

# Badjao Bridge

## Annual Report 2021

### Programs

#### Child Sponsorship Program

The past couple of years have been more difficult for many of us due to the Covid-19 crisis and unfortunately, nobody knows when would this be over. Yet we are thankful that we are still able to continue this program.

For less than a dollar a day, we provide quality education, nutritious meals, basic healthcare, and spiritual nurture. Through the years, children from these less-privileged communities have benefited from this initiative. Last year, there were 231 children in this program while this year we have 249. 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 go fishing and make money. A few had moved to other cities or provinces. Meanwhile, there were new kids also got enlisted in our program.

The pandemic even made the situation harder. Due to health protocols, they were not allowed to go to school but have only been receiving home assignments or taking up their classes online or through radio-based instructions the past couple of years now. Our staff and teachers have to go to the community to monitor our learners and make sure they are catching up with their lessons.

We are happy though that through this program, we have seen another batch of children pass a milestone - each from their respective school levels despite challenges. Two of our scholars were honor students in their classes - Sunshine, Grade 6, and Jackie, junior high school. Jackie has been our scholar since preschool; Sunshine, since Grade 1. Both of them didn't let their circumstances distract them.



Jackie

Sunshine

We have given our scholars and staff radio sets that they can use for the radio-based instructions. We also have a desktop, printer, and wifi connection available at our Lighthouse Learning Center in Bohol for them to use.

With the pandemic affecting almost all livelihood and threatening everyone's health, life has become even harder for many especially the poorest communities like the Badjaos who barely make \$5 a day. We have extended help even to a number of Badjao learners who are not our scholars by including them in our tutorials and also giving them some food relief.

During the last quarter of this year, we have started constructing a one-classroom building for our Badjao learners in Totolan Elementary School (TES) in Bohol. This will be used when face-to-face classes resume. Due to the school's shortage of classrooms, a number of our scholars used to attend their classes somewhere outdoor or in some spare rooms in school. A standard classroom for them with its own restroom with flowing water would mean a



more comfortable, conducive learning environment.

For two consecutive years now, TES acknowledged our efforts in significantly helping improve the academic performance of our Badjao learners. They gave us a plaque and certificate of recognition as one of its generous and active stakeholders.

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

## College Scholarships

For Badjaos to reach college level is already a great achievement. Many of them don't get this far due to financial constraints or for some due to lack of determination and interest. They either abandon school to go fishing and make money or for most girls, they end up getting pregnant or married early.

We are proud of the college graduates we have helped through the years - a certified public accountant and two Criminology graduates. Currently we have four college scholars - three on their senior year and one new freshman, Andrea. She is 21 years old taking up a degree in education. She has been in our scholarship program since Grade 1. Her father is a fisherman and her mother is a daycare worker. Their daily income is not enough to support Andrea and her four other siblings. With our help, they are able to send their children to school.

College education is already very costly even for Filipino families with an average income. For the Badjaos, it is even more discouraging. But with their determination and through the help of our sponsors, getting a degree and ultimately a professional job is not impossible after all. What a breakthrough it would be to have more financially independent Badjaos.

## Literacy

The Badjao community has a very low literacy rate. Most parents don't know how to read and write therefore they could not help their children in their studies. Many of those who are in elementary or high school still struggle a lot in reading and



comprehension. But we are proud that our tutorials have brought us some amazing results - for one, we have a champion!

Eight-year-old Raiza, Grade 2, won first place in Letter Sound Wizard (District Level Literacy Contest). Coached by our staff, she bested 11 other participants. She is the first Badjao ever to win in this competition.

Another scholar, Maria, 11, used to struggle with her reading skill. Learning from home is a challenge for many like her who can't study on her own. Our tutorials at the Lighthouse Learning Center help her learn and improve day by day. She is thankful to our tutors who have always been there for her.

After more than a year of suspending our tutorials because of the pandemic, we have conducted face-to-face tutorials (daily and weekly) again to continue helping our scholars. We have two full time and nine on-call/temporary tutors and learning facilitators.

All our activities are done while observing health protocols like temperature checking, disinfection, physical distancing, and wearing of mask. 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 we have 44 students.

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 everyone's safety.

## Complimentary Intervention

### Covid-19 Relief Program

The past couple of years have been extra challenging due to the current pandemic. Many people lost jobs, sources of income, and some even lives.

As days were getting more difficult, the deeper our conviction to find ways to extend help to the people in need. Hundreds of Badjao children are currently in a state of malnutrition. The adults are struggling to find food to put on their table. So far we have provided more than **6,000 meals**. Until parents can go back to work and life goes back to normal, we aim to serve **40,000 more meals until March 2021**.



Every week, we give 2 kg of rice for every scholar for them to cook at home since we have temporarily stopped our feeding at our center. Monthly we also give rice with chicken and sometimes with fruits and veggies. More or less 200 families benefit from this including our staff, volunteers, Badjao chieftain, cluster leaders, and others.

We have promoted sustainable gardening and encouraged them to have their own source of healthy food. We provided soil and seedlings to our Badjao community leaders and distributed them to every household for them to grow and eventually harvest their own vegetables. We have our own garden in our center. The parents of our Badjao scholars take turns to water the plants. After some months, we have already harvested and shared eggplants to the community for free.

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



## **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 in Bohol and two deep wells in Palawan.



We have four toilets available for our staff, students and people in the community to use. Having these toilets would help improve sanitation in our two properties in different islands where the Badjaos live.

In Palawan, there are currently close to 100 families living in this area in more or less 60 houses. Because of more fishing opportunities (less government restrictions) on this island, we are expecting more Badjao families from other provinces or islands to move here. Our Lighthouse and water facilities will be serving a bigger community.

## **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 almost two years now since 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 place for them to distribute and collect the modular instructions for the Badjao students. The teachers were thankful for the access given to them to our wifi connection making their online work easier.

Aside from our Lighthouse Learning Center in Bohol, we also have another multipurpose building built in Palawan. Also called the Lighthouse, it serves the Badjao community. On some days the local government health officials use it as a Covid-19 vaccination site for the Badjaos. On other days, they use it for feeding, tutorials, and other educational activities for the Badjao children. On Sundays, the community gather there to worship. But again, due to the pandemic, activities have very limited and done with health protocols in place.

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