



# EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT 2018

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the sponsors, donors, and supporters who have helped the Fairplay for All Foundation in leveling the playing field through our education and community development programs.

Special thanks to:



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# I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, Fairplay has become embedded in the Payatas community. Our interaction with the community on a daily basis immerses us in their realities, often making their concerns and daily struggles our own.

We work with the poorest of the poor. These are kids who have suffered a large amount of childhood trauma. Their parents struggle to care for them, having their own physical and psychological challenges within the context of an unrelenting poverty cycle. In academic literature, childhood trauma is referred to as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ACEs refer to some of the most intensive and frequently occurring sources of stress that children may suffer early in life. Such experiences include multiple types of abuse; neglect; violence between parents or caregivers; other kinds of serious household dysfunction such as alcohol and substance abuse; and peer, community, and collective violence.





It has been shown that considerable and unpredictable stress in childhood has life-long consequences for a person's health and well-being. It can disrupt early brain development and compromise functioning of the nervous and immune systems. In addition because of the behaviors adopted by some people who have faced ACEs, such stress can lead to serious problems such as alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, unsafe sex, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases. It's important to note that the behavioural problems and even the resulting mental and physical health problems are symptoms of the deeper issue of trauma and how stress has damaged the body and mind. Dealing with this, in other words, can have knock-on effects to minimise and reduce the frequency and intensity of depression, addiction, and more.

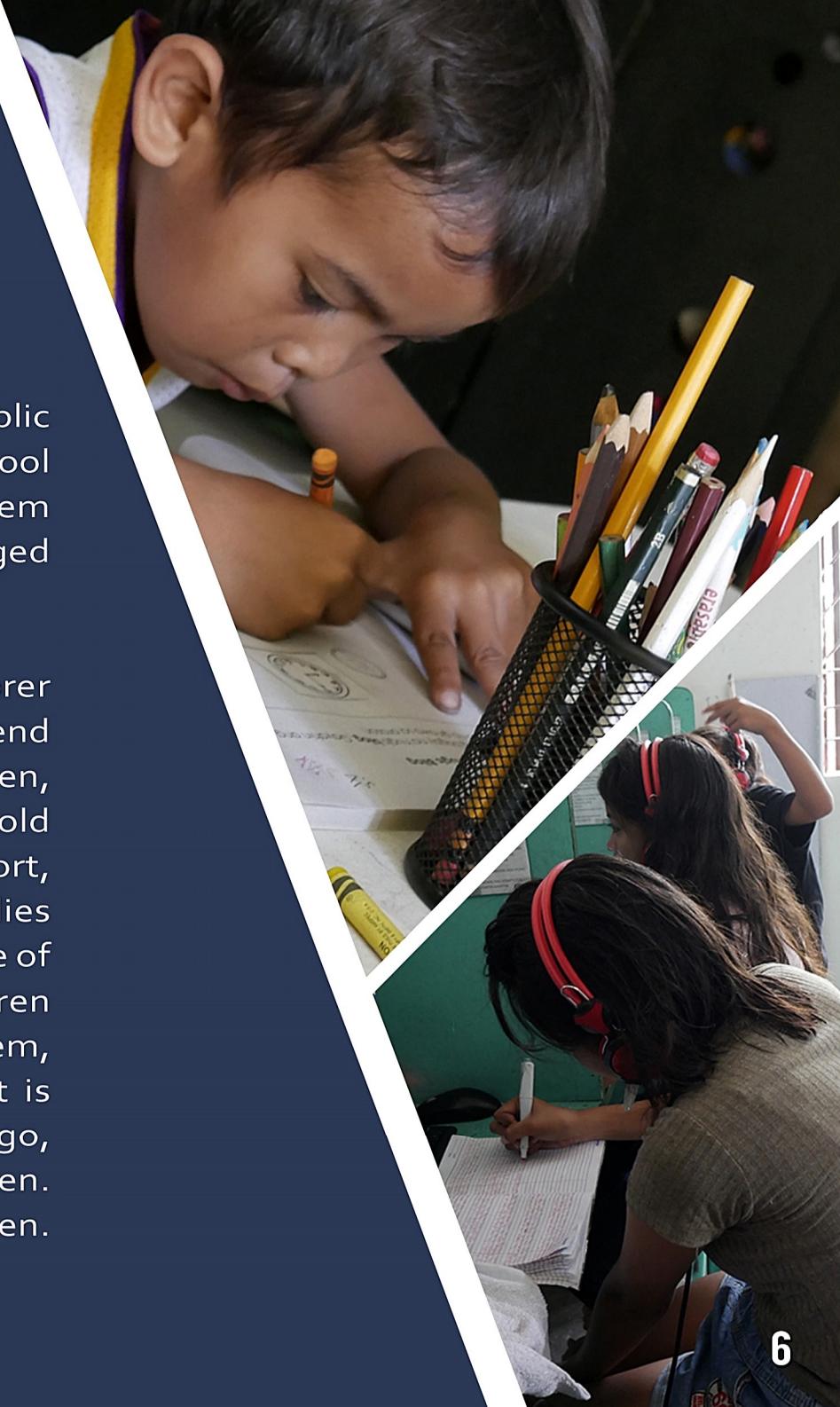
Through our Education and Community Development Program, we provide a loving and caring environment to buffer the young children from the trauma they have experienced, and a safe space for them to learn, to play, and to grow. During the day our Fairplay School is open for out-of-school children to develop their emotional intelligence and catch up with their academic pursuits. In the evenings, our Youth Group & EQ Club sessions are held two to three times a week to hold mentoring sessions on different social issues and life skills. In the long run, through our Program we hope to genuinely empower our students and buffer the largest problems of childhood trauma, so that we can more effectively break the cycle of poverty.

## II. THE FAIRPLAY SCHOOL

### A. Background

Throughout the Philippines, half of grade school students in public schools will drop out. Another half will not graduate high school (Nava, 2009). Beyond the drop-out crisis is a larger, looming problem shared by countries throughout the world: children are disengaged and bored in the traditional classroom.

The rigid style of education has proven difficult to translate to poorer contexts in particular. Financially, families just can't afford to send their kids to school. If a family on the poverty line had three children, for example, they must spend at least half of their entire household income sending their three kids to school; for uniforms, transport, projects, outings, etc. What happens, therefore, is families "specialize" their children. This means one child becomes the hope of the family and their school needs are provided, while other children will work to support the basic needs. The root cause of the problem, then, is in the household income. Boosting that provides what is necessary to allow smaller families in poorer areas. Fifty years ago, for example, each woman would have an average of 5 children. Today, it is half of that, as every woman has 2.5 children.





Fairplay began working in education through a drop-in center, whereby kids had a safe space to learn, play, and rest. We gradually began to sponsor kids who felt ready to go back to formal school. For the most part, this has been successful with attendance and grades improving gradually.

However, over time, it became clear through research and input from the community that this could not be a universal solution. If, for example, we send all the kids currently out of school back to the classroom, class sizes would double from their already egregiously large average of 60 to 80 in Payatas. It wouldn't work.



Nor does the traditional system work for most kids. The kids dropped out of school for a reason. Often that was their poor experience in school (corporal punishment, traditional teaching, irrelevant curriculum, etc.) not just the financial burden. So, at Fairplay, we believe there's a better way. We believe in child-centered learning; the students have a say in how the school is run, in what lessons they take, and in how they shape their future. We believe that curiosity should be encouraged and become the cornerstone of the learning process. We believe children learn best when cooperating, not competing; when they are happy and engaged, not passively memorizing. We believe teachers know their students best, and that they should be free to support their students in ways they deem best, without bureaucratic burden.

This is our vision for the Fairplay Academy. Students learn at their own pace, focusing on social and emotional development first to ensure they see mistakes as a positive step in the trial and error process that epitomizes the real learning process.

## B. Achievements

In 2018, our Fairplay School made some real strides. Here are some of the successes that we are proud of.

### ***1. Socio-Emotional KPIs***

Throughout the past three years, the Fairplay School officially made the transition from being a drop-in center open to any child in the community into an alternative school open only to enrolled students. Our criteria for accepting students are: (1) that they are out-of-school, (2) that their families cannot afford to keep them in school, and (3) they prefer to study with us than in the public schools. This way, we are able to focus on the most hard-core of cases, possibly the most neglected and disadvantaged young children in our community. In addition, this also meant we are able to measure and to track the progress of the same kids throughout the year.

As a way to measure the progress of each of our learners at the Fairplay School, we started using certain KPIs or key performance indicators. They include grit, emotional intelligence or EQ, self-regulation, growth mindset, and self-esteem.



## Results

In general there are small improvements between the 6 months of KPI testings. BMI rates have slightly improved in the younger, most underweight children, while the older students remain within the healthy range. Careful consideration needs to be placed upon how most of the children are small for their age, which BMI doesn't cover. The regular checkups and access to regular health support, as well as the daily hygiene time and regular, healthier food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for full-time students, has certainly helped improve access to healthcare and prevention of disease.

Socially and emotionally, improvements are seen in the aggregate EQ (emotional quotient) scores, in particular from the latter half of this period. A school-wide improvement of 19% in this area translates to improved emotional regulation and management. This is observed also by the teachers and through the daily community meetings and other conflict resolution areas, this improvement is hoped to continue.

This translates into long-term benefits on all fronts. Some more specific tests see mixed results (in growth mindset, grit, self-regulation, and self-esteem). These remain in the margin of error for the tests as a whole. The long-term trends of these indicators is important and the success of our programs should show over the long-run in these indicators from year to year. In short, it's too early to say much about the more specific tests.





## 2. ALS and the Academic KPIs

As part of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), the Fairplay School initiates tests in Basic and Functional Literacy to gauge the level of each student and fashion a program for them to advance from one level to the next. These levels in general are basic literacy, elementary, and high school. The classes offered cover many of the modules of the ALS, and once our students feel ready they can take the scheduled exams administered by the Department of Education. Passing the exams and other requirement of the ALS program means being awarded a high school diploma.

In the Fairplay School, learners set learning targets with their teacher. These are broken down into monthly and weekly targets. Every week the learners review their weekly goals, assess them, and revise them as appropriate. By keeping a portfolio containing the learner's works and previous goals, teachers are able to monitor the individual progress of each learner without needing to conform to a universal standard. Regularly, the teachers also administer the Basic Literacy Test (BLT) and the Functional Literacy Test (FLT) as an objective measure of the learners' progress.



## *Results*

In short, the results on the academic front are mixed. Generally speaking the younger the student the better the progress has been. The youngest students, with a safe space, have responded the most to the instruction, time, and play. With educational toys, learning from play, and other simple methods more easily available, their academic development has been strongest of the three groups (roughly equal to pre-school, elementary, and high school levels). These students have gone from little to no literacy at all, to a very basic level of literacy, representing a strong leap forward in their education – especially considering they are the most at-risk kids. The elementary-aged students show small progress. They are almost ready to pass the literacy test as they show basic literacy and basic comprehension.

Academically, there are disappointing results for the older students. The older group have somewhat stalled in their academic progress. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that the teachers focused more on the younger students than the older students in this time period due to the larger number of behavioural issues in that group. The second is that the educational materials are geared more towards a younger age group, with WiKAHON (Below) and other resources built for younger students learning basic literacy and comprehension. As the school is still working towards resources that will promote further independent learning at older ages, this is still somewhat a work in progress.

The older students have therefore stagnated academically. This requires immediate rectification and the teaching staff are aware of the problem. Plans are put into place to fix this. In the long-run, however, there may be larger issues here. Progressive education does not exist in poorer communities in the Philippines, with most students experiencing a harsh, traditional-style of schooling, with lectures for classes from a teacher largely unfamiliar with the topic. As such, training teachers to develop a more progressive style of teaching has proved slow going. One teacher is currently enrolled at the University of the Philippines' teaching certificate program while another teacher has many years of experience teaching at different schools in the Philippines. Despite training and modeling, the teaching styles for the older age group remain unsatisfactory.



Should the teaching staff fail to reach the levels of academic development hoped for among our older students, it may become necessary to essentially outsource this area by sponsoring the older students into a nearby private school for their high school and continuing their emotional and personal development at the Fairplay Academy to ensure the holistic development, mentoring, and necessary social work continues.





### 3. WiKAHON

In August 2018, we acquired a learning tool called WiKAHON (a portmanteau of wika [language] and kahon [box]). WiKAHON is a collection of readings and exercises for leveled language teaching in Filipino from Adarna House, a local publishing company. These readings and exercises are arranged according to the level of difficulty based on results from FiTRI (Filipino Text Readability Index) and assessments by reading experts.

Designed for independent use, WiKAHON requires that users can already read and are familiar with common Filipino words. The success of WiKAHON programs depends not on age or educational level, but on matching the language abilities of the students with the WiKAHON level to be used. This box contains:

- i. A guide for teachers - an educator's manual on WiKAHON usage, from student orientation up to evaluation;
- ii. 80 reading cards - short fiction or non-fiction about culture, history, or science; each with corresponding exercises on vocabulary, comprehension, and creative connections; and
- iii. 80 corresponding answer keys student references to be used when checking answers in the exercises.



It is particularly important to the academic program for learners at the lower elementary level. WiKAHON was the main educational tool used to improve reading, writing and comprehension skills; it also established the foundation for a more learner-oriented pedagogy where learners finished WiKAHON lessons at their own individual pace, as well as corrected their own answers independently. Half of the learners placed at the literate levels have finished the WiKAHON set last year, while this year, another third have started using the set. The manner in which the school uses WiKAHON parallels the teaching methodology suggested in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the Department of Education. WiKAHON, therefore, has been valuable in preparing the learners for the higher education modules of ALS.

#### 4. Fairplay School's Mood Meter

The Mood Meter is one way of quickly checking in the emotional condition of students within the day or the week. Through the Mood Meter, children express what they are feeling in that present moment. It's a simple magnetic whiteboard with the kids' names written in a row alongside the different emotions represented by an emoticon or an emoji.

From time to time, the teachers scan the Mood Meter to check if a student specified having a negative emotion. Most of the time, a negative emotion in the morning may change right away into a positive one in the afternoon. When a child consistently indicates having negative emotions for several days, this is a red flag and prompts the teacher to talk privately with the student to find out what is going on, and conduct a home visit if necessary.

The Mood Meter is not intended to be a perfect tool to measure emotions, of course, it is a quick indicator of how happy or sad the students are. It is also useful for the students to reflect on how they are feeling, as identifying emotions is the basis for developing greater emotional intelligence.





## *5. Medical and Dental Check-up*

Last September 2018, we brought the Fairplay School students to the National Children's Hospital for their annual medical check-up. The check-up is not just to assess the health condition of our students but also minimize the incidence of preventable and communicable diseases. Considering the students are among the most at-risk, we hope to be proactive in preventing disease and better managing the health of our learners.

The medical check-up revealed that some of our students have primary tuberculosis and in need of immediate medication. With the well-being of our kids a top priority, we provided the prescribed medicines, the multivitamins, and any other additional health needs.

Many of the kids were also in need of relief for their toothaches so we brought them to the dentist for a dental check-up. Many suffered from having cavities, and others had to get a tooth/teeth extracted. Dental care is a neglected part of the kids' routine in their homes; for many, it's only at the Fairplay School where they learned and developed dental hygiene and habits as well as have access to basic items like toothpaste and toothbrush.

We continue to monitor our learners' physical health through periodic check-ups.

## *6. Access to Water, Sanitation, and Personal Hygiene*

Access to clean water and sanitation is a major problem among the poorest of the poor in Payatas. Many of the kids in Payatas are not able to easily wash themselves, their clothes, or have access to a private and clean toilet. Due to lack of facilities, and sometimes severe neglect, many of our students had not washed for days (even weeks) before they came to our school.

At the Fairplay School, we provide these basic necessities to our students, making our facilities more like a second home to them. Access to water and a supply of health and hygiene kits in the School continue to ensure that our kids are able to shower daily with soap and shampoo and to wash their clothes properly with laundry detergent. Sometimes we had to use bleach to totally clean their clothes and erase the pungent smell. Regular and consistent care in hygiene has benefited both old learners and those newly-enrolled, many of whom had poor dental hygiene and habits. For many, the school is presently the main source (or only source) for basic hygiene items like toothpaste, soap and cleaning and washing materials. Apart from their own hygiene, the kids also take ownership over their school by helping to clean and maintain the facilities with our staff.



# III. EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP

## A. Background

Before we opened the Fairplay School, Fairplay's main education initiative was the Education Sponsorship Program, or ESP. Under the ESP, outside sponsors would send money to sponsor a child in the local public school. The monthly sponsorship of PHP 1,000 (roughly USD 20) would pay for the child's lunch, transportation, and school materials or other additional education-related expenses. Children who went to our drop-in center and participated in football training sessions were among the first who were offered the scholarship opportunity.

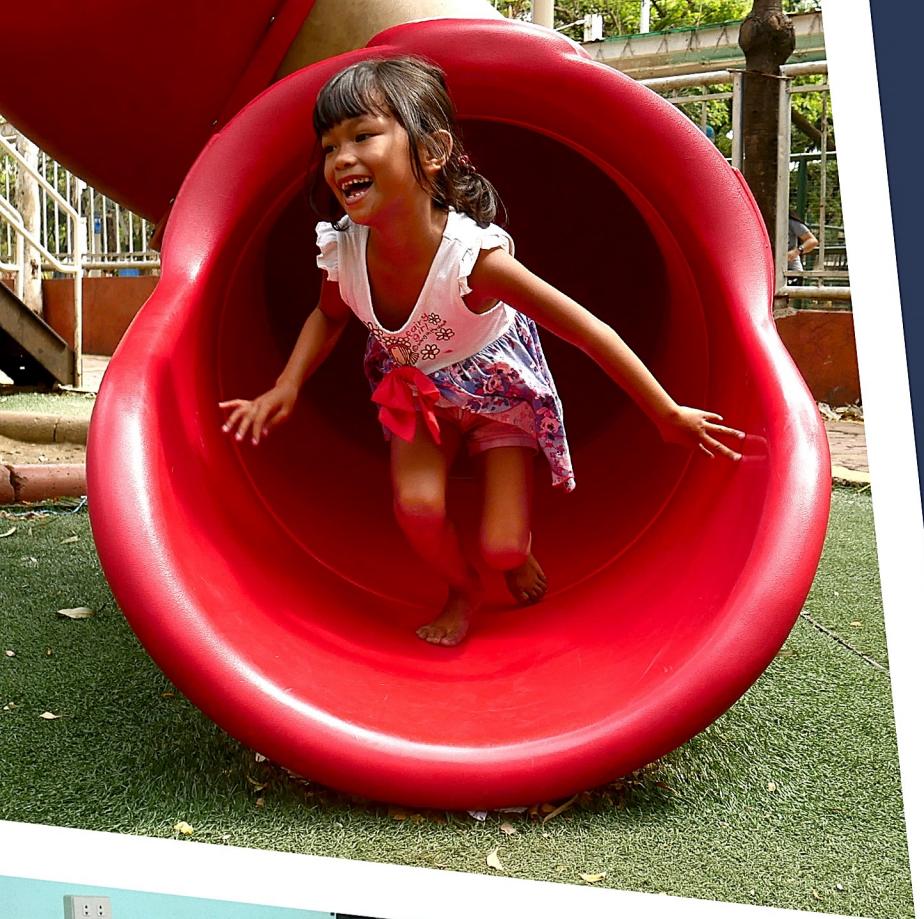




## B. Achievements

In 2018, we celebrate some of the notable successes of our sponsored kids. Firstly, 5 of our 44 sponsored kids graduated from senior high school. Out of the 5, 4 proceeded to pursue their college education - Ronalyn at the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), Rosemarie and Pia at the National College of Business and Arts, and Ricardo at the Quezon City Polytechnic University. While our college level kids are no longer in the ESP, we continue to support them through a college assistance initiative. Through this, they are able to "borrow" money with 0% interest to pay for their educational needs (such as the school tuition) and pay it back in the future. As they pay this back, the scholarship for the next student is opened up, and so on, making the program more sustainable than relying on outside sponsors.

One of our students was also invited onto the UST Varsity program. Her father died later in the year, however, and with the strict schedule UST imposed on varsity players she had to leave the sports aspect of the scholarship. She continues her degree at UST.



Secondly, our 2 sponsored kids who have been scholars in a private school since Grade 7 completed junior high school and got accepted to continue their scholarship through senior high in the same private school.

Thirdly, in 2018 we announced some changes to the ESP. The 1:1 sponsorship scheme was dropped; a sponsor could no longer sponsor one child and expect regular updates about that one child. This was decided as it is more expensive to send students to school, and the administrative and bureaucratic burden of maintaining 1:1 sponsorships is very high. Instead, the sponsor can contribute to the whole education program including the Fairplay School and receives a feature story of one scholar per month plus information on how the entire batch is doing. This ensures more of their support can go directly to the students in question and that if a child does drop out it does not affect the opportunities of other students.

# IV. YOUTH GROUP & EQ CLUB

## A. Background

The new batch of the Fairplay Youth Group was formed last April 2018 and it was a revival of the original project that was established several years ago. The current Youth Group are comprised of 20 young individuals ages 13 to 18 who want to expand their social circle and learn more beyond the formal education setting. Newly hired community development workers Javier "Avie" Alcantara and Christine "Tin" Censoro who joined Fairplay last April and August 2018, respectively, handle the group and facilitate weekly sessions.

The Youth Group provides mentoring and facilitates different kinds of activities for young adults involved in Fairplay's education and football programs so they can develop other aspects of their intelligence and capabilities such as their social, emotional, and critical thinking skills. Most of these activities originate from the teens themselves and their kuya (big brother) Avie and ate (big sister) Tin are there to help them crystallize their own ideas. This way, they have a sense of ownership of the learning process.



Fairplay's Youth Group also offers an avenue for teens and young adults to tackle social issues that are close to their realities, such as poverty, social support and relationships with their families and friends, gender and socioeconomic discrimination, access to justice, health and education, and many others. The opportunity to share their real-life dilemmas with each other in a supportive environment help them process these experiences constructively.

In a nutshell, the Youth Group is a safe space for young teens in a corner of Payatas who want to improve their lives by becoming more aware of themselves and the world they live in beyond Payatas.





## B. Achievements

It has been a busy 2018 for Fairplay's community development team. Here we highlight the many activities and accomplishments of the Youth Group and EQ Club.

### 1. *SOGIE Seminar*

Last June 2018, a month-long celebration of the Pride Month was held in the Philippines and the Youth Group wanted to be involved with many LGBT issues. Part of the interest comes out of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression or SOGIE seminar conducted by the University of the Philippines Center for Women's and Gender Studies (UPCWGS) with the youth group. The SOGIE seminar taught them about the various forms of discrimination and hate people from the Third Sex experience because of their gender.

## 2. *Pride March*

Aside from the SOGIE seminar, the Youth Group also participated in the 2018 Pride March where several people from all walks of life gathered along the streets of Metro Manila to fight for and celebrate freedom and equality for all, highlighting the plight of the LGBT community. Prior to this event, the Youth Group held debates and talked about topics like homophobia, same-sex marriage, and safe space for gays, among other things.





### 3. Spoken Word Nights

Many talented members of the Youth Group who have a knack for writing and speaking in front of a crowd participated in the Spoken Word Nights where they got to express themselves through a word-based performance art called spoken word. It is a different twist of poetry where rap and hip-hop are incorporated and performed live in front of an audience. Words can be written beforehand or can be uttered extemporaneously. Many of the Youth Group members took this challenge to heart. Some even took inspiration from Juan Miguel Severo, a spoken word artist in the Philippines, and used background songs or looped beats to strengthen the impact of their presentation. It was an amazing activity and we saw many of them come out of their shell and deliver a moving performance.

#### *4. Basic Photography*

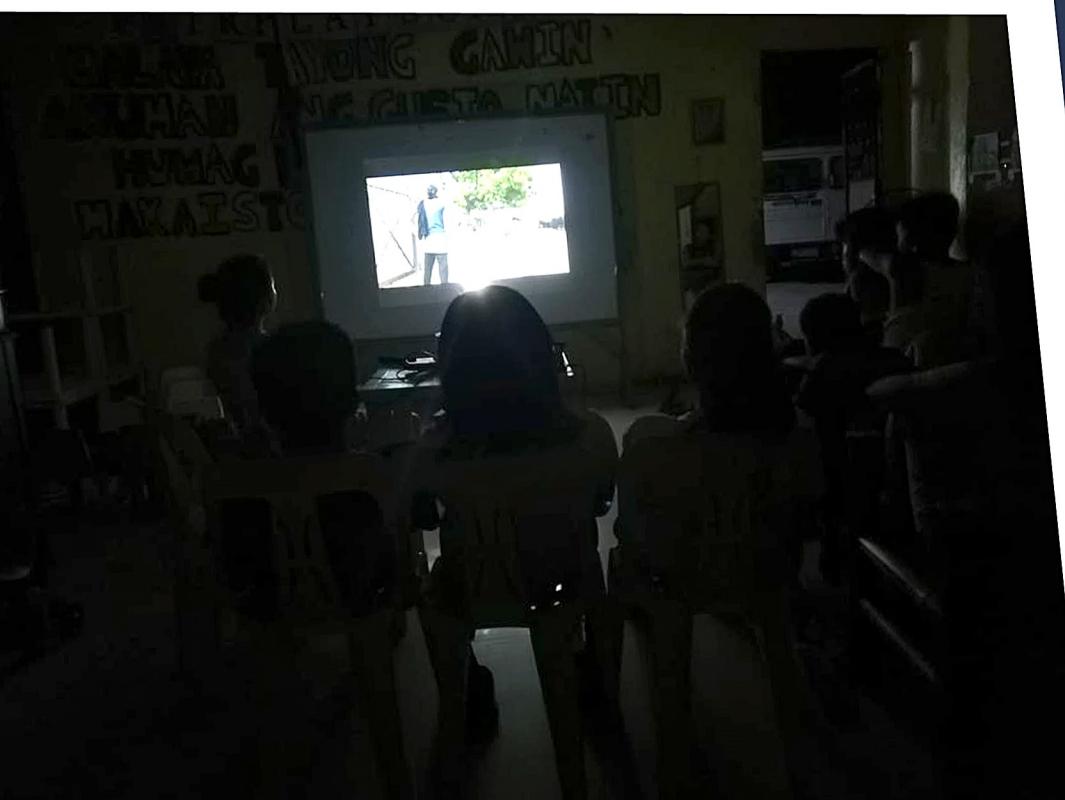
A handful of interns from Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro held a basic photography class last May 2018. They are Development Communication majors who shared their picture-taking skills to the kids. They taught them how to handle and use a DSLR camera, and introduced to them the three basic elements of photography: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. The youngsters had fun taking photos around the Payatas community!



## *5. Stress Management and Resilience*

Ms. Frances Aguda, our current Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, held a workshop for stress management and resilience for the youngsters last June 2018. It was a timely activity for them because at that time formal schooling had just commenced and the workshop taught them how to deal with stress in school, particularly how to manage their study time, extracurricular activities, and most importantly, rest and sleep.





## *6. Film Shows and Movie Marathons*

Multiple movies that resonated well with the Youth Group were shown for a number of weeks, and still recurring up to now. These are films that greatly impact them right now as young individuals and will probably affect them someday in the future when they become adults. Movies are curated by our Community Development Worker kuya Avie Alcantara but, from time to time, the kids get to choose what they want to watch.

Many of the movies are quite controversial and may have strong themes that can be challenging to grasp. The aim, of course, is to develop a debate and discussion around the themes. Our Community Development workers always make sure that the chosen films are age-appropriate, contextualized to the topic or issue at hand, and discussed before and after to deepen its understanding. Some of the socially relevant films that the Youth Group watched include: Love, Simon; Give Up Tomorrow; Heneral Luna; and standalone TV series like Black Mirror.



## *7. Martial Law: A Special Series of Youth Group Sessions*

One of the most intellectually stimulating issues for the Youth Group that covered several sessions in 2018 was the topic of Martial Law during the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. One of the most salient debates held dealt with long-held beliefs by some of the kids that Marcos was the greatest president in the history of the Philippines and deserves to be in the Libingan ng Mga Bayani or the Heroes' Cemetery, while other kids in the group expressed an opposing view. The debate may never end but facts must be distinguished from fiction and that's what the teens did.

The issue was also tackled vis-a-vis the current socio-political context of the country. The Youth Group attended a forum in September at the University of the Philippines - Diliman that allowed them an opportunity to ask questions about the Martial Law, about Marcos, and the current political situation, as well as interact with a panel of speakers comprised of a variety of individuals from the academe to martial law survivors. In the end, the questions were more important than the answers and the kids learned much from the experience.

## 8. Community Fair and Horror House

Our young members also tried their hand at organizing events. With the help of our Community Development Team, the Youth Group hosted the Community Fair in Payatas last October 20, 2018 and the Halloween Horror House on October 31, 2018. Both activities were a huge success! But more importantly, the experience was a treasure trove of learning for our protagonists and their young mentors.

The Community Fair is our version of a local charity fair wherein donated items are sold at very low prices in the community through a street-type bazaar, or ukay-ukay. We receive a lot of in-kind donations such as clothes, shoes, toys, and various other random stuff, some of which we can't really use. After our respective projects are able to get what they need from the donations, we hold our Community Fair. We believe that freely giving donations away in poor communities such as Payatas, outside the context of emergency relief operations, can breed more dependency. By holding our charity fair, kids and families feel that they have control over what they get while the act of buying the goods make them feel more empowered since they paid for it from their own pockets. Considering a t-shirt may cost as little as P20 it's mostly a token gesture as these events aren't about making a profit. It is learning to organise an event and the sense of ownership that is important.



The Horror House meanwhile is a tradition started by the Youth Group in 2016 to celebrate Halloween. In Payatas, entertainment for members of the community means karaoke and gossiping with neighbors. The Horror House is Youth Group's alternative for a spooky yet fun experience with family and friends. They prepare the Fairplay School as the haunted house, and dress up as ghosts and ghouls. The event was so popular, long queues and massive crowds would gather outside the Fairplay School hours before it opened. And last year, it was as well-received as ever!





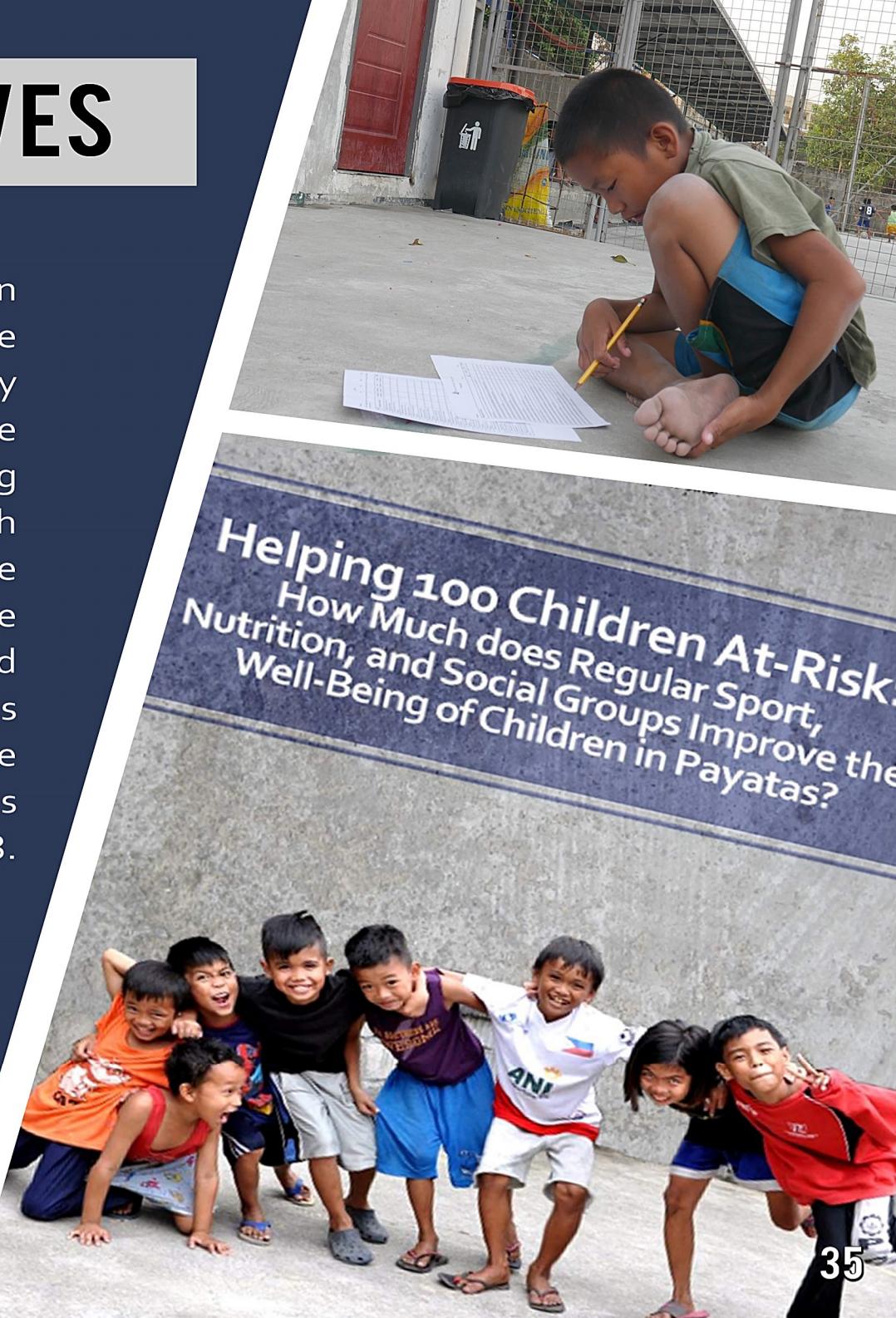
## 9. *The EQ Club*

Kids from our Education Program, including members of the Youth Group, gather together on a Saturday afternoon at the Fairplay School for the EQ Club. Guided by the premise of holistic development and social inclusion, the club seeks to develop their emotional intelligence through various activities and sessions that they may not easily find elsewhere. This is a cornerstone of Fairplay's philosophy and practice: the emphasis on developing emotional intelligence. This is particularly important when kids from this kind of background score high in the ACEs test (see page 4). Our survey in the community, for example, has shown that the typical child has experienced three or four times more childhood trauma than the average child outside of Payatas. The EQ Club hopes to help them by facilitating the learning of various coping strategies and the development of a growth mindset to build resilience.

The EQ Club every Saturday has only just started to find its foothold in our Education Program in the last quarter of 2018, but it has proven to be a promising initiative.

# V. RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Research is extremely important to us and in improving our operations and services to the community. We want to know if we are making any impact to our stakeholders and how, and where we can improve at. This is also part of our monitoring and evaluation. From the latter half of 2017 through the end of 2018, our researchers tracked the progress of our Fairplay kids, particularly the students of the Fairplay School (30-45 students) and the football players (90-100 players). Their progress was monitored across several KPIs. The research we conducted, the data we gathered, and our findings have been one of our biggest triumphs in 2018.



# VI. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Along with our successes, we also faced tremendous challenges that we overcame and continue to overcome.

## A. Capacity and Cost Effectiveness

The number of learners we had at the Fairplay School ranged between 30 and 40. Our target was 50 learners - 40 kids and 10 adult ALS learners. We retained a majority of our core students, but we also saw a few of them leave either to work and help take care of their families, or go back to public school in June.

In 2018, we welcomed a surge in the number of full-time interns in the summer months, but we also saw two of our teachers and two of our social workers moving on to pursue their careers elsewhere. To replace them, we hired one teacher, two additional teaching assistants (TAs) and one social worker.

Altogether, we currently have 42 students, 2 teachers, 1 volunteer, and 4 teaching assistants. All of our TAs are from the community and we are quite proud of this as we seek to strengthen our relationship with the families in the community. Nevertheless, the costs involved in running the whole operation and the capacity challenges of our team mean we need to see more progress as a whole in order to justify the cost.



Facing hard truths can be a real learning opportunity though. It's an invitation to truly look inward, reassess our strengths, and move forward accordingly. If this means restructuring in 2019 to consolidate the team, streamlining the operations, and tweaking our program to become better then we will embrace this new chapter of Fairplay's journey.

In particular, it is likely that we will have to outsource certain elements of our work. While there has been some strong progress among the younger students especially due to the capacity of our staff members being more suited to their age group, we still need to strengthen what we offer for our older students.

Part of the reason is that we are trying to offer support in every area: academic, social, and psychological support as well as emotional, mental, and physical health. In order to be able to improve and grow to the next level, it may make sense to outsource the academic side of our work, by enrolling students in the best schools we can find for them, and focus on the social and emotional support of the students at a deeper level. This focus should allow us to achieve more and do so with better cost-effectiveness.





## B. Development Work, Trauma and Security in Payatas

Payatas has been and continues to be much affected by the current socio-political situation in the Philippines. The government's crusade against drugs has, in reality, been more of a crusade against the poor. Urban poor communities are now living in anxiety and fear on a day to day basis. Families in our community now mourn their loved ones, young kids are orphaned, parents are visiting their grown-up children in prison, and tens of thousands of poor people in general are languishing in prison cells with little access to the legal system.

In this kind of context, we are challenged firstly by the question of how we can help and to what extent. Many have come to us for assistance, but as much as we want to our limited resources cannot stretch further. So far we could only provide safe space for children to at least attain a level of normalcy, offer some comfort and social support, and refer community members to other specialized groups or organizations for help.



We are challenged secondly by the secondhand trauma that our team faces. We now experience not only the ills of poverty but also the added anguish of the families most impacted by the state's policies. Knowing how addiction itself is a symptom of deeper pain, and knowing that nowhere in the world has such a 'War on Drugs' ever been successful, as it creates more problems than it solves, the environment has only become more challenging.

The situation can be despairing at times and to a certain extent is outside of our control. The opportunity here lies in developing not just the social support program of the children and families we work with through our community development initiatives, but also a social support and mental health program for our staff.

## C. Sustaining the Progress with our Students

Another big challenge for us has been sustaining the progress we make with our students. During the day when they come to the Fairplay School, they get to enjoy being children again in a safe and happy place. However, after school the progress we make gets undone by the negative and toxic environment at home. This is specifically true for kids with families who are not supportive of their growth, have been rounded up in police raids, or have fled the area as their name appeared on a list somehow. In the end, the development of our kids takes much, much longer. Moreover, with the added security issues, many of our kids and young adults are not safe at home.

Our long-term solution, and indeed our grand vision, is to build a boarding school to provide complete care for the most hardcore of cases among our students. In this Fairplay Academy, we will provide both residential care and education for the most neglected kids in the community, cementing and sustaining the progress that the kids have made. While those who come from stable and supportive families can join the Academy during the day for tutoring sessions and academic support and in the evenings for various mentoring sessions.

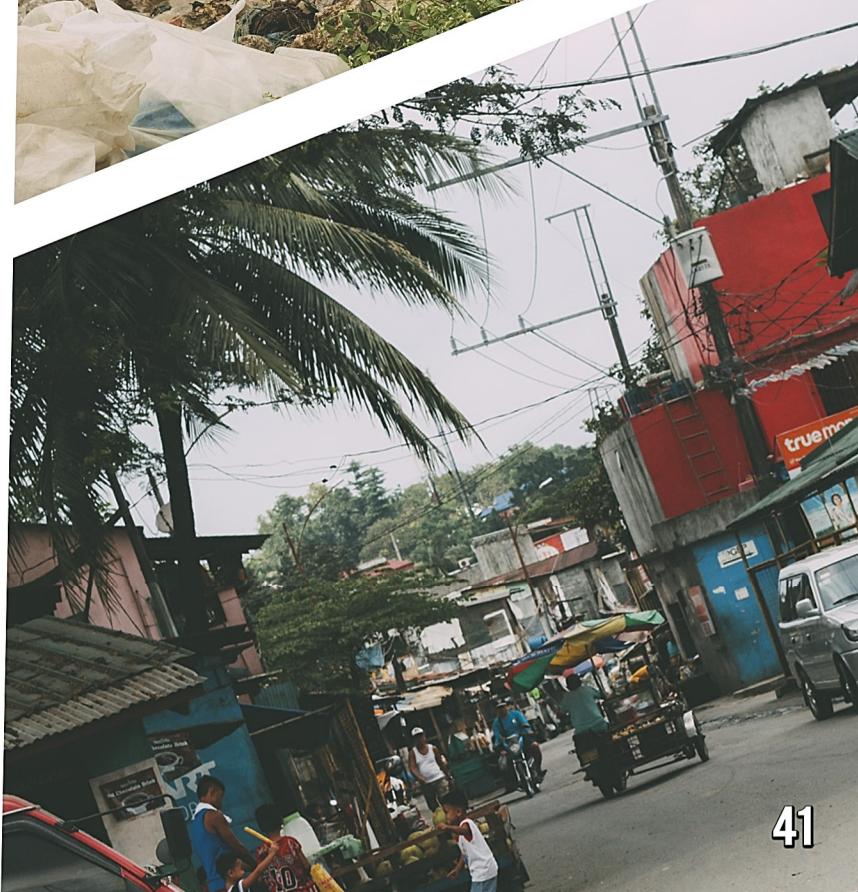


## D. Social Divisions and Biases in the Community

A seemingly simple yet deep-rooted challenge in the community has come to our attention: social divisions and biases within the community based on location in Payatas. Within Payatas, stereotypes exist against residents who live in certain streets and areas. These stereotypes influence members of one area to view members of another area in a certain way, often negative. The effect of this division has extended from parents to their children, and has formed a division between the Youth Group members and the Fairplay School students, and within the Fairplay School students.

This social division has been difficult to break, and it saddens us that it is happening even among the children that we support. But we are not altogether without hope, as we have learned from our football program that breaking social barriers is not impossible. The players from our football program had this issue before; one group of players from one particular street would refuse to play with another group of players from another street. However, as they continued to train and to play together, eventually they got to know each other better and became very good friends.

This challenge of social divisions and biases within the community therefore can be overcome, as we continue to build platforms for different groups of Fairplay kids to interact and work together more regularly. The EQ Club in particular will become a bridge of bringing them together in a journey towards building their emotional intelligence.



## VII. WHAT'S IN STORE IN 2019

Reflecting on the previous year's achievements and challenges, we feel excited welcoming another year for Fairplay. The Fairplay School is going to undergo some big changes as we adapt to the challenges and concerns in the community and with the Department of Education here in the Philippines.

One of the biggest challenges has been maintaining academic progress whilst dealing with very heavy health and social work concerns. The split focus is a challenge with the young nature of our staff and the mentoring and training that still need to be conducted with them. As a result, we are transitioning the Fairplay School towards a Youth Center setup.





## The Youth Center

The Youth Center model would present the possibility for us to focus on a smaller niche and make more of an impact. By finding the best academic environment for the students and setting up a pathway for them to earn their way forward, we would expect a more formal academic environment for the kids. This will free up our staff members to focus on the social work, family and health problems, and other needed support that make the most difference for the students involved.

Most students would be in a public school (government run) for the first year. From there they can be assessed each year and if they have shown commitment towards their education through high attendance rates, improving grades, and improving attitudes and mindsets, they will be able to access the next level of scholarships. Here they can get access to a private school scholarship or a better public school, earning their way up the levels of support through their effort and improvement.



Whilst we hope in the long-run to be able to offer academic classes in-house, the combination of internal and external problems means that it will be better to outsource this area for the time being. Internally we need to be able to focus on what we can do best and gain more training and experience in academic areas and progressive education before offering alternative classes. Externally, the Department of Education (DepEd) continue to postpone the exam for the Alternative Learning System meaning we have several older students ready to take the exam and earn their High School Diploma, but they are essentially in limbo as we wait for the DepEd to re-organize the entire program which could take years. Rather than wait, our older students can enrol in High School and earn their qualifications.

The Youth Center will therefore focus on supporting the students with training and activities to develop a growth mindset, for social support, and for financial security. This is based on our understanding and past research that four main areas are required for a successful mentoring program, namely 1) academic support, 2) financial incentives, 3) mental health support, and 4) social support. The Youth Center will be able to offer mentorship for each of these areas, opening pathways in a more sustainable manner.

The growth of our students until this point will serve them well in returning to a more formal setting. For most of them, they will be able to skip several grades and catch up with classmates of their own age. For others, the support from the Youth Center will allow them to gradually catch up and eventually surpass the average learning rate of students in the local schools.

When we have re-consolidated the education program in the Youth Center setup, and have attained a level of excellence in our services, then we would be in a better position to assess our capacities to offer the next levels of support: residential care to our most at-risk scholars, and then once again in-house academic classes. Step by step, we are paving the way forward towards the Fairplay Academy.



# VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, enquiries, and comments:

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