in this program while this year we have 231. A number of them have dropped out for various reasons like loss of interest in school or their parents would rather make their children help them in their livelihood like fishing.

We are happy though that through this program, we have seen another batch of children pass a milestone. Twenty elementary and high school Badjao scholars graduated in April this year. A number of them were honor students like Sunshine, Grade 5, awarded with "High Honors" plus a couple of other awards; Celia, Grade 8, ranked 8th out of 32 in her class.

The current Covid-19 crisis makes this program even more relevant. Before the pandemic, Badjao parents or adults barely make \$5 a day. With the pandemic affecting almost all livelihood and threatening everyone's health, life had become even harder for many especially the poorest communities in the country like the Badjaos.

Going to school wasn't like how they knew it anymore. Embracing the "new normal", the Philippines opted for alternative, distance learning - modular, online, and radio-based instructions to help protect the students from possible Covid-19 infection. We have coordinated with the local government for partnership with a local Christian radio station for a radio-based instruction, which is very helpful especially for the Badjao students who are just beginning to learn how to read and write. Most of their parents are not able to help and teach them.



(Every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 2-3 pm is the time allocated for the Badjao learners. Our scholar Bea rendered a Sinama (the Badjaos' language) Christian children's song at one of the radio segments for the Badjaos.)

So aside from food and educational supplies, we have provided our scholars 65 radio sets, two laptops, and flash drives and also internet connection in our center for them to use for their online classes. We have also extended some help even to the other Badjao students in the community who are not in our program.



With radio-based instruction as one of our learning delivery modalities for Grade 1 Badjaos, our staff goes to the community and monitors our learners and make sure they are following and learning.

Thanks to our sponsors, donors, and local staff and volunteers for helping us continue this program even through these hard days.

College Scholarships

Availing oneself of college education is very costly even for Filipino families with an average income. For the Badjaos, this endeavor, the final hurdle before they could become professionals, is a tough mountain to climb. But with their determination and through the help of our sponsors, that mountain becomes possible to get through.

We already have a certified public accountant and two Criminology graduates the past few years and currently in college we have one Nursing student, 3rd year; two Marine Technology students, 2nd year and 3rd year; and one Criminology student, 3rd year.

We can't just imagine what a breakthrough it would be to have more and more Badjaos finish college education and have a chance to have better lives by being financially independent and having jobs or source of income that could sustain them throughout their lives.

One addition to our college scholars is Selma, who recently graduated from high school as an honor student.



(Selma with her mother. Thanks to a group of people who helped us buy her a laptop and have Wifi connection for her online classes.)

Selma is taking up a course in Business Administration. She and her younger brother were single-handedly raised by their mother who used to solely depend on her income from selling pearls in a tourist destination five hours from their house. However, the pandemic has wiped out her meager income and she struggles to provide enough food and water for her children.

Selma dreams to run her own business one day and give her family a better life. Without the help of our sponsors, it will be difficult for her to at least have a chance to do it.

Literacy

One common problem in the Badjao community is its low literacy rate. Most Badjao parents don't know how to read and write, which makes it hard or impossible for them to help their children with their lessons. Many of them, even those in elementary or high school already, struggle a lot in reading and comprehension. That is why our daily and weekly tutorials help our scholars a lot.



Rosing (photo), a non-reader in elementary, was teary-eyed when she shared how she was bullied in school. She was determined and motivated to improve by participating regularly in our Tutorial Program.

After a few months of suspending our face-to-face tutorials because of the pandemic, we have conducted tutorials again to continue helping our scholars especially in this new way of learning.

Our six full time and on-call/temporary tutors and learning facilitators do tutorials and follow up classes Monday to Friday accommodating Grade 1 learners in the morning and Grades 2-6 in the afternoon. Two of them do one-on-one tutorials at our center with selected struggling high school students to guide them in their modules and give them activities to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.

There are two teachers from the public school who would also come to our center to do follow up tutorials to our Grade 1 learners, three times a week every morning.

(Our staff doing tutorials at the Badjao multipurpose building.)



All our activities are done observing health protocols like temperature checking, disinfection, physical distancing, and wearing of mask. Only five students per session are allowed. We are thankful to our staff and volunteers for helping out.

Preschool

This is a community effort helping children with difficulty in writing and reading. With safety protocols observed, we continue to provide daily pre-school lessons for kids with books and lesson materials at our Lighthouse Learning Center. This year there are 38 Badjao pre-school students and 10 of them are our scholars.

Aside from our staff, there are three pre-school teachers from the public school who come and do follow up lessons to the students every afternoon.

Thanks to our teachers and volunteers who not only help in the tutorials. They also help manage the classroom and encourage children's participation in the class.

Church Partnership

While we address their needs for education, food, healthcare, and others, we also help them in their spiritual lives. The past few years, we used to have fellowship program for our elementary, high school, and college scholars together with our staff. They meet for Bible stories. But because of the

Covid-19 restrictions for gatherings, we have temporarily suspended our fellowships for now.

Complimentary Intervention

Covid-19 Relief Program

No one anticipated this crisis but we are thankful that we have been able to extend help to the people in need. Hundreds of Badjao children are currently in a state of malnutrition. So far we have provided more than 6,000 meals. Until parents can go back to work, we aim to provide 40,000 meals until March 2021.



Every week, we give 2kg of rice for every scholar for them to cook at home since we have temporarily stopped our feeding at our center. More or less 200 families benefit from this including our staff, volunteers, Badjao chieftain, cluster leaders, and others. Aside from rice, we also give dressed chicken, canned goods, bath soap, alcohol and sanitizers.

We have also asked our Badjao community leaders to submit their improvised pots. We provide the soil and seedlings and distribute them to every household for them to grow and hopefully harvest their own vegetables.

All of these won't be possible without our staff and volunteers who do all the purchasing and distribution of the goods to the community and to our donors who financially enable us to provide these basic needs of the people.



Water, Basic Health Care, and Sanitation

A stable water supply is a constant problem for many poor communities in the country. Without a steady supply of water, people will have to buy it from local providers which could be extra costly for them. We are happy to have provided the Badjaos with a safe water system and three water tanks.

We have four toilets available for our staff, students and people in the community to use - two in each community we are helping (Bohol and Palawan). Having these toilets would help improve sanitation in our two properties in different islands where the Badjaos live.

Lighthouse Learning Center and Living Community

Our Lighthouse Learning Center is a place for us to meet and serve our scholars and community. This is home for the Badjao kids who come to study and learn from their teachers and as well as a place to play and have fun

together. It serves as a pre-school, tutorial center with clean bathrooms and kitchen for our students' meals, and as an emergency shelter for vulnerable children. It also provides families with access to safe water and sanitation through a rainwater filtration system and access to toilets.

However, for the most part of this year since March when Covid-19 hit the country, we have stopped having people in the center as part of health protocols set by the local government. No more feeding and activities for children at the center.

Only towards the later part of this year when we have started to use the Lighthouse again with safety measures in place - physical distancing, thermal scanner, hand sanitizers, and others.

We were also happy to accommodate the teachers from Totolan Elementary School (TES) in our center and let them use it as a temporary place for them to do their work - encoding and printing of the learning activity sheets and modules for their students. TES, where most of our Badjao scholars are enrolled, was used as a quarantine facility for individuals arriving from other places.



Doctors and medical workers from the provincial hospital also visited the Badjao community and our Lighthouse Learning Center and taught our kinder students proper hand washing and cleaning of ears.

Our building also served as evacuation center when a fire ravaged houses in the nearby neighborhood earlier this year. Next to the sea-dwelling Badjaos, there were no public roads for firefighting equipment, there were no fire hydrants, and there was lack of water supply to the entire community (a very common situation). Grateful that our local director had earlier suggested for us to add more fire extinguishers than what was required for our building and also installing a long fire hose to be connected to our two 500-gallon water tanks. It was indeed so timely.

Several houses were fully consumed and the flames were about to spread to the entire community of over 12,000 people. Our junior teacher Ana Mae, who we hired to help our kindergarten class, ran for the 250-foot fire hose. She helped with the first response. Others grabbed our fire extinguishers and slowed the fire just long enough until the firemen finally arrived. They used our water tanks, too. After one hour it was put out and although 10 houses were destroyed, no one was killed or injured. The displaced families were temporarily housed in our classroom until they were able to leave and rebuild their homes.

Salute to our female staff who turned out to be brave firefighters, too!



(Ana Mae, second from right)

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