



Maria Cristina Bagaforo - Philippines

I am Maria Cristina Bagaforo, representing the Pearl of the Orient, the Republic of the Philippines. I am an English teacher by profession, also the current Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator for the Diocesan Commission on Youth, Diocese of Malolos, and during weekends and holidays I volunteer in a shelter built for the sexually abused, sexually exploited and trafficked young girls called the Bahay Pangarap, "Dreamhouse" if roughly translated to English. Having said so, these volunteering efforts brought me to drafting the solution entitled: *The Road to the Promised Land: Human Development and Inner Capacity Building Sustenance Program for the Abused Women and Children of Bahay Pangarap Women's Center Foundation* or simply *The Road to the Promised Land Project*.

Mirroring The Catholic Women's League, Philippines' mission, The Road to the Promised Land seeks to intensify the pursuit of the advocacy of Christian Womanhood particularly by working ardently to respect the dignity, protect the rights of the abused girls and women and help in their societal reintegration.

The Road to the Promised Land Project would like to carry out the following objectives:

1. To provide protective custody and care for women and girls during crisis situation.
2. To provide a wide range of psycho-social interventions and services for protection, healing and rehabilitation to empower them as healthy survivors.
3. To facilitate reconciliation and reunification of families without threat or further exploitation.
4. To create a viable program and various services and activities implemented by volunteer resource partners in the hope of making the survivors become productive citizens.
5. To install a creative and viable resource-based program for the financial sustainability of the center.
6. To serve as a resource center for women and girls in crisis situation in the province of Bulacan, Philippines.

Trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation and all other associated forms, are referred to by Pope Francis as examples of "modern-day slavery." In the national context, it has been widespread due to different circumstances plaguing the country such as natural and man-made calamities, economic difficulties and degenerating values.

The shelter, Situated in a first class urban municipality in the Province of Bulacan promises to heal broken souls and rebuild shattered dreams – the Promised Land to every Israelite who has come for refuge.

The Solution is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5 which is to Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and all its corresponding subtargets.

The Road to the Promised Land Project presents the three essential and integral elements that will immensely contribute to the successful reintegration of a rescued individual; quality education, spiritual formation, and legal assistance and intervention.

Quality Education

In a third world country like the Philippines, education is considered critical to one's success. The shelter promises to provide a better quality of education, if not the best, to victims who are in the basic education system, in the tertiary level. Aside from the honing of the intellectual capacity of the rescued individuals, livelihood education is also being taught to prepare them with the skills they need when reemerging in the society.

Spiritual Formation

Under the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, the shelter reinforces the values and virtues that were once lost thru the Sacraments and other spiritual activities

Legal Assistance and Intervention

The Road to Canaan Project works to provide protective custody and care, as well as psycho-social interventions and services to the victims who had been robbed off of their morale and dignity. Qualified practitioners/professionals in the said field are available to assist them in legal aspects as they recover, heal and rehabilitate, as well as to facilitate the peaceful reconciliation and reunion of families.

Barriers/hurdles

The Diocese of Malolos has limited financial resources to sustain the only temporary residential facility to house the victims. Meager as it is, the center selflessly assists the victims to survive providing them with human development program and inner capacity building that they need. Currently, the center is being managed by eight regular staff and a core of volunteers from the Catholic Women's League (CWL) and the Diocesan Commission on Youth. The managing group conforms to the standard ratio recommended by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the accrediting and licensing agency of the government. The center's 2015 budget projected P1.6 million pesos or \$32,878 with \$18,250.00 for the programs and services alone while \$9,466.66, \$3,822.22 and \$1,340.00 were allocated for personnel services, maintenance and operating expenses, and social benefits respectively. However, due to an unstable economic condition in the country causing great differences in the cost of living, these annual expenses are expected to increase 15% by 2017.

Implementation and Next Steps/Implementación y desarrollo

The project implementation will involve three strategies with corresponding supplementary activities. Please do take note that these activities are time-bound.

The first strategy would be the pre-submission of project proposal. This will include the review of an implementation (every last month of the quarter), followed by a performance appraisal and review of staff (every December), submission of requirements to the DSWD for reaccreditation (last month of the second quarter), board meeting to formulate strategies on resource generation (every first quarter), and regular meeting of the staff and core volunteers (every quarter).

The second strategy identified is case management. The said strategy will include case review and conference with local government unit (every month), preparation and submission of first semester report to the board (every July), networking with other NGOs (every third quarter), seminar, training and meeting with ABSNET (every second quarter), training and group work (every month), monitoring of the Alternative Learning System and regular class attendance of college students (everyday, school days), monthly consultation and supervision (every month), conducting outdoor activities (every month), assisting clients in court appearances (every month), and livelihood and skills training (every quarter).

Lastly, the third implementing strategy is the year-end performance evaluation and planning that includes two processes; the preparation and submission of project implementation, and documentation of annual accomplishment report, to be done every July and December.

The Road to the Promised Land Project also presents a monitoring strategy including the formulation of the Annual Strategic Plan to serve as basis, a quarterly board meeting to review and assess the movement of the residents under care, a monthly consultation and staff meeting, a monthly case load review to assess movement of cases of residents in care, an annual performance and year-end review, planning for the succeeding year, and documentation of project impact reports through the research of on-the-job staff.

Exodus, the second book in the Bible, reminds us how God saved His children from the land of slavery and made them His people. It tells the story of a faithful God, who kept His vow to the forefathers of the Israelites – the fulfilment of their deliverance from bondage. It exposes the courageous “exodus” (or the “exit”) of this entire nation from captivity towards the land God has promised them.

In the same sense, this articulates that at present, there is hope for people who have been entrapped behind the bars of modern-day slavery, there is hope that they can still be brought to the land God has promised them.