

ygrp

**Changemakers
in the
Community**

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Editors: Kevin Ramsden & Aaron P. Campbell



Young
Global
Researchers
Project

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Young Global Researchers Project - Year Two

Foreword

The main aim of the Young Global Researchers Project is to build an online platform for facilitating research, writing and discussion forums linking universities and communities in Japan with their counterparts in other Asian countries and beyond. It is an authentic community engagement initiative that encourages students and educators to collaborate in learning more about key societal issues, and the actions needed to address them, through interactions with individuals and organizations in their local areas. This is achieved through solid research, primary source engagement, and the voicing of the participants' individual experiences, and those of others, through the written word and other forms of media. Furthermore, the lead researchers on the project focus on identifying the different styles of research employed in the various cultural settings the project is active in, with analysis of the data collected hopefully leading to insights on how to prepare a more effective and universal approach to research for undergraduate level university students, in particular.

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Work

The Work of the Zienzele Foundation in Rural Zimbabwe

Researchers: Pamela Mahohoma & Faith Hama

Great Zimbabwe University

The issue of rural poverty in Zimbabwe is very deeply rooted in the country's post-colonial history. Economic and social problems in recent years have only served to exacerbate the situation, and the majority of the country's rural population live with the daily struggle to feed themselves or find work of any kind. The enduring legacy of colonialism with subsequent inequality in distribution of resources has had a major impact on agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, with hyperinflation and currency devaluation only making matters worse.

Climate change has also played its part in threatening the income levels in rural areas, with irregular rainfall and prolonged droughts leading to a drop in livestock productivity, failed crops and ultimately severe food insecurity. Improvements to infrastructure in agricultural practices are desperately needed to combat these challenges. When one adds in limited access to education and healthcare, it is easy to see how a downward spiral of non-acquisition of skills and unemployment will likely result in a continued and seriously aggravated situation.

In addition to the aforementioned issues that both the rural and urban poor have to deal with in Zimbabwe, the arrival of the global COVID19 pandemic in 2019 only served to compound an already desperate situation. According to one source (Chingono, 2021), almost half of Zimbabwe's population fell into extreme poverty between 2011 and 2020, and this means that the poorest households have had to give up on attempting to access formal healthcare or forgo education for their children, with food taking priority over school fees, uniforms or books. Almost 90% of the extreme poor live in rural areas, and around 1.6 million of this number are children. However, perhaps the most damaging effect of the pandemic was the impact it had on the workforce and employment situation. Movement from rural to urban areas by a mostly young, male, job seeking demographic has caused serious problems in the familial make-up of rural communities, in particular.

Despite some positive input and assessments from some within the World Bank that the Zimbabwean economy is ripe for improvement (Sharma, 2022), this would almost certainly be reliant on a move away from low-productivity, small-holding style agriculture to higher-productivity activities in the industrial and service sectors. However, this is something that would leave rural communities in a very difficult position. How can these communities hope to survive in this transition period and beyond, and indeed how are they managing to survive even now? Almost certainly, the answer lies in the work of NGOs alongside, or independent of, efforts by local authorities. One researcher acknowledges this quite clearly, stating, "Many NGOs in Zimbabwe have implemented skills development interventions aimed at dealing with poverty. These skills development interventions include bee keeping, carpentry, horticulture, and many off farm enterprises" (Kabonga, p.4, 2023). Indeed, one such NGO engaging in these kinds of activities in the Chivi district, Masvingo, is the Zienzele Foundation.

The Zienzele Foundation (ZF)



Nancy Clark (left) and Prisca Nemapare (right)

The Zienzele foundation (ZF), a registered charitable organization in Zimbabwe, that also qualifies as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization in the United States (www.zienzelefoundation.org), was born out of a chance meeting in Zimbabwe of two women, Prisca Nemapare and Nancy Clark, both of whom were committed to helping others. Dr. Prisca Nemapare, then a professor of nutrition at Ohio State University had started an Earthwatch project researching the nutritional status of women and children in her native Zimbabwe in 1984, and had continued with this endeavor with some success through the 1990s. In 1998 and 1999, Nancy Clark, a nurse from rural Vermont, also began volunteering with the project. However, in 2000, Earthwatch was unable to continue its support due to the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe. Undaunted by this, Prisca and Nancy were to later return and set a new course for assistance to the rural poor that would become the Zienzele Foundation. Prisca and Nancy based the mission of Zienzele on findings from the research they had carried out, and by that time, there was an emerging crisis of children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As the virus devastated an entire generation of adults, widows and grandmothers were struggling to adequately manage the needs of the orphaned children left in their care.

These aging carers asked Prisca and Nancy for help, and Prisca and Nancy responded with “OK! Let’s think about what we can do together”. There were a number of issues that needed to be addressed at that time, and Prisca and Nancy had to find solutions to each of the problems they were faced with. For example, these women knew how to manage a vegetable garden, but simply didn’t have the seeds to sow. They were able to craft extraordinary baskets with strikingly inventive and intricate whirling designs, but they had no market at which to sell them. That is the point when Prisca and Nancy were able to step in and help. They started to buy those baskets and resell them outside Zimbabwe, mostly in the United States of America. With the money paid to them in Zimbabwe, carers were then able to buy food and other household necessities. Moreover, unlike many other kinds of fair trade goods, the proceeds from international sales were also reinvested in the makers’ communities (www.culturalsurvival.org), with every cent of profits from sales being returned to the Masvingo region, paying for AIDS-orphaned children’s school tuition, national exam fees, and other needs.



These are some of the beautiful baskets made by Zienzele women.

Additional funding comes from private donations from the many friends of Nancy and Prisca across the US and abroad. Also, great support systems are in place in Athens, Ohio and Kyoto, Japan.

Since the year 2000, the Zienzele Foundation has worked in the southern part of Chivi district, which is a part of Masvingo province. This area is home to some of the poorest villages in Zimbabwe, where the very low annual rainfall rates usually results in drought every year. Now, the Zienzele Foundation has a network of volunteers in Zimbabwe who provide oversight and carry out the work when Nancy and Prisca are absent. Each of the twenty three Zienzele school districts has a Zienzele Representative who has been chosen by the carers in their village. There are also three Zienzele Coordinators who oversee several districts each. This model has created a high level of accountability and quick response to situations as they arise.

Through basket-weaving the Zienzele women's cooperative groups earn money to help support themselves and care for over one thousand orphans. In 2001, the Foundation was registered as a trust in Zimbabwe and its mission is to educate AIDS orphans and vulnerable children and also to enable carers to improve their own lives. The Foundation has grown exponentially since the year of its founding, to the extent that there are now nutritional community garden projects, sewing projects, poultry projects and goat projects for the women in the co-operative.

The Zienzele Foundation Achievements

- In 2000 when it started, school fees were paid for fifty orphans. By 2012, eight hundred orphans were being sent to school, and now there are over one thousand orphans and vulnerable children getting educational support from the Foundation.
- In 2000 one Child-Headed Household received extra help in terms of food, uniforms and books; but now the Foundation regularly supports between fifty and seventy households, based on need.
- The number of basket-making groups has grown from two to forty six!
- Zienzele started with two garden projects and now there are fifty four!
- In 2000, there were no sewing groups. Now there are nine!
- In the past several years, many of the Zienzele women's cooperatives have started chicken projects and goat projects.
- The Zienzele Foundation now has more than twenty post-graduate students who have graduated from various courses at polytechnic colleges, teacher's colleges and universities like Great Zimbabwe University and University of Zimbabwe.

Interview

Interviewees:

Ms. Korogwe (Zienzele Foundation coordinator)

Ms. Chirigo (Zienzele Foundation representative)



Ms. Korogwe



Ms. Chirigo (on the right)

Q: What does the word Zienzele mean?

Mrs. Korogwe: The Zienzele foundation is all about self-reliance. Zienzele is a Ndebele word which translates into English as do-it-yourself.

Q: What are your main duties in the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: As a Zienzele Foundation coordinator, I work with parents who are in our weaving projects. Actually, I can say I act as the supervisor in the sense that I help in bringing Nancy or Prisca's messages to parents who are in our clubs. I also work with primary and secondary school children who are beneficiaries of the foundation in the sense that if any problems occur, I have to report quickly to Nancy and Prisca so that the victim can get help. In this case I also work with teachers to get correct information on how our children are doing at school. I also act as a parent, especially to our child-headed families where both parents are dead. I have to visit those families and take care of them and any problems they have. I feel that I have to comfort such families so that they can reach their educational goals.

Q: What is the role of the ZF in your community?

Mrs. Chirigo: The Zienzele foundation helps us in paying school fees for children and also our grandchildren so that they will be able to learn until they reach any level they like.

Mrs. Korogwe: The Zienzele foundation buys the baskets we make and goes and sells them outside of Zimbabwe. The money they get through selling those baskets helps us to pay school fees for our children and grandchildren. Also, the Zienzele foundation helps those children who are orphans to pay their school fees and also offers them all the necessary school items, such as books and uniforms, as well as food.

Q: What projects are you doing in the ZF?

Mrs. Chirigo: We, as Zienzele foundation members, are doing the basketry project where we produce baskets out of grass and sisal. This has been our main project since we started the cooperative in the year 2000. However, the foundation is also very concerned with our health and nutrition status, and therefore provides garden projects where we are growing a variety of vegetables like rape, spinach and cabbage. We also grow carrots, tomatoes, beans and onions.



One of the Zienzele Foundation gardens in Run'ai center where Mrs Chirigo is the representative.

Mrs. Korogwe: To add to what Mrs Chirigo has said, we also have projects of keeping hens and goats. We were given these domestic animals and birds by the foundation so that we can get eggs, milk and meat to boost our nutrition and also receive money from selling the products. On top of that, we were also given sewing machines, which we use to sew clothes, especially children's uniforms that are mainly given to the child-headed families.

Q: What are the most important things a person should know or understand when volunteering with the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: For one to be able to join the Zienzele Foundation he or she must be very hard working, strong in spirit and well-focused. The Foundation needs those people who are well committed to their work and those who keep their eyes on the prize. The foundation is capable of accommodating everyone who is in need, despite race, color, gender or physical structure. Volunteers should also know that we should love one another as we work in the Foundation and also feel for others, being faithful and always telling the truth.

Q: What are the biggest problems you have faced since becoming involved in the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: At first we were not able to make very nice baskets of the good quality that our buyers

expected. So, the Zienzele Foundation took that opportunity to teach us how to make nice and attractive baskets and also taught us to have self-reliance.

Mrs. Chirigo: We also have a challenge that some of our members have now grown old, so they are experiencing eye sight problems and also having problems with their legs. Also, some of them are no longer able to make baskets which are strong and beautiful enough, as expected by the Zienzele foundation. This is all because of the problems of old age. However the Zienzele foundation tries by all means to help us by providing members with some glasses so that they can use them whenever they are making the baskets. Also, Zienzele members are trying to recruit younger ladies from our communities, and they are now joining us to make our projects survive.

Q: What is most rewarding about being in the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: What is most rewarding about being a member of the Zienzele foundation is that both our children and our grandchildren have their school fees paid. Our children are educated up to the level they wish to reach. Also, the baskets we make are sold and we have money in return in order to buy groceries and other needs for us to survive with our families. Our area of Chivi district is an annual drought experiencing area every year and we receive very little or no rainfall. This always results in drought and starvation. Through these times of hardship, it is the Zienzele Foundation which helps us with our weaving of baskets and we get money to buy meals.

Mrs. Chirigo: On top of that the Zienzele foundation also helps us by providing us with healthy food through the use of the projects we are involved in.

Q: What is the philosophy of the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: As Zienzele Foundation members we believe in self-reliance, and that means working for ourselves. We are very proud of our handiwork. We also strongly believe in helping every child in our communities to have access to education, especially the vulnerable and those who are in need.

Q: How is Chivi district or Zimbabwe as a whole benefiting from the ZF?

Mrs. Korogwe: Our country is benefiting a lot in many ways from the Zienzele Foundation especially in Chivi district where the Foundation is based. To start with, through educating young children, the country is benefiting from having a well-educated young generation which is the bright future of our country. Again child marriage is being overcome in our area, as our children are more likely to focus on their studies rather than having nothing to do, which may often result in an early marriage. The foundation is also supporting us as a community. Our children who finished their Ordinary and Advanced levels are having their fees paid to start courses of their own choice in colleges, polytechnic centers, universities and vocational training centers. This reduces the number of unemployed school leavers who may end up stealing, practicing drug abuse, or even murder.

Mrs. Chirigo: Through the Zienzele Foundation, our nation is benefiting in the issue of women empowerment. This always results in the reduction of domestic violence incidents in our homes and villages as we now have our own source of income and are able to rely on ourselves. To add more, through this foundation, Chivi district's women's works are now recognized at the international level. Our basketry projects are now seen as great work. Also our district has benefited from the Zienzele Foundation through the building of infrastructure. In this case, the Foundation donated funds for the building of community halls in Chiware, Berejena and Run'ai centers.

Q: What are your future expectations of the Zienzele Foundation and the community?

Mrs. Korogwe: As Zienzele Foundation members we are expecting a long lifetime for our organization. If we look back to where we were before this foundation, we can see what are called great developments and achievements so we don't want our projects to fail.

Q: What advice would you give to other women who are interested in starting a similar cooperative in their community?

Mrs. Korogwe: To all those who want to join the Zienzele Foundation they should come and join us so that we can do these projects together and pay school fees for our children and grandchildren. By doing this we will be able to build a better future for our children. The Zienzele Foundation does not select members but only wants people who have the heart and are prepared to do their own things wholeheartedly

Mrs. Chirigo: The Zienzele foundation is our diamond. It has changed our lives. We are now living a greater life all because of the Zienzele Foundation. It has taught us to make use of our own two hands, that we should not sit on them, but rather use them to do work so that we can help our families. So I say to every mother out there, "Come and let's work together."

Q: What message would you like to share with people who support your effort to improve access to education for children in your community.

Mrs. Korogwe: We would like to take this opportunity to thank Nancy Clark and Prisca Nemapare Choto for the love they offer us each and every day. They were sent by God to help us in our time of need and allow our children to be educated and have a brighter future. We are thankful, may God continue blessing them with many years of survival and power so that they can't leave us. We are nothing without this Foundation and our children may not survive this world without these two ladies. They brought light to our lives.

Mrs. Chirigo: We want to thank Nancy Clark and Prisca Nemapare Choto for the support they give to our children and to those orphans who do not have parents at all. They made us believe again in this world, because of the education they are bringing to our children. Some of our children are now engineers, teachers, accountants and so forth just because of the Zienzele Foundation. Also, we want to thank them for the support they

offer us as women of the community. We are also taking this opportunity to thank our driver, Blessing Maturi, for doing such a very good job. We just pray that things will continue to be good so that our children and grandchildren will continue with their education and they will be able to take care of themselves.

Reflections

Zimbabwe and Japan are two countries with different situations in terms of wealth, as Zimbabwe is a developing country and Japan a developed one. According to the research done in this project, similarities are that both the FUKU JOB (FJ) organization and the Zienzele Foundation (ZF) are working with the mission of helping carers/caregivers although the type of help needed is different. In Japan the declining birthrate and aging population have become serious problems, hence the need for accepting foreign caregivers to look after the aging people. However, in Zimbabwe the aging ones are becoming the carers of their grandchildren because of an increasing death rate due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic and other social factors that are resulting in child-headed households.

The (FJ) organization was founded by Japanese people aiming to help foreign workers handle demands of work in their profession. In this case, it was Japanese people who volunteered to help foreign workers, but the situation in Zimbabwe is vice-versa. The Zienzele Foundation is a non-governmental organization, with one of its founders being a Zimbabwean citizen whilst the other is a foreigner. In Japan the FJ organization is helping to train foreign caregivers so that they can become knowledgeable about Japanese lifestyle, residence status, labor laws and regulations. The organization is also helping these foreign workers in their problems due to the lack of consultation services and difficulties in gathering information about daily life and disasters in Japan. This is very different from the situation of the Chivi area in Zimbabwe, as the ZF is providing a source of income to the carers there through buying their baskets.

In terms of activities, the FJ organization is working with Japanese employers as they need more understanding about accepting foreign laborers and also have the burden of improving the working environment and uneven policies in different industrial sectors. This helps a lot in protecting foreign workers so that they can feel comfortable in their workplaces and become knowledgeable about their working conditions and environment. FJ organization is also maintaining, keeping, and developing human resources as they are emphasizing the values necessary to accept foreign workers in the future. By contrast, in Zimbabwe, the Zienzele Foundation, as a non-governmental organization, has its own mission of educating orphans and vulnerable children as well as enabling carers to improve their livelihoods. In this way the foundation emerged to help the carers to be self-reliant workers. The foundation provides many projects like goat rearing, poultry management and gardening as a way to improve the lives of the community in terms of health and providing a source of income for the hard working carers.

In conclusion, the situations in the two researched countries are actually somewhat different. In Zimbabwe, it is the non-governmental organizations that mostly deal with those self-reliant workers in marginalized communities. They might not be recognized by the government, and quite often remain hidden. However, in Japan, it is the Japanese people and the government that introduce and develop organizations to help foreign workers. According to the research done on the FUKU JOB organization, Japan is in need of more nursing care workers, with most of them coming from outside

the country. Both the ZF and the FJ organizations are working to provide solutions to social problems that were caused by natural or man-made disasters, HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe and low birth rates and an increasing number of aging people in Japan. It is our wish for a continuous survival of the two organizations, and regardless of the location of each, the distance between the two, and the problems they address, we sincerely wish that they may find a way to cooperate.

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Researchers



Hello everyone!! I'm **Pamela Mahohoma**, a 28 year old student of Great Zimbabwe University. Most people know me by the name Pamela Dzingorira, but I later changed my surname. I am proud of being one of the Zienzele Foundation beneficiaries since the year 2002. I would really like to be an Early Childhood Development (ECD) specialist, so I am currently in my third year of a Bachelor's Degree in ECD at Great Zimbabwe University. I usually spend my free time reading books that have something to do with women and children. If I get the chance in life, I would like to volunteer and participate in any organization or programs that have impacts on women and young children.



Hello everyone!! My name is **Faith Hama** and I come from Zimbabwe. Currently, I am studying in my second year of a Bachelors of Education (Hons) Degree in Early Childhood Development at Great Zimbabwe University. I truly enjoy communicating with a wide range of people from around the world to further explore and improve my English. I also enjoy spending time with children, but also spend a good deal of time cooking and hanging out with my friends

FUKU JOB: Helping Foreign Nursing Care Workers

Researchers: Yusuke Sakai & Yuwa Kan

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies

In the late 1980s, Japan, which was in a boom time, began to accept foreign workers. At that time, there was a high demand for workers to sustain economic growth, and the economic disparity between Japan and neighbouring Asian countries was expanding. This is why numerous workers came to Japan for better employment opportunities. Afterwards, in 1989, even though blue-collar workers were in high demand, the Japanese Government enacted a law stating that only “professional and technical workers” would be accepted. This is because a great number of foreign workers in the period were believed to be illegal. In response, the demand for a supply of unskilled workers has been met by accepting people of Japanese descent, trainees, and technical interns for technology transfer to developing countries.

The population of Japan has been in serious decline for many years, and the shrinking and ageing population have become serious problems. The population in 2010 was 128,057,000, and by 2022 it had decreased to 122,030,523. In addition, the number of births in 2020 was 782,089, representing a considerable decrease compared to the 987,223 births in 2015. The decline in the birth rate has led to a decrease in the working-age population, and the current low birth rate situation cannot be easily gotten out of, further increasing the demand for foreign workers. In addition, there is a shortage of medical, welfare, and long-term care workers needed to support Japan’s future ageing society, which is a great challenge to cope with in a country with a shrinking working-age population (Miyajima & Suzuki, 2019) In other words, foreign workers are necessary for the sustainability of the Japanese economy.

According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW), the number of notified foreign workers was about 480,000 in 2008. However, by 2020, this figure had increased to 1,724,000. Classifying foreign workers by nationality, workers from Vietnam and China (including Hong Kong) account for about half of the total, with 25.7% (443,998 workers) and 24.3% (419,431 workers), respectively. When classified by the status of residence, it can be divided into six categories: professional and technical field status of residence, specified activities, technical internship, activity other than that permitted under the status of residence, Permanent Resident and people of Japanese descent, and others. Permanent Residents (546,469 people) accounted for the largest share at 31.7%. In specified activities (45,565 people) and Unknown (72 people), there is no considerable difference in the percentages of the other three categories, each accounting for about 20% of the total.

The above statistics clearly show that the acceptance of foreign workers is progressing, and demand for nursing care workers, in particular, is expected to increase further in the future. MHLW announced in June 2015 its “Demand and Supply Estimates for Nursing Care Workers Toward 2025 (Fixed Figures),” estimating the gap between supply and demand for nursing care workers as of 2025

will be approximately 377,000. In addition, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry estimates that there will be a shortage of approximately 430,000 nursing care workers in 2025 and 790,000 in 2035, according to one researcher (Yang, Josai University (2020)).

In response to this situation, the Japanese Government is promoting the appropriate and smooth acceptance of foreign workers and improving the environment to build a symbiotic society. However, many problems need to be solved. A survey conducted by the Osaka Prefectural Government shows that employers and foreign workers face challenges. In the case of foreign workers, these include a lack of knowledge about lifestyle, residence status, labour laws and regulations, lack of consultation services, and difficulties in gathering information about daily life and disasters. On the other hand, the need for more understanding about accepting foreign labourers, the burden of improving the working environment and uneven policies in different industrial sectors are significant issues for employers.

FUKU JOB (FJ)

Numerous efforts are being made to solve these problems. In this project, we would like to introduce one of the organisations working in our local area, the Kyoto Prefectural Foreign Care Worker Support Center, called FUKU JOB. Their office is located in Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto, and their goal is not only to facilitate the acceptance of foreign caregivers but also to maintain, keep, and develop human resources. They emphasise the values necessary to accept foreign workers in the future, such as a symbiotic society and diversified work styles. They are working comprehensively to solve problems by providing support in both labour and daily life. In addition to supporting foreign caregivers and the offices that accept them, they also have the distinction of cooperating with related institutions and organisations in Kyoto Prefecture.

There are five main activities of this organization. The first is a consultation at the center and visiting counsellors. The center provides a place where foreign caregivers can consult about their workplace and personal concerns. The second activity is holding conferences to support foreign caregivers and care facilities. This conference aims to exchange information on foreign workers, and meetings are held regularly with related facilities and experts involved in welfare, such as companies and professional associations on welfare. Thirdly, the center holds seminars and exchange events for host nursing homes and foreign caregivers. The seminar held in January 2023 included lectures by instructors on caregiving in Asian countries and Japan and the work's rewards. The seminar aimed to inform participants about nursing care in other countries and consider the Japanese caregiving situation in terms of philosophy and how to manage long-term care. In addition, an event was held on the same day, where participants played games related to nursing care, discussed the situation in their home countries, and talked about their hobbies and interests. The exchange meeting aims

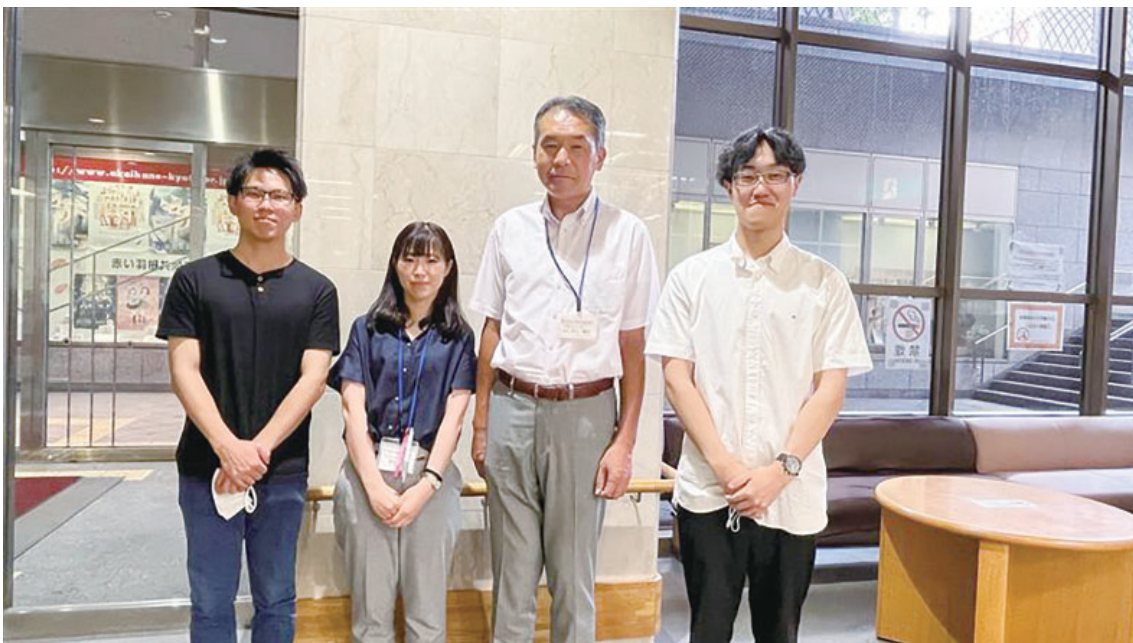


Fuku Job Office

to reduce the anxiety of foreign people through interaction and connection with other caregivers.

Next, a training project is provided for foreign workers to acquire and improve the caregiving and Japanese skills necessary for their work. The office staff also attends the training to promote mutual understanding among staff members and teach how to instruct foreign caregivers and essential things for them. In addition, the supervisory staff also participate in follow-up seminars to learn how to provide guidance and how to communicate. Finally, efforts are made to collect and provide information on foreign caregivers. Since 2020, the Center has surveyed corporations that accept technical intern trainees annually, with the survey results about the main reasons for accepting trainees, challenges in accepting trainees, and expected support published on the Center’s website. In addition, information on upcoming seminars, exchange events, and training opportunities is posted on the website and in the Center’s bimonthly magazine “With You.”

Interview



The Authors with Mr. Inoue and Ms. Sakashita of Fuku Job

Interviewees:

Mr. Inoue - Chief Manager

Ms. Sakashita - Manager

Q: What is the center’s history (who founded it and when)?

Ms. Sakashita: The background to this was that the national Government began to move towards creating a residence qualification ‘specific skills (nursing care)’, and Kyoto Prefecture also began to consider support for foreign nursing care workers. In 2019, the Jobnet Cooperative Strategy Study Team started with a survey on accepting foreign personnel and worked on the following three things:

- Holding a seminar on the acceptance of foreign nursing care workers
- Visiting facilities accepting foreign workers and administrative organisations in Kyoto as well as in other prefectures
- Surveying the situation regarding the acceptance of foreign nursing care workers

Subsequently, Kyoto Prefecture held a “Study Group on the Acceptance of Foreign Nursing Care Workers.” Afterwards, Kyoto Prefecture decided to open the “Kyoto Prefecture Human Resources Support Center for Foreign Nursing Care Workers” in 2020, and Kyoto Prefecture entrusts the management of our center to the Kyoto Prefectural Council of Social Welfare.

Q: What is your main role here?

Ms. Sakashita: I am the main person in charge of the Foreign Caregiver Human Resource Support Center. Since only a few people are in charge, I am sending out information through the PR magazine, planning training programs, responding to consultations, and attending meetings alone. In addition to this, I am also involved in a project called JOBNET, commissioned by Kyoto Prefecture, which aims to retain employees for nursing care.

Q: How many staff members and volunteers are there in total?

Ms. Sakashita: Basically, there are four of us, including myself, the section chief in charge, the director and the main person in charge of JOBNET, who also supports foreign personnel. Many volunteers are not involved in the work, but there are many who wish to help. We have asked these people to participate in training together and have had them act as facilitators and lecturers for group work. Also, during practical training, support is provided by staff with specialist knowledge who work in care facilities in Kyoto.

Q: What is the most common nationality of the users of your service?

Ms. Sakashita: I think most center users are from Southeast Asia. Originally, Vietnam was the leading country regarding the number of foreign caregivers as technical interns. Speaking of this point, the number of people from the Philippines, China, Myanmar, and recently Indonesia, are increasing. We conduct a survey of foreign caregivers once a year. According to last year’s survey, the most significant number was from Vietnam, followed by the Philippines and Indonesia.

Q: What are the main problems and difficulties faced by foreign workers?

Ms. Sakashita: More and more people have recently been interested in obtaining a residence status for specified skills. For international students at Japanese language schools, there is an option to go on to a care worker training school or vocational school after graduation. However, most will obtain a residence status for a specified skill if they intend to work immediately. We will consult them on what kind of system this specified skill is, what you need to do to find a job, and how to work in Japan. When seeking jobs, many

people want to visit nursing homes and learn about the work in advance.

Q: Do the problems differ according to the countries they come from?

Ms. Sakashita: In the training group work, we often hear about what surprised them in Japan. However, everyone got a lecture that each workplace has many original rules. Thus, even if they feel that there are differences from the values of their own country, they manage to adapt to them. However, in some countries, there are prayer times for religious reasons. Many offices try to understand and deal with their values by creating time to take breaks during those times or by securing a place for them to worship. Conversely, foreign workers who cannot eat certain foods depending on the country, bring their own meals. Both sides are making efforts as best they can.

Q: What kind of things do you discuss at the liaison conference for supporting foreign caregivers?

Ms. Sakashita: In the meeting, people from related organisations exchange opinions twice a year. Until 2021, the meeting was held four times a year. However, in 2022, it was merged with a conference to encourage foreign people and more people to work in the nursing care industry. As a result, the conference is held twice a year as an exchange conference, and the remaining two conferences are held in combination with the conference for accepting diverse human resources and the exchange conference. At these meetings, we ask for opinions to decide our future policy. For example, we propose new training programs and receive suggestions from related organisations. We also have the Kyoto Prefectural International Center and the management organisations of technical intern trainees join the members of these meetings, which is a place to share information about the situation overseas and what each organisation is doing to help.

Q: What do you do to deepen mutual understanding with foreign caregivers effectively?

Ms. Sakashita: Many foreign workers who come to us speak fluent Japanese. However, we talk with them in person as much as possible because sometimes we cannot convey subtle nuances over the phone or by email. If we meet face-to-face, it is easier to explain materials and communicate the message. I also keep in mind to use simple Japanese and to contact them frequently.

Q: Mr. Inoue, what do you think is important to consider when accepting and supporting foreign personnel in the future?

Mr. Inoue: I am sure many things can be done, but the first is to create a framework that will include both a legal and an institutional design. After that, we must maximise our efforts. Especially since our primary focus is on nursing care, it is essential to have an international mutual understanding between the welfare facilities working with us and those who use those services and foreign workers.

Ms. Sakashita: From my past visits to and observations of various business establishments and workplaces, I have the impression that they are using multiple ways of accepting (foreign workers). There is no set formula, but everyone tries to do this independently through trial and error. Many establishments have introduced Japanese language learning during working hours and have prepared job manuals. Some establishments also exchange diaries between foreign workers and Japanese staff to improve Japanese language skills and communication. In this way, the retention rate of foreign personnel is high in establishments that have devised and created a good working environment.

Q: In what ways do you think FJ has a positive effect or impact on the people it serves?

Mr. Inoue: Although there are places in each prefecture that accept and provide consultation for foreign people, Kyoto is providing a suitable environment for centre users in terms of establishing a center and providing training and other services.

Ms. Sakashita: This is additional information; we offer work experience programs such as tours and one-day challenges before workers actually work there. This allows foreign people to understand the differences between nursing care in Japan and their home countries. In addition, some people who cannot communicate in Japanese fluently join them for their future. Suppose some people have concerns about such visits or experiences. In that case, our center staff will accompany them on the tour and tell the facilities their thoughts and feelings that they may not be able to communicate well. We can ensure they can participate in the program with peace of mind.

Q: Can you share one or two stories of individuals whose lives have been changed because of the efforts of FJ?

Ms. Sakashita: As one individual case, we supported a job change for a foreign worker who had been working in the manufacturing industry, not in nursing care. He wanted to work in nursing care, where he would have many opportunities to use Japanese to work as an interpreter. However, he wanted to stay in the area of northern Kyoto, where he lived, although there were considerably fewer nursing homes. Furthermore, the facility that met our requirements was one that had never accepted foreign workers before, so we discussed acceptance with the facility. As a result, the facility agreed to accept the person, and we worked together to find a registration organisation for the specified skill status of residence and accompanied the person to the interview and facility tour. This person was successfully hired and is still working there today.

Q: How does FJ keep supporters updated about its work?

Mr. Inoue: We use our reflections on any work to make improvements. In terms of updating our operations, for example, we used to conduct public relations (PR) activities only through our website. However, now we have started using social networking services such as Twitter and Instagram to keep up with the times.

Ms. Sakashita: As for our work, as I mentioned earlier, we are working on an assignment from Kyoto Prefecture. We are asked to provide training to improve nursing care techniques and Japanese skills. However, we also think about and implement training programmes regarding the training content. After each training program, we take questionnaires for improvement and update the content. For example, this year, many participants wanted to learn more that they could use in their jobs. Thus, to enhance the training time within a limited budget, we have incorporated both online and in-person training to ensure more time within the same budget. As for the exchange meetings, at first, only caregivers were invited to participate, but to attract more people, we now include foreigners living in Kyoto Prefecture as well. Some people were uncomfortable with face-to-face meetings due to COVID-19, so we have implemented it based on users' opinions, such as making online participation possible.

Reflections

We investigated the employment of foreign personnel in Kyoto. Japan accepts foreign personnel due to a severe labour shortage caused by a falling birthrate and an ageing population. Still, one of the challenges is the low retention rate. In response, Fuku Job (FJ) is working to promote the employment of foreign carers through the following activities: setting up a consultation service, seminars and training to improve care techniques and Japanese language skills, and collecting and disseminating information on foreign personnel.

In Chivi, Zimbabwe, HIV/AIDS has left many children as orphans. However, there is no one to care for these orphans, leaving older people and widows to care for the children; a difficult situation. In addition, poverty and the social status of women are also significant challenges. In response, the Zienzele Foundation (ZF) is working to generate a source of income and solve health and nutritional problems through basket weaving and farm management, which not only leads to women's empowerment and economic independence as women weave the baskets from the communities supported by Z, but also provides income for the education of orphans.

One main difference between the two initiatives is that FJ promotes employment and mutual understanding between foreign human resources and employers, whereas ZF promotes self-reliance through job creation projects in impoverished rural areas. As Japan is a developed country with suitable employment opportunities, the emphasis is on establishing a new presence, such as foreign human resources, in the current situation rather than creating jobs. In particular, despite many employment opportunities in Japan's care industry, the turnover rate is high due to a lack of mutual understanding between foreign personnel and Japan. Therefore, FJ supports making the most of the existing employment environment. On the other hand, ZF creates employment itself from scratch and creates a climate in which more people can be engaged. It then expands this income-generating system in the areas it supports, aiming for economic self-reliance independent of assistance. ZF is also working to prevent the reproduction of poverty and helps develop communities by providing educational support.

In terms of things in common, both FJ and ZF are creating new jobs; in the case of FJ, they are creating jobs by inviting foreign caregivers to work in facilities that previously accepted only Japanese caregivers. Another commonality is the provision of educational opportunities: while FJ

provides the Japanese language, caregiving skills and knowledge of caregiving in Japan through workshops and seminars, ZF does not provide direct knowledge but offers opportunities to receive education in public institutions, including support for schooling and higher education. The ZF mainly supports local women and children, who are the region's future leaders, thereby addressing current issues and investing in the region's future. Likewise, FJ is strengthening its association with foreign personnel for the future of Japan, where further labour shortages are predicted.

In conclusion, both FJ and ZF are creating jobs, but FJ aims to diversify the care industry in Kyoto and promote mutual understanding. ZF, on the other hand, aims for community self-reliance and sustainable development through job creation. Although the countries and environments in which they operate are different, I hope they will continue to work together as an essential factor in tackling social problems.

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Researchers



Hello everyone! My name is **Yuwa Kan** from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. I live in Shiga, which is next to Kyoto. I am majoring in English, and I really love history. Speaking of history, what I am really interested in is rethinking history. By rethinking history we can understand new perspectives of culture or identity. This is fascinating to me. When I have free time, I like to go jogging, and although it's tiring, I use it to refresh my mind. Recently, I started training my muscles, but because there are no gyms near my house, I am doing bodyweight training at home. Training is hard, but I am enjoying it.



Hello! My name is **Yusuke Sakai**, and I am currently a senior student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan. My major is British and American Studies. I am studying development studies by myself because my future goal is to contribute to community development in developing countries and rural areas in Japan. Since learning new things is fascinating for me, I always try to acquire new skills and knowledge on a daily basis. Besides this, I love to watch documentaries and travel in my free time.

GDL SUR Destino y Libertad

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Migration is an exceptionally broad topic, encompassing various origins and influencing a multitude of circumstances. It can involve scenarios such as returning, deportation, or seeking refuge, among others. However, an essential aspect of comprehending those who have experienced migration is understanding the culture they have embraced as their own. Leaving the place one calls home is a daunting prospect, and the deep roots cultivated over the years can be torn asunder in mere seconds. Considering the unique cultural perspective of each individual and the act of deportation itself, it is here that GDL SUR Destino y Libertad makes its impact. GDL SUR Destino y Libertad is a non-profit civil association that was established in 2010. Its primary focus is on rehabilitation, reintegration, and psychological counseling.

In the realm of rehabilitation, the organization assists individuals struggling with drug or alcohol addiction in their journey towards starting anew. Similarly, in the context of reintegration, they provide support to help individuals find gainful employment, particularly Chicanos or homies who often face discrimination, along with challenges related to identification. GDL SUR Destino y Libertad also offers psychological counseling services. This is crucial because the experiences of homies often leads to significant trauma, such as deportation, incarceration, returning to their country of origin, or arriving in an unfamiliar country



This non-profit civil association was founded by Roberto Hernandez Ramirez. Although he was born in Sinaloa, he was taken to Los Angeles, California at a very young age. He spent his formative years and adolescence in a foreign country, distinct from his place of birth. "I lived a very chaotic and dysfunctional life in the United States due to the choices I made when I was young, including my time in jail and subsequent deportation," he shared. In 2004, Roberto faced deportation to the state of Tamaulipas after spending eight years in jail. It wasn't until the end of 2006 that he arrived in Jalisco and made the pivotal decision to establish what would later become GDL SUR Destino y Libertad. His journey involved a process of social readaptation, detoxification, and rehabilitation from

alcohol and drug addiction. Remarkably, he realized the effectiveness of this process when he undertook it upon arriving in Guadalajara. This personal transformation became the guiding principle he aspired to instill in his organization. Roberto dedicated himself to education and self-improvement to equip himself to work with individuals facing circumstances similar to those he had overcome. He recognized the need for a support system tailored to those who, like him, had experienced deportation and struggled with addiction.

While Chicano culture has garnered increased attention in recent years, it has not always been actively addressed by society. This is where Roberto and GDL SUR's mission comes into play. During his time in a rehabilitation center, Roberto endured discrimination and rejection due to his life story. It was clear that there was a lack of understanding for Chicano culture in that particular center. Drawing from this experience, Roberto was motivated to establish GDL SUR as a space where individuals like him, often referred to as "homies," could receive the attention they needed while having their unique stories understood. Through this approach, the organization aims to help homies improve their lives with guidance from someone who has walked a similar path.

People arriving in Mexico due to deportation face a starkly different situation than what they were accustomed to in the United States, often leading to a profound cultural shock. As Roberto explains, "Being Mexican is one thing, but being a cholo or a gang member in the United States, while not being seen as a respectable person, is still a reality. And in Mexico, we are experiencing it too." This predicament triggers an ongoing internal struggle, prompting individuals to question why they must change to gain acceptance in society. It's a constant battle between staying true to the culture and lifestyle they have known for most of their lives and the process of adapting to a new phase of life. Roberto remarks, "This place was opened in 2010 out of a necessity that was often overlooked or ignored by others." People who identify with Chicano culture have grappled with acceptance not only in the United States but also in Mexico. There exists a general lack of understanding within societies regarding the distinction between being Mexican and being bi-national (Chicano, pocho, Mexican-American). Recognizing this need, spaces like GDL SUR Destino y Libertad have emerged, offering a familiar environment for Chicano individuals to enhance their lives alongside others who have shared similar journeys.

Interview

Interviewee:

Roberto Hernandez Ramirez

Q: What is the protocol when you arrive at the organization?

When you arrive at the organization, there is a protocol in place, primarily for your safety. It's important to emphasize that each individual is unique, and the approach may vary based on their circumstances. For example, it's not the same to receive someone who has a history of incarceration and is in their forties compared to someone who is the child of someone deported after 20 years in the United States, doesn't speak much Spanish, and doesn't want to be in Mexico. In cases like the latter, the use of a language often referred to as "Spanglish" can provide a sense of comfort, allowing them to express themselves more freely, with reassurance that they have support. It's important to note that

this place is not exclusively for individuals dealing with addiction, incarceration, or mental health issues; it's also open to people who may be alone and in need of assistance. Regarding security and the intake process, there is a meticulous assessment. The staff can quickly identify who you are and, if necessary, they will make contact with the United States. Based on the information gathered, a decision will be made. In very rare cases, where there may be an issue of compatibility or understanding between the individual and the organization, it may be necessary to decline assistance to a very small minority. This decision is made in the best interest of all parties involved.

Q: What is the process at GDL Sur to help the Chicano community find dignified work?

I have had the opportunity to work with various institutions, including call centers, churches, and even political parties. In each case, I make an effort to both listen to their proposals and understand their needs while also offering my own suggestions. For instance, during my time at AT&T, I collaborated with two representatives who have since become managers. They even reached out to me to inquire if I could recommend new candidates for them. In the vibrant rap scene of Jalisco, there are approximately eight notable artists I'd like to mention. First, there's 420, a homie hailing from Los Angeles, just like myself. Then there's The Mara, originally from the south of Mexico but closely connected with our group, as he has embraced our culture due to his experiences. Remik Gonzales, from Tijuana, has also adopted our culture. From Texas, there are two artists who have embraced it, and there's one from Arizona named Ave Fenix. Additionally, several artists from Los Angeles have ventured to Jalisco and collaborated with local talents, including notable figures like C-Kan. These collaborations have resulted in songs that have gained significant recognition.



Q: What is the main impact that the organization has at the local level?

The impact of our work in Jalisco is evident when you consider the transformation these individuals have undergone compared to their previous circumstances. Many of them faced the question of whether to return to the United States or not. I have been spearheading this effort independently, but envisioning a future where we can expand our impact by involving figures from diverse economic, academic, and cultural backgrounds. The goal is to have individuals who have found stability and peace in Jalisco without engaging in criminal activities. Such a change would undoubtedly have a positive influence.

I won't claim that this program has achieved incredibly high levels of "progress," but it has certainly made strides, which are even more significant when compared to shelters where individuals sometimes have to pay for assistance. What I can affirm is that many of these individuals have since settled down, gotten married, and started families. However, it's important to acknowledge that our impact, though positive, remains relatively modest in the state of Jalisco. I aspire for it to be more substantial, but achieving that requires financial resources and a larger team. I, alone, cannot accomplish this on a grand scale. In Guadalajara, I can confidently assert that you can find homies working in virtually any call center, illustrating the potential for broader change.

Q: Which are the main challenges facing the organization?

One of the most challenging aspects is helping the homies grasp that returning to the USA is not an option. We are already in Mexico, and we must accept our Mexican identity. We have undergone detoxification and even participated in programs to help us lead fulfilling lives without relying on substances like alcohol or marijuana. However, I'm also noticing other needs emerging, and if these needs aren't met or addressed, there's a risk of falling back into old patterns. It's as if we feel that doors are closing, similar to what happened in the United States and initially here in Mexico upon our arrival. Convincing individuals that they need to study, behave responsibly, and work diligently can be very challenging when they are resistant to making these changes.

Q: What are the areas to highlight or skills that GDL Sur can offer to the community?

We are a house of life that was created for a need that only we could see and today we are the only one in Guadalajara where we provide free service, respect for human integrity, provide occupational therapies, teach you, and explain what are the things that you should consider of value as we did not do before, what are the advantages and how these disadvantages do not affect us to make decisions.

Q: Do you think there are areas for improvement within the organization?

Certainly, there is room for improvement within the organization. I've dedicated 15 years to this work, and I've reached a point where I'm feeling fatigued and ready to step back. I've helped many people, and my conscience feels somewhat clearer for the contributions I've made. What I'd like to see is for all the information I've shared, which has been gathered through interviews and interactions, to be used to develop concrete projects. However, it's disheartening to note that there seems to be a lack of priority placed on this issue, and there aren't enough individuals or organizations focused on

providing support.

Perhaps one way to move forward is to seek out individuals with the resources and willingness to support a specific project. For instance, we could approach someone who wants to make a difference in the lives of a particular population, such as children returning to Mexico, those in their 60s, or even those arriving with their children and grandchildren. We could propose creating a program aimed at helping them reintegrate into a society they are not familiar with. While such a project may require significant funding, it could be dedicated to assisting the children of dreamers, making a positive impact in their lives.

Q: How did the organization change before and after the Covid-19 pandemic?

There haven't been significant changes within the organization before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. While the pandemic had a profound impact on many aspects of society, including businesses and clinics, the organization maintained its operations without major disruptions. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, there was a consistent presence of individuals seeking assistance and support, and the organization continued its work without interruptions.



Reflections

Comparisons

When comparing GDL SUR Destino y Libertad with the Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI) in the Philippines, there are both similarities and differences in their approaches.

Similarities

Specific Population Focus: Both organizations cater to distinct segments of the migrant society. MMCEAI addresses the needs of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), while GDL SUR Destino y Libertad works with individuals deported from the United States to Mexico.

Differences

Gender-Specific Focus: MMCEAI places a specific emphasis on addressing the unique challenges faced by migrant women. In contrast, GDL SUR Destino y Libertad does not specify a gender-specific community within the population they assist.

Nature of the Support

MMCEAI primarily focuses on providing support for the life decisions and well-being of OFWs. They work to empower OFWs to make informed choices and improve their conditions while working abroad. In contrast, GDL SUR Destino y Libertad specializes in the process of readaptation for deported individuals, helping them reintegrate into Mexican society and start a new life after deportation. Both the Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI) and GDL SUR Destino y Libertad have forged partnerships and relationships with other organizations and institutions to create a stronger support network for their respective populations. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in achieving their primary objective of generating opportunities to enhance the lives of their target groups.

MMCEAI has engaged with various sectors of their government to establish a robust platform for supporting Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Their partnerships have contributed to creating an infrastructure that sustains their projects and helps protect the rights and well-being of OFWs both at home and abroad. GDL SUR Destino y Libertad has collaborated with universities and other organizations that focus on migration-related issues to strengthen their support system for deported individuals. Their alliances have shed light on the challenges faced by deported individuals, thereby creating awareness and understanding within society.

Common Objectives

Both organizations share the overarching goal of providing opportunities and support to the populations they serve. They aim to improve the conditions and livelihoods of the individuals within their respective focus groups. MMCEAI aims to build a community committed to safeguarding the rights and well-being of OFWs, both domestically and internationally. GDL SUR Destino y Libertad seeks to help deported individuals and create a trustworthy community. They work to dispel stereotypes and demonstrate that individuals with tattoos or past offenses can be given a second chance in Mexico, particularly in Guadalajara.

Ultimately, both organizations have experienced significant success, albeit measured by different criteria. GDL SUR has achieved successes such as a reduced desire to return to the United States, integration of deported individuals into call center jobs, and the promotion of Chicano culture through events like “Chicano Fest.” MMCEAI, on the other hand, has achieved success through its focus on sharing success stories and overcoming adversity. While their metrics may differ, both organizations prioritize the welfare of migrants and the assistance they provide to them.

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Researchers



Hello everyone! My name is **Salma Hallal**. I'm 23 years old and I was born in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco in Mexico. Currently, I'm in my last semester as a student in International Relations at the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores del Occidente in Guadalajara, Mexico. The topics that I am interested in are gender dynamics, feminism, migration, intercultural communication, and journalism. I enjoy attending concerts and music festivals, reading, watching movies, and spending time with my family and friends. I really appreciate the opportunity of participating in a project like this.



Hello everyone, My name is **Gladys Lazcano**, and I'm 22 years old. I study International Relations at Western Institute of Technology and Higher Studies (ITESO) in Guadalajara, which is also my hometown. My interests primarily revolve around studying contemporary societal issues, particularly those related to human rights and migration. In my leisure time, I have a passion for learning new languages, and at the moment, I am focused on Chinese. Additionally, I find joy in sports, with swimming being one of my favorite activities. I am truly grateful and delighted to have been invited to be a part of this magnificent event.

Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc

Researchers: Reena Angelika Coralde & Regine Magdalene Guillermo

San Pedro College, Philippines

The Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI) is a guiding light of empowerment and support for migrants, especially Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and their families. MMCEAI was founded in 2007 thanks to the coordinated efforts of several advocates, and on April 10, 2008, the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) granted it accreditation as a facility providing vital services. The organization was established as a direct reaction to the rising number of people entering the international job market as a result of the changing global economic environment. In particular, the founders of MMCEAI were motivated by their commitment to meet the urgent needs of distressed migrants, with a major focus on the difficulties experienced by female migrant workers.



The overall goal of MMCEAI is to create a community that is committed to protecting the rights and well-being of OFWs both at home and abroad. This vision is inclusive of public and governmental organizations, families, educational institutions, local communities, and international networks. It cuts over national and international boundaries. Fundamentally, the purpose of MMCEAI is to operate as a focal point for partnerships and community development that actively promote and defend the rights and welfare of OFWs in Mindanao while also giving them the resources and empowerment they need.

MMCEAI has outlined a number of crucial aims in order to accomplish these objectives. First and foremost, the organization is dedicated to providing direct help and all-inclusive services to OFWs and their immediate families in recognition of the complex difficulties they encounter during their migratory journey. In recognition of the fact that the migration experience frequently necessitates major personal and familial sacrifices, this includes offering not only practical support but also emotional and psychological assistance.

MMCEAI focuses its efforts on advancing and defending the rights of migrant workers by supporting legislative proposals and government procedures. In order to bring about long-lasting change and

guarantee the welfare of OFWs, the group firmly believes that legislative campaigning is an essential component. MMCEAI seeks to sway policy changes that address the particular needs and vulnerabilities of migrant workers, with a focus on women migrants who may encounter gender-specific challenges. It does this by collaborating with legal professionals, legislators, and international organizations.

The commitment of MMCEAI to bringing attention to the predicament of OFWs is equally significant. The organization seeks to promote comprehension, empathy, and fruitful conversation on the subject by highlighting the local and international elements that have an impact on migrant workers. Collaborations with similar organizations, institutions, communities, and groups that share the shared objective of promoting the rights of migrants are also a part of this deliberate effort to raise awareness. MMCEAI educates different stakeholders on the reality of migration, refuting stereotypes and creating a more compassionate stance through workshops, seminars, and multimedia campaigns.

In order to fulfill its objective, MMCEAI takes a multifaceted strategy, with each component intended to solve a particular need or problem. In the area of policy formation, MMCEAI serves as a link between many parties, including OFWs, NGOs, governmental agencies, and social service providers. These parties collaborate in order to pass local laws that directly help migrants and their families. The group makes sure that the voices of OFWs are heard in formulating policies that have a direct impact on their life by working with legal professionals and lawmakers.

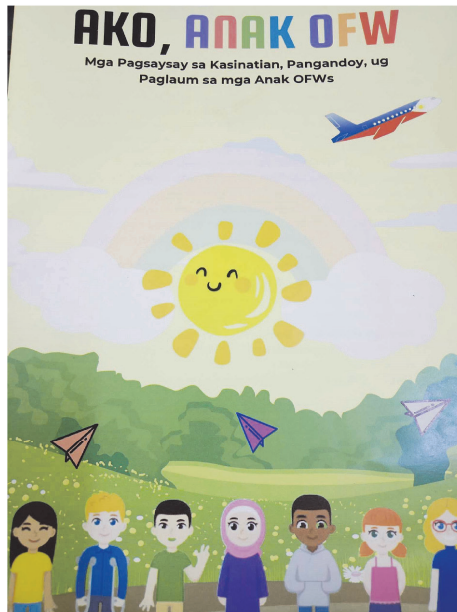
MMCEAI does not undervalue the influence of the media or of public education. The group wants to promote educated conversations about labor migration and its wider implications by offering forums for productive talks including local residents, policymakers, educators, and service providers. These talks foster the creation of sympathetic solutions while also illuminating the difficulties experienced by migrants. MMCEAI's dedication to truthful and compassionate teaching is vital in a society where false information can reinforce stereotypes.

In a similar spirit, MMCEAI prioritizes research and publication, using its resources to finance research initiatives that act as launchpads for advocacy efforts. With these initiatives, lawmakers can create sound laws and regulations that will benefit Filipino migrant workers and their families. In order to conduct studies that illuminate the experiences of OFWs, their contributions to both the host and home nations, and the difficulties they face along the way, the organization works with academic institutions and research partners.

MMCEAI's actions in the area of direct support and services are brought to life through four key program components: organizing, special missions to help migrants in need, livelihood-building and partnerships, counseling and referral services. At various points during their journey, these programs cater to the specific needs of OFWs. The direct services provided by MMCEAI fill important gaps in the support system that is accessible to migrant workers, from creating organizing venues that allow OFWs to voice their issues collectively to delivering crucial help during times of crisis.

Among these programs, the "Anak OFW" (Child of an OFW) program exemplifies MMCEAI's dedication to helping all migrants. The initiative emphasizes that Anak OFW can refer to any child that the OFW considers to be such, whether through legal adoption or a written declaration. By respecting these children's rights, MMCEAI works to promote their growth and well-being by offering

specialized services and programs. The program provides a variety of resources, such as counseling, educational support, and mentorship programs, in recognition of the particular problems experienced by children of OFWs.



For Overseas Filipino Workers and their Families, MMCEAI shines as a beacon of hope and support. The organization's broad strategy, which includes legislative lobbying, awareness campaigns, research, and direct support services, was developed through the cooperation of various activists, and it is a monument to its dedication to the welfare and empowerment of OFWs in Mindanao and elsewhere. Through programs like Anak OFW, MMCEAI works to improve the present and future for every migrant family member, solidifying its role as an agent of change.

The organization remains steadfast in its objective to elevate the voices and rights of individuals who contribute so greatly to both the local and global communities, even as the global landscape of labor migration evolves.

Interview

Interviewee:

Ms. Inorisa Sialana-Elento (Executive Director/Ex-Officio)

Q: What is MMCEAI and what are its vision, mission, and advocacy?

MMCEAI's origins lie in its visionary programs designed for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Primarily, its core advocacy revolved around international labor migration, creating a secure environment, and safeguarding the rights and well-being of migrant workers.

The organization's strategic approach centers on engaging OFWs and their families left behind, alongside other stakeholders including the government. This encompasses all aspects directly and

indirectly related to migration and development, including the OFW's community, Local Government Units (LGUs), and broader local governance. At the heart of MMCEAI's identity is a "Rights-Based" perspective. It emphasizes the rights of individuals opting to work abroad, irrespective of obstacles like family responsibilities.

These factors are viewed as shared responsibilities of stakeholders and the government. Ensuring safe migration and the protection of those choosing to work overseas are shared objectives for both government and stakeholders. MMCEAI focuses on programs encompassing Policy, Advocacy, and Campaigns. This involves urging local legislators to enact policies, conducting campaigns on migration-related topics, addressing issues such as abuse, and advocating for child safety.

The organization is also involved in ongoing publications and media work, conducted either within centers or communities. Research and development committees play a pivotal role in identifying significant migration and development concerns before initiating these publications. "Direct support services" form the core of MMCEAI's program. This includes building community-based migrant associations and associations for children of OFWs.

While offering counseling and referral services for distressed migrant workers, significant efforts are devoted to capacity-building through formation. Resources from partners, migrant associations, and individual initiatives are tapped, with MMCEAI facilitating access to other agencies for initiatives like income-generating methods. Special Missions address crisis situations such as UN peace interventions, earthquakes, fires, and floods.

A fund is allocated to assist affected MMCEAI members, particularly Anak OFWs. In Davao, collaboration with local governments has led to the establishment of 8 community Anak OFW programs. MMCEAI operates through diverse platforms, both initiated by the organization and joined as participants. The 5th program, "Migration Environment Peace and Development," emphasizes exploring the interplay between migration, environment, peace, and development.

Beyond solely focusing on migration in international labor, the aim is to comprehend the multifaceted factors impacting migrants, including safe migration, first aid during catastrophes, and combating trafficking and illegal recruitment. The organization's outreach extends to regions like Davao and BARMM, SOCKSARGEN, CARAGA, and western Mindanao. Despite lacking offices in these regions, MMCEAI's "Migration Environment Peace and Development" network involves civil society organizations from these areas, ensuring local and region-specific migration issues receive media coverage.

Collaboration with national government agencies and periodic convening of these networks enable MMCEAI to advance specific agendas. Further efforts are devoted to Financial Literacy programs, focusing on remittances, savings, and investments, aimed at enhancing financial literacy for both migrant families and individuals.



Q: What are the challenges that confront migrant workers in this day and age?

Migrant workers today face a multitude of challenges, including:

Violence Against Women (VAW): Many migrant women experience violence, particularly in employment-related contexts. Their perpetrators often include their employers. Additionally, situations such as pregnancies during their time abroad can be considered neglect since they were not present to care for their children.

Gender-Based Abuses: Women migrants often encounter gender-based discrimination and views of inferiority, which can manifest in various forms of abuse.

Physical and Sexual Abuse: Migrant workers, both women and men, are at risk of physical and sexual abuse, including rape, while working

Wage Payment Issues: Migrants are forced to grapple with problems such as unpaid wages or exploitation regarding compensation.

Mental Health: Mental health issues are prevalent among migrant workers, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Elevated levels of anxiety and stress are common due to the manifold difficulties they encounter.

Illegal Recruitment: Some migrants fall victim to illegal recruitment practices. They may initially work under legitimate employers but subsequently flee due to abuse, leading to their classification as illegal recruits.

Q: How does MMCEAI help migrant workers?

The organization can collaborate with the relevant embassy in the migrant worker's location when there is a complaint or request for assistance. There is a primary coordinating body called the DMW (Department of Migrant Workers) where these complaints can be submitted directly. The DMW, in turn, communicates with the respective countries of the migrant workers. In cases where complaints are submitted, counseling services are also offered to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) or families left behind. Pro bono counselors are available to facilitate these sessions, in addition to in-house registered social workers and volunteers who work alongside psychologists.

Q: How does MMCEAI collaborate with local legislators, advocates, and other stakeholders to effectively advocate for policy changes that uplift the status of OFWs and protect their rights, both in the Philippines and abroad?

MMCEAI typically extends invitations to local legislators, advocates, and other stakeholders to engage in discussions about their advocacies. This outreach is crucial because future projects and collaborations often hinge on the alignment of these advocacies. MMCEAI also runs various projects, such as ANAK OFW, where they invite legislators and representatives from National Government Agencies. They participate as resource speakers and are subsequently encouraged to join workshops, offering their insights and recommendations regarding the prevalent issues at hand. This collaborative approach fosters a holistic and informed perspective on addressing migrant worker concerns.

Q: In the area of women services and action, what specific initiatives does MMCEAI undertake to empower female OFWs and address gender-related issues within the context of labor migration?

Given that the majority of migrant workers are women, MMCEAI tailors its services to address their specific needs. These services primarily focus on issues related to psychosocial well-being, interpersonal relationships, and income generation. MMCEAI takes a proactive approach by offering opportunities in areas where these women excel, whether it be gardening, arts and crafts, or other income-generating activities. The organization seeks to empower migrant workers by enhancing their skills and income potential. Additionally, MMCEAI works on capacity-building for the partners of OFWs, creating opportunities for them to contribute and support their families. This holistic approach encompasses both group and individual engagement to provide comprehensive support.

Q: As an organization focused on empowering OFWs and building partnerships, can you share some of your success stories and better practices in promoting the rights and welfare of OFWs in Mindanao?

Defining success stories can be subjective and context-dependent. Personally, I consider success stories to be those where migrant workers have overcome extremely challenging situations to rebuild their lives or start anew. These stories often involve individuals who have endured significant stress, including experiences of Violence Against Women (VAW) both at home and abroad, the hardships brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, or other adverse circumstances.

For instance, one remarkable case involves a migrant worker who faced a series of devastating events, including the loss of her husband and one of her three children during Typhoon Pablo. Despite these hardships, she made the difficult decision to leave her children with her mother and work abroad. While working overseas, she experienced sexual abuse, and upon returning home, she learned that one of her children was pregnant. Despite these challenges, she took legal action against her abusive employer and helped her pregnant child secure a scholarship. With the support of MMCEAI, she demonstrated incredible resilience by not only providing for her children but also for her grandchild.

Reflections

Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI) in Davao, Philippines and GDL Sur Destino y Libertad in Jalisco, Mexico: these two organizations aim to provide opportunities for Overseas Filipino Workers and deported people from the United States who arrived in Mexico seeking to start a new life. Both organizations have a common end goal or objective, which is to provide service for the people who need said help. There may be similarities and differences in tackling such problems, but both of them aim for optimum wellness of their client. As for the differences, MMCEAI encompasses Overseas Filipino Workers alongside their family members, while for GDL SUR Destino y Libertad focuses on deported people from the United States. For Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI), they specifically aim to meet the urgent needs of distressed migrants, with a major focus on the difficulties experienced by women migrant workers. While GDL Sur Destino y Libertad, focuses on readaptation or rehabilitation helping deported people to open a new leaf. Another difference is that MMCEAI provides opportunities wherein the OFWs life decisions are supported, compared to GDL SUR Destino y Libertad wherein they create a systematic process of readaptation, for the deportees to have a kick start for a better life. Both organizations connect to other organizations aiming to provide more opportunities for their clients.

MMCEAI works alongside different sectors such as Legislators and National Government Agencies, to provide optimum help towards their clients. This approach is similar to GDL Sur Destino y Libertad, as they also work with different institutions depending on their proposals and goals. MMCEAI works with the different sectors of the government, while GDL SUR Destino y Libertad works with universities and at other gathings. Both organizations aim to produce optimum gathering of opportunities, this is done by widening their scale, thus the reason why it is important to build relationships with other institutions and sectors. As for the clients, both organizations are similar in a way wherein basically all of their clients are looking for a change, waiting for help, and hoping for better opportunities. The clients that ask for help from GDL Sur Destino y Libertad are mostly troubled people looking for help. As for the Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI), the clients are mostly women, especially women who have experienced untoward situations such as being sexually harassed, physically abused, or basically anything that can evoke negative emotions.

The dedication of MMCEAI and GDL Sur Destino y Libertad to defending the rights and welfare of migrants is praiseworthy. For migrants to find comfort, direction, and empowerment, they have constructed safe zones. Their work goes beyond simply meeting people's fundamental needs; instead, it aims to empower migrants by giving them the tools, information, and resources they need to start again and realize their aspirations.

We must acknowledge the crucial contributions made by groups like MMCEAI and GDL Sur Destino y Libertad as we traverse into the complicated world of migration. Their steadfast commitment and encouragement will serve as a reminder of the value of kindness, inclusivity, and the inherent dignity of every person, regardless of immigration status. Let us stand together in solidarity, support one another, and campaign for a world in which every migrant is treated with dignity and respect. It is important that we become their advocates during times of trials. Treating each and every person we see with respect can further establish a society that accepts diversity, defends human rights, and promotes the potential of every individual, regardless of their place of origin; this is all by working together.

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Researchers



Hi! My name is **Regine Magdalene Guillermo**, I am currently a 3rd year Nursing Student of San Pedro College of Davao, Philippines. I am an introvert, a bookworm, a foodie, a swimmer, and I enjoy playing basketball. I love to lose myself in a good book, savor the taste of a delicious meal, feel the cool water of the pool on my skin, and the adrenaline rush of a basketball game. I can be described as a well-rounded individual who enjoys the simple things in life.



Mabuhay! I am **Reena Angelika R. Coralde**, 20 years old, and currently a 3rd year Psychology Student from San Pedro College, Davao City, Philippines. I am a foodie, especially when it comes to sweet and savory foods. I also love to listen to a wide variety of music and consider myself a frustrated singer. Very passionate when it comes to movies and books, and I am a wannabe video game master. I am shy but my friends describe me otherwise.

Penang Care Society

Researchers: Nur Athirah Binti Khairul Ferdaus & Rayner Mu Lay Chin

Universiti Sains Malaysia

The Penang Care Society (hereafter referred to as PgCare Society), formerly known as PgCare Alliance, a coalition of like-minded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions, was established on July 16, 2021. The main purpose of establishing the PgCare Society is to provide aid and assistance to families and individuals who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and the protracted lockdown. The initial effort made by friends to organize the distribution of supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the expansion of the organization into various departments that are assisting the people of Penang in dealing with the consequences of the pandemic.

PgCare Society has a mission to provide assistance to needy individuals in Penang with the help of its 28 alliance partners. Among the partner NGOs are D'Home Mental Health Association, Befrienders Penang, Penang Sneham Malaysia Welfare Organisation, Kiwanis Club of Penang, Women's Centre for Change, Penang Buddhist Tzu Chi Merits Society Malaysia, HOPE Worldwide, Home Dynamics, Agape Counseling, Than Hsiang Association, and Junior Chamber International Penang. The partnership also comprises the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM), Malaysian Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA), Small and Medium Enterprises Association (SAMENTA), and Social Security Organization (PERKESO).

PgCare Society was set up to address the short and long-term social issues relating to mental health, food aid, and employment, which have all been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The service aims to assist families and individuals who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to regain their well-being and dignity. This will be accomplished by encouraging organizations and institutions who share similar values to collaborate with the Penang State Government. The collaboration between the Penang government and the PgCare Society aligns with the Penang 2030 goal of "A Family-Focused Green and Smart State that Inspires the Nation." PgCare Society aims to bring hope for a brighter future to all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Logo of PgCare Society

When it was first created, PgCare Society emphasized four primary pillars: mental health aid, food aid, job aid and financial consultation. At the end of 2021 the organization then added two more services: A Virtual Care/Telehealth Service and Traditional Chinese Medicine. In the context of Mental Health Aid, PgCare Society provides helplines for people who need someone to talk to or just listen when they are frustrated, anxious, or feel down. Among the NGOs supporting these initiatives are Befrienders Penang, Home Dynamics, Women’s Centre for Change, Agape Counseling, and others.

PgCare Society has provided a list of *Ahli Dewan Undangan Negeri* (ADUN), or state legislative assembly members, as well as a list of local MPs in Penang on its website, so those who need food aid can call the PgCare Society Helpline directly for assistance. Moreover, if people are looking for a job, the PgCare Society will assist individuals in finding the ideal employer for their skills and experience. PgCare Society also assists in financial consultation for those in need, especially those who are in financial peril due to job loss, loss of mobility, and other factors. In addition, regarding Virtual Care & Telehealth Services, PgCare Society volunteer doctors are available to provide virtual care consultations via video or phone to those in need, particularly individuals who are under home quarantine after testing positive for COVID-19. This is to ensure that patients do not feel alone when experiencing illness. People can book appointments for this service for as little as 5 Malaysian ringgits.

To date, PgCare Society has received more than 7,000 calls from members of the community and distributed around 1,200 food kits to those in need. Over 233 pieces of medical equipment, including oxygen concentrators and oximeters, have been loaned out to COVID-19 patients. Additionally, the society has recommended almost 100 individuals looking for work. These are only a few of the numerous ways that PgCare Society is offering support to the local community in Penang.

For the purposes of the Young Global Research Project, we are focusing on Job Aid as provided to the

community by PgCare. We would like to know more about how the organization has assisted people to find work in Penang state. We interviewed the founders, Dr. Ngoo Seong Boon and Mr. Chong Soon Kheng regarding their work and involvement with the PgCare Society.

Interview



Mr. Chong Soon Kheng (left), Dr. Ngoo Seong Boon (right), Rayner (middle)
(This interview was carried out at 3:30pm on August 3, 2023)

Interviewees:

Dr. Ngoo Seong Boon (Chairman of PgCare Society)

Mr. Chong Soon Kheng (Deputy Chairman of PgCare Society)

Q: Can you introduce yourself by briefly describing your position and how long you have worked at PgCare Society?

Ngoo: My name is Ngoo Seong Boon. My position is Chairman. I am the founder of Penang Care Society and I have held this position since 2021, together with Mr. Chong.

Chong: I am Chong Soon Kheng and I am the Deputy Chairman of PgCare Society. I am also a co-founder of this organization.

Q: Can you explain the role of PgCare Society in empowering locals to work in the local community?

Ngoo: We are providing a platform for people who are looking for a job to link up with PERKESO, a social security organization and some industry associations such as the Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA), SAMENTA, etc. Those associations consist of manufacturers, such as Multinational Corporations (MNC), while SAMENTA is more for

small and medium enterprises. They are all a part of the same alliance. When there is a job request, we pass it down to these associations, and they will broadcast it to their members, who then pass out resumes or requests from the local community, especially those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chong: People can access and get the information about what Dr. Ngoo said from our website and can search from there to get more details about job seeker assistance as provided by PgCare Society.

Q: How does the organization ensure the effectiveness of its initiatives and programmes?

Ngoo: For job requests in the local community, we ask applicants to fill in what they require before we pass it on to PERKESO. Every month, we review with PERKESO as to how these applicants have progressed, so we have a tracking system to ensure that all of their needs are being met. So, if PERKESO cannot find them the right job, PgCare Society will broadcast their information to all our industry partners.

Chong: PgCare Society works as a platform where factory or business owners looking for people to work can come to us. During the lockdown, these industrial associations needed a lot of foreign workers, but they could not come to Malaysia. Therefore, they have a workforce shortage and an urgent need to hire local people, so we started to connect these enterprises with people looking for work. At this moment in time, many local workers come from tourism, hotels, etc. We try to fit these people into jobs and get PERKESO to help by giving some incentives to hire these people.

Q: Does PgCare Society also provide training for those who are unemployed to upgrade their skills?

Chong: PgCare Society can provide grants and train those who have lost their jobs. For example, we can provide these people with cooking classes if they want to run a bakery business. We will train them, get government and industry support, and some funds to get them started. PgCare Society will help them buy all the equipment needed to start their business.

Q: Do you receive any feedback from the local community regarding the organization's initiatives to address employment?

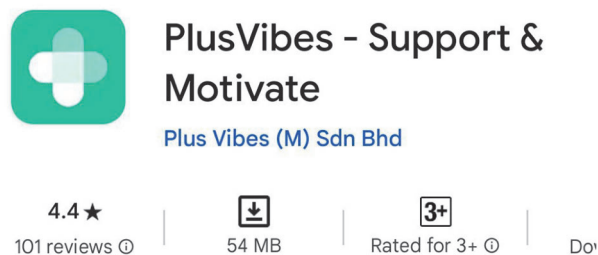
Ngoo: Yes we did receive some positive feedback from the local community and the Penang State Government. One of the awards we received is the Love PENANG Community Awards Programme, two years straight (2022-2023). Many people have played a significant role in helping the community during the pandemic. This award does not belong to me alone but it is also for all the unsung heroes who have contributed a lot in this challenging period.

Chong: Yes indeed. We were grateful to receive a tremendous amount of support from the local community and local government. Without this we will not be able to achieve our mission of helping those who are in need.

Q: *Based on our research, we found PgCare Society was established to aid and assist families and individuals affected by the pandemic and the prolonged lockdowns. Since the pandemic has largely ended in Malaysia, has your focus changed?*

Ngoo: Right now post-pandemic, we are not active in helping people to find jobs. However, one side effect of the pandemic is mental health. We can see that youths, especially students, are more prone to have mental health issues. This is because they were forced to isolate and study at home for 2 or 3 years. Therefore with the end of the pandemic, they suddenly have to step out straight into society, which can lead to phobias and stress. Beginning last year, suicide cases in Penang from May to July increased dramatically. A lot of the victims are in their 20s. That is why PgCare Society is focusing on mental health.

Chong: We use an online app, the Plus Vibe app, to support our efforts. We are training a lot of people in mental health first aid. It took us a lot of resources to start this program. We prepare people to help or coach others before the situation gets worse. We licensed this program from Australia and we have trained more than 120 people, which takes a lot of time and resources. Each training session takes 2 days. We have also invested in getting a trainer license.



PlusVibes app.

Q: *What has been the most difficult thing the organization has had to deal with in helping people in Penang?*

Ngoo: Firstly, the issue is funding. As you are aware, PgCare Society is a non-governmental organization. Therefore most of the time and energy we spend are all self-funded, as we do not get paid for our work. However, we do get some funding from the state government. The initial stage was the most difficult as we needed cash to pay our costs such as licensing and operations, not to mention the purchase of every piece of equipment needed for said operations.

Chong: Even right now, we do offer training to a lot of needy people which is also a cost to us. Any NGO faces the same challenge. We do appreciate all our committees and members for their generous support. They give their time to support our work.

Q: *In what ways do you think the organization can play a larger role in the local community in the future?*

Chong: We always get requests from a lot of NGOs to join our platform. This is how we are going to

expand our network. Right now we cover food, mental health and jobs. Next, we plan to target how we can reach out and help people with special needs.

Reflections

Based on the collaboration with the Indonesian group from University of Surubaya, we found that the Common Seas Organization there is a non-profit organization whose mission is to drastically reduce the quantity of plastic polluting the rivers and seas. Common Seas get their funds from philanthropic donations and consulting work for governments and corporations. Any profits from investments are also reinvested in circular economy solutions. This organization operates by running programs such as government partnerships, business partnerships, Clean Blue Alliance, and education-related programs etc.

Firstly, what distinguishes PgCare Society with Common Seas is that the former helps the local community regardless of gender, etc., while Common Seas has been helping targeted groups such as women and people with disabilities by hiring these groups to work for them. PgCare Society works as a medium to help people who lost their jobs during the pandemic to gain a new or temporary job and they also provide physical help such as food, clothes and other essential needs to those who were greatly affected by the pandemic.

PgCare Society also provides training to help the locals gain new skills to boost their employment chances, in addition to a start-up fund that can serve as a model for those who would want to venture into business. Meanwhile, Common Seas is currently hiring women and disabled people to work in their organization; disabled people are defined as those who have physical, mental, intellectual, and/or sensory limitations but still have the same ability to work as able-bodied employees. Individuals with physical disabilities, affecting the legs, back, hands, fingers, neck, as well as visual and aural impairments, speech defects, sensory and other birth defects, can still be considered for recruitment. What distinguishes Common Seas is its dedication to community development. Instead of outsourcing the production of reusable diapers, they hire local women and individuals with disabilities and provide them with training and decent salaries. Over 200 people from marginalized groups are expected to be employed as part of the project.

The current focus of the PgCare Society is mental health in post-pandemic Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged mental health and quality of life in Malaysia. These findings are important for timely interventions to prevent mental illness. Mental health issues, especially among young people, have surged in the wake of the pandemic. According to the National Library of Medicine, individuals aged 21-24 account for 43.4% of the overall statistics (source: "Depression and Anxiety in the Malaysian Population During the Third Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic," 2021). In response, the PgCare Society has trained numerous individuals in mental first aid and is pursuing a trainer license to assist those grappling with mental health challenges. Additionally, the PgCare Society has developed the Plus Vibe app to provide support. This app, accessible to anyone with a smartphone, monitors users' moods and connects them with experts from various mental health organizations for guidance and assistance.

Conversely, the Common Seas Organization, while also focusing on employing women and individuals with special needs, primarily addresses the pressing issue of water pollution. This international effort

involves collaboration with multiple countries and encompasses a variety of programs. In Indonesia, the Common Seas Organization runs “Clean Blue Indonesia,” dedicated to cleaning up the Brantas River, a vital source of drinking water in East Java. The organization has identified single-use diapers as a significant contributor to river pollution and is tackling the problem by manufacturing reusable diapers and raising public awareness about the hazards of disposable ones.

Despite their differences, both PgCare and Common Seas share a common goal: aiding the local community in finding employment. These organizations’ initiatives underscore their unwavering dedication and commitment to supporting the local community in distinctive ways.

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Researchers



Hello everyone! My name is **Nur Athirah Binti Khairul Ferdaus**. I am from Perak, Malaysia, and I am 22 years old. I study at Universiti Sains Malaysia and am currently in my third year of studies. I'm working towards a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science, and my major is Political Science, and my minor is Psychology. I am a person who enjoys meeting new people and I love to express my opinions whenever I get the chance.



Hi guys! I am **Rayner Mu Lay Chin**. I was born in W.P Labuan, a small yet beautiful and tranquil island located near Borneo. I am 21 years of age and currently studying at Universiti Sains Malaysia. I am a Bachelor's Degree student in the Social Sciences faculty, majoring in Sociology and Anthropology, minoring in Archeology. I am an extrovert who loves socializing and a person who is passionate about languages. Not to mention that I am an adrenaline junkie who loves outdoor activities.

Common Seas

Researchers: Novellie & Rahmah Nurul Aini

University of Surabaya

There are a lot of people in Indonesia that have to deal with poverty and unemployment. Everyday, thousands of people search and apply for jobs all over the country. Even though the number of unemployed people in Indonesia has dropped by 410,000 in the first quarter of 2023, almost 8 million people still have no way to make a living for themselves or their families. This predicament also affects people with disabilities. They are less likely to be hired because of people's view on them; it's hard enough for them to do basic day-to-day things, let alone jobs with high pressure where they have to meet certain targets.

The government has already made laws to help people with disabilities to access employment and be treated well in those jobs. For example in Pasal 5 Ayat (1) and Pasal 11 UU No 8/2016, it is stated that people with disabilities have a right to be employed in jobs that are organized by the government, BUMN, or the private sector without discrimination. Additionally, it is stated that they have a right to obtain the same wage as workers who have no disabilities, receive proper accommodation in their work, not be dismissed for reasons related to their disability, and access to back-to-work programs; everything one would expect of a fair, proportional and dignified work placement. Despite these measures, many companies actively choose to turn a blind eye to people with disabilities because they are considered as a potential liability.

With the high unemployment rate in Indonesia and people with disabilities' low chances of getting a job, we have decided it would be good to shed a light on an organization that is trying to help. Common Seas is an organization based in the United Kingdom that tries to reduce and stop plastic pollution in rivers and seas. In Indonesia they have a program called Clean Blue Indonesia where they focus on cleaning the Brantas River. The Brantas River, located in East Java, is the main source of drinking water for people in the province. Common Seas considers that it is important to take care of this resource and prevent any further pollution of said river.

As the Governor of East Java, Khoffah Indar Parawansa stated in an interview, "The Brantas River is the lifeblood of East Java, but it is heavily polluted – particularly plastic waste. We all depend on the river for our lives, so there is a lot of demand to make things better. The East Java Provincial Government is collaborating with different parties to find a solution. Clean Blue East Java is one of these and has my full support."

The Common Seas organization has identified single-use diapers are the most common source of pollution in the Brantas River. Everyday, at least 1.5 million single-use diapers are thrown away and they contribute to half of the waste found in the river. Common Seas then decided to focus on trying to reduce the single-use diapers by making reusable diapers and educating the public about the dangers of pollution caused by single-use diapers.



Figure 1: Logo of Common Seas

Now you might be wondering, what does an organization that wants to clean East Java's river have to do with lowering the unemployment rate in Indonesia? Well, to produce said reusable diapers, Common Seas decided that they wanted to give back to the community; rather than buying them from a company, they decided to hire women and people with disabilities. The workers get training and they also get paid for the work they do. According to their brochure, it is said that the project will employ over 200 local women and disabled people. We think Common Seas has brought a wonderful and welcome change to our community. Not only do they provide jobs to the marginalized, but they are also working with the government to try and clean the Brantas River.

We are hopeful that with the availability of the reusable, affordable diapers, customers will be enticed to buy and use them. With the help of health workers from local clinics and P.C. Muslimat, the region's largest women's charity, we (Aini and Veve) are optimistic that reusable diapers from Common Seas can reduce household expenditure and help more women and disabled people make a living.

Interview

Interviewees:

Celia Siura - COO

Ani Yulika - Production and Procurement

Ivana Tejokusumo - Program Intern

Q: What kind of organization is Common Seas and what is its main focus?

Ivana: Common Seas is a not-for-profit social enterprise based in the United Kingdom that collaborates with other countries although we operate alone in Indonesia.

Here we have a project namely "Clean Blue Indonesia" where we focus on trying to reduce the plastic waste in the Brantas River, more specifically waste created from single-use diapers. After conducting

research of pollution sources in the river, we found that 50% of the waste in Brantas River comes from single-use diapers so we're here to tackle this problem.

Celia: At least 1.5 million single-use diapers enter its waters everyday, which comes to around 500 million daipers a year. The Brantas River travels through 17 megacities and through communities of 17 million people with 18.000 babies potentially using single-use diapers living near the river itself.

Q: *How long have you worked at, or been associated with, Common Seas? And what are your main roles in this organization?*

Celia: I started working here in June n 2021, so I have been working with Common Seas for two years. Right now my position is Chief Operating Officer for Indonesia.

Ani: I have been working at Common Seas for two years as the Production and Procurement Manager.

Ivana: I have been interning at Common Seas for around two weeks.

Q: *What are some of your duties or activities in the organization on a daily/weekly basis?*

Celia: I manage Common Seas in Indonesia. I manage the program and its operations, handle relationships with the government, stakeholders, fund-raising, and I also manage our campaigns.

Q: *What part do you think the organization plays in the life of the local community, and the lives of its citizens?*

Ivana: Common Seas in Surabaya has begun to focus on reusable diapers as a tool to educate citizens and health workers as well as campaigning on the pollution risks of single-use diapers, how to use reusable diapers properly, and the benefits of using reusable diapers such as saving money, etc. Reusable diapers are made by local women and disabled people to help drive a lasting behavior change that prevents 186 million single-use diapers from entering the country's rivers.

Celia: In short, we provide a stable income for the manufacturers of these reusable diapers, namely women and disabled groups that need the money. People who use our product can save around 75% of their household expenses if they were to change their habit of using single-use diapers to reusable ones. These diapers also keep babies from catching diseases such as urine infections, cholera, typhoid and hepatitis A. Single-use diapers can also cause antibiotic resistance.

We educate the citizens on the dangers of plastic pollution. For example, if they throw plastic trash in the river and there is another ecosystem that depends on the river water, when we pollute the river ourselves, catch and eat fish that live in the river, we will also consume some microplastics that the

fish has in its system. Even people who don't throw things away in the river may get all kinds of diseases caused by the pollution because our main drinking water comes from the Brantas River.

Q: In what ways do you think you and the organization can play a larger role in the local community in the future?

Celia: Over the next five years, Common Seas plans to distribute over a million reusable diapers in Indonesia. Now, we are currently still in the stage of campaigning, hoping we can make the citizens of Indonesia aware of the problem in the Brantas River.

In the future we hope that all of the citizens in Indonesia will be able to access these reusable diapers. We are working with health workers in local clinics, and P.C. Muslimat, the region's largest women's charity, to promote and resell these reusable diapers. The promoters and resellers will also get an incentive of around 15% from the sale of these diapers, as we also need to incentivize the middlemen and service providers; it's not only about producers and consumers.



Figure 2: Interviewers holding up reusable diapers produced by Common Seas

We have successfully promoted and supplied reusable cotton diapers to 1,000 mothers in Jember, East Java. Over 98% continued to use the reusable diapers with their babies.

Q: What is the most difficult thing you do at Common Seas?

Celia: We definitely need more resources. People who are willing to work on our project. Right now, we are looking for funds and investment so we can scale up our program. We have a pilot that has been very successful in Jember. We are currently at the stage of fundraising to scale up the program and will engage with investors and international companies focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) that might be amenable to helping Common Seas reach its goals.

Q: We hear you employ marginalized people, is that true?

Ani: Yes we do. There are currently openings for women and disabled individuals to work in the organization; people who are disabled are defined as those who have physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory limitations but still have the same ability to work as well as able-bodied employees in general. They need to be willing to work and learn. The physical disabilities we can still consider for recruitment are, among others, related to the legs, back, hands, fingers, neck, visual impairment, hard of hearing, speech impairments, sensory - i.e. touch and taste impairment, and congenital defects.

Q: Usually employers search for able-bodied people. What made you want to employ people with disabilities?

Celia: We want to make a social impact in the local community. We are motivated by the desire to help others. Entering into contracts with factories to make the reusable diapers has been simple and beneficial; the output is faster, cheaper, and can be produced with better quality.

We are a not-for-profit social enterprise that wants to contribute to society in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, because if you solve the economic issues, it can actually help solve a lot of other underlying problems, for example education and health issues due to a lack of funds across a community.

So besides the Common Seas' main focus, which is improving the environment, they also want to engage local communities to enjoy the benefits of the program, which is why we are working with marginalized groups.

When Common Seas first entered Surabaya and recruited people with disabilities, of our reusable diaper production 50% got rejected by the government, resellers, and promoters due to the lack of the skills of the production team, so we had to train the people we hired many times until they mastered their jobs. However, we still trusted that our team would improve. Common Seas made it through these difficult circumstances by training our staff persistently, steadfastly and consistently. As a result, our current employees with disabilities who are working with us have managed to make market-ready reusable diapers.



Figure 3: (From right to left) Novellie, Rahmah Nurul Aini, Ms. Celia Siura

Reflections

Our partners in Malaysia interviewed a similar coalition called the Penang Care Society. The purpose of the PGCare Society is to provide aid and assistance to people who have been negatively affected by the pandemic and lockdowns.

They initially organized the distribution of supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic which then resulted in the expansion of the coalition. The PGCare Society now has five pillars that cater to Mental Health Aid, Food Aid, Job Aid and Financial Consultation, Virtual Care & Telehealth Service and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

As we were researching the same issue, there are a couple of similarities between Common Seas and the Penang Care Society that we have picked up on. Both teams found that it is not easy to look for someone to fund the projects and that can hinder the progress that our organizations are trying to make. Other similarities are how the organizations that we interviewed both offer not just jobs but different and many types of aid.

It is nice to know how generous and sincere these organizations are towards building and maintaining the society around us and that these organizations are supported openly by their respective governments. While the PGCare Society offers programs that have more reach across the general public, Common Seas focuses its efforts on women and those with disabilities. PGCare Society focuses on those that have been affected by the recent pandemic meanwhile Common Seas puts their focus more on clean river water.

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Researchers



Hiya! My name is **Novellie** and I am a second-year student at the University of Surabaya (UBAYA) in Indonesia, currently majoring in English for Business and PR. I am currently 19 years old. I love English because it opens a gateway to new information around the world. I love reading, drawing, and spending time with my close friends. I like listening to music - mostly Western or Japanese music. I get shy around people so proceed with caution!



Hello! I'm **Rahmah Nurul Aini**, but my friends call me Ain, or Vivi. I am a student in Ubaya in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. I am in the Faculty of Polytechnic, majoring in English For Business and PR, and I'm currently in my 3rd semester. I was born and raised in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Since I was a child, I have enjoyed dancing, learning new things, and reading books. I love both English and business! That is why I joined this study programme to learn more about such topics. To be honest, I'm still learning about branding and what aspects of business I might be good at. I spend my free time reading books, mainly fiction, watching movies or anime, playing games, napping - I swear I love naps - and editing photos and videos. I love animals, especially cats and seals, whom I find simply adorable.

Health

El Refugio Casa del Migrante

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El Refugio, which translates to “The Shelter,” is an organization integral to the pastoral complex of the El Refugio parish. Its primary mission is to aid migrants passing through Mexico. The dedicated individuals who collaborate with this institution focus on providing food, medical assistance, clothing, accommodation, legal advice, and shelter to migrants facing challenging circumstances.



Even though this is a religious organization, it is not a requirement to identify as a follower of Catholicism in order to be welcomed within this shelter, as they provide support to any migrant person who approaches them seeking assistance. El Refugio sustains itself through international funds, both monetary and in-kind donations, as well as proceeds from a bazaar held every Wednesday where they sell a variety of donated items to support the organization. Regarding the collaborators, they include nuns, individuals closely connected to the church, and volunteers who dedicate themselves to assisting the people within the organization. Many of them are motivated either by

their Catholic devotion or their empathy for the cause.

Strategically situated atop a hill next to the train tracks, this organization takes advantage of its location, which serves as a conduit for transit to the United States. The demanding journey undertaken by migrant individuals across Mexico exacts a toll that is not only physical but also carries a significant emotional impact. This is especially true for those who board freight trains bound for the north, as they confront the challenges of traveling in the open, enduring high temperatures and rain, as well as the dangers of getting on and off the train which results in a myriad of accidents, in addition to enduring hunger and fatigue.



The efforts made by El Refugio are extremely important, since it is a clear example of how organized civil society strives to uphold the well-being and dignity of migrants navigating this region. Their work is admirable since they use the few resources they have at their disposal to be able to help those who often find themselves in critical situations. Regarding the issue of health, as we will be able to observe in more depth in the interview, the shelter facilitates access to medical consultations, medicines or first aid for migrants who require it, which allows them to access these services and then continue on their way to the United States. It should be noted that El Refugio operates in an environment where local people themselves face a certain degree of marginalization. This shared experience has fostered a receptive attitude towards the shelter within the community. This stands in contrast to the experiences of other shelters in Guadalajara and across Mexico, which have encountered resistance and opposition from residents. After our investigation, we learned that El Refugio has a changing dynamic, influenced by immigration policies and practices, which is why they are now also dedicated to the defense of human rights, providing legal advice and support to people seeking refuge or residence in Mexico.

The above is an example of how the organization has been providing different facilities to migrants who come to the shelter, based on the different needs that emerge over time. Thanks to the time we got to spend in this shelter, we were able to understand the monumental work that is carried out at

El Refugio, and how busy the days are for the collaborators and volunteers who lend their time and work for the benefit of these migrants in need. During our visit to this organization, we were welcomed by Sister Carmen and Mr. Arturo Navarro, commonly known as Mr. Marin. They allowed us to take part in the organization's activities for a day, and they also agreed to be interviewed by us, with the provision that we would assist a group of migrants who were passing through, which made us see first-hand the importance of the work that is carried out every day at El Refugio. The shelter stands as a beacon of hope, extending a compassionate hand to those in urgent need, while also contending with unique challenges intrinsic to its compassionate mission.

Interview

Interviewees:

Sister Carmen (Volunteer)

Mr. Arturo Navarro Jauregui (guard and permanent collaborator of the organization)

Q: How long have you been working at the organization? In what area? What are your main responsibilities?

Sister Carmen: For over a year now, I've been alternating shifts with a colleague, each of us taking turns overseeing shifts and managing the kitchen. Additionally, I have responsibilities that extend beyond the kitchen itself. Because we follow different shifts, we collaborate and address situations together as they come up.

Q: In what context was the organization created?

Arturo: It started as a rehabilitation center for drug addicts and alcoholics, but the founder of the organization noticed that more and more migrants seeking refuge were arriving. So, the organization shifted its focus and decided to become a migrant shelter. El Refugio is located near the train tracks, where trains from Mexico City and Manzanillo converge. Migrants would get off there, looking for food and shelter, and that's how they began to arrive. Over the years, with the help of donations, the shelter has expanded its facilities. During the construction process, they hired some of the migrants who were staying at El Refugio, and with the money they earned, they were able to continue their journey by bus. It has been a gradual process over several years for the organization to attain the facilities it has today. The International Red Cross also assisted us in constructing a structure and dormitories for volunteers through a project that we applied for prior to the pandemic.

Q: What can the organization do to help migrants?

Arturo: When an immigrant arrives sick, we take them to the nearby health center. We have an agreement with this center, and we use WhatsApp to schedule appointments for the patients. The health center provides medical attention to migrants without the need for documentation, thanks to the arrangement we have with them.

Sister Carmen: During the registration process, we gather information about their health condition. We carefully ask targeted questions to determine their overall well-being and whether they're facing any notable discomfort. It's common that during our initial assessment, we come across migrants who have arrived with injuries, fractures, and respiratory ailments. Among them, there are individuals who have a background of epilepsy, and accessing the essential care they need proves to be a challenge. Furthermore, we encounter cases of diabetes, and a significant number arrive without the medications they require. Our main focus is to gain an insight into their health requirements and offer suitable assistance based on their needs.

Q: Is the health center open to anyone in the community?

Arturo: Yes, the health center is open to everyone, but in this case, it specifically caters to migrants. Mexican nationals are asked for their CURP (Unique Population Registry Code), but migrants without documentation can receive medical attention, thanks to our agreement with the health center.

Sister Carmen: On weekdays, the health center operates its services for visitors. However, there are frequent instances when medical professionals are unavailable, and the pharmacy is not situated on the premises. Recognizing the remote origins of many migrants, the center places significant importance on assessing urgent and critical cases, providing aid whenever feasible. In situations where a doctor is absent, a backup physician tends to the sick. They diligently ensure the availability of essential medications for such cases. The center's sustainability relies on contributions from diverse individuals and institutions. A particularly noteworthy monthly contribution is made by Laboratories Pisa, supplying respiratory medications and electrolyte solutions, with a focus on addressing the most crucial needs.

Q: What role does the organization play within its community?

Arturo: We have been here in the community for almost 11 years. People are aware of our work, thanks in part to the Father's efforts in raising awareness during mass. Many individuals in the community support us by providing aid such as food, medicine, and clothing. The religious community also offers assistance, by bringing food or dinner, for example. The Father's efforts in making the parish aware of our work have been instrumental, as we are committed to our mission of mercy of helping migrants as an act of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, providing shelter to the pilgrim, and assisting the sick.

Sister Carmen: Most people come and look for work in order to continue in their journey. They usually stay for 1-2 weeks. Venezuelans are the ones who stay the longest. They arrive, assess the situation, and sometimes they are able to find work. However, sometimes jobs are only available in shifts when El Refugio is closed.

Q: Do you have any other health-related support, or is the health center agreement the only one you have?

Arturo: We also have a doctor in the neighborhood who attends to migrants when the health center is closed. We call her, and she makes time to come to El Refugio.

Sister Carmen: We receive donations from various individuals and institutions. Pisa Laboratories provides a monthly donation for the respiratory area and serums, it's the first thing that's provided. Also, with FM4 Paso Libre, we are working on an arrangement that helps both parties.

Q: What happens in an emergency?

Arturo: If the doctor is unavailable, we send them to the Green Cross or the civil hospital.

Sister Carmen: We also analyze and try to assist urgent cases, but also the doctor who helps around here will directly assist the patient. We strive to have medication available for these critical cases.

Q: We had the opportunity to support a group of arriving migrants. How would you describe the reception process for these individuals?

Arturo: First, at the gate where the grille is located, we conduct the first filter. We ask who they are, where they come from, what they need, and what is offered to them. The first step is to distinguish between a migrant and a homeless person. A homeless person doesn't know where they are going, so we ask, "What is your goal?" and they can't answer. A migrant says, "I'm going to the border," or "I'm heading to Piedras Negras," "I'm going to Tijuana," etc. (border cities). They also tell us where they come from, such as Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, etc.

Having established that the visitor is indeed a migrant, we ask them what they need. Sometimes, they say they need clothes, a backpack, or they just want to rest for a night or recover from illness or blistered feet. We accommodate them in the shelter, and when they have recovered or decide to leave, they can continue on their journey. For example, last week, we had a young man with a foot injury who stayed with us for two weeks. There was also another man with an arm injury from jumping off the train, and he stayed at El Refugio for almost a month.

Q: So, you also provide support for those who are sick and need to stay?

Arturo: Yes, they can stay until they feel better and decide to leave. Some people don't want to travel by train because they've seen the risks and witnessed accidents, with some losing their limbs. Instead, they prefer to work and save money to travel by bus. We try to find them work here. For example, last week, four people left after finding jobs and getting their bus tickets.

Q: Has there been any change in the management and implementation of protocols/ programs during and after the pandemic?

Arturo: When the pandemic started, we had to close the shelter. At that time, we had a large number of people, about 50. We told them they couldn't go out to work anymore. Those who wanted to stay had to remain inside, and we provided them with food and basic services. Those who wanted to work were sent to some apartments owned by the organization, where they could stay for free for six months while they settled and could afford to pay rent. We closed the doors, and new migrants were not allowed to enter. We provided food outside, and we built bathrooms outside for them to clean themselves. Now, those who don't want to enter the shelter can still use the outdoor showers.

Things have returned to normal now. As it's a shelter for passing through, migrants usually stay for 1 to 3 days to rest. Some are sick and request more days to rest until they feel better, or they want to find a job.

Q: What challenges have you encountered in managing health within the organization?

Arturo: We have a nursing station and receive donated medicines, which allows us to offer support with non-prescription medications like painkillers or cold medicine.

Sister Carmen: We need access to a budget, a suitable nursing area, a doctor with a set schedule, and free access to medical studies. We need to be more attentive to how to inquire about their health situation because many times people say they are fine but they come in clearly injured, and we find later that they have fractured bones. Right now, coughs and flu are receiving special attention. In most cases, migrants don't have a place to seek medical care.

Q: Do you think having a doctor or nurse on staff would be beneficial for the organization?

Arturo: Ideally, having a doctor or nurse who could provide medical care and treatment to migrants would be great. About four years ago, we had a nursing student doing their social service here, but the project was abandoned due to the pandemic. We would like to resume that program and have doctors, nurses, and even a psychologist to provide comprehensive services. Many migrants arrive with trauma from witnessing accidents or kidnappings involving the train, and they may have fears or delusions of persecution. Some women arrive beaten or abused. Providing comprehensive medical and psychological services is a challenge. Even if it's only for those doing their social service, having doctors and psychologists would be beneficial, as having them permanently on staff is not financially feasible for us due to budget restrictions.

Reflections

Comparisons

A very important element of this investigation was the opportunity to discuss with our peers in another country about the organizations that they chose and the work that they conducted with them. While both organizations share the common goal of providing assistance to migrants, their specific focuses, challenges, and methods of engagement with the government, NGOs, and the local community differ significantly.

Similarities

Both CHARM in Kyoto and the El Refugio organizations prioritize addressing the health needs of migrants. CHARM focuses on migrants with infectious diseases, particularly HIV, while El Refugio attends to a broader range of health issues, including injuries, fractures and other conditions. This shared emphasis reflects the understanding that migrants often lack access to proper medical care during their journeys.

Both organizations recognize the need for systemic change in their respective countries' policies regarding migrant healthcare. CHARM highlights the difficulties immigrants face in accessing treatment due to stricter visa regulations in Japan, and calls for a change in the country's healthcare system. El Refugio, on the other hand, operates in an environment where migrants may not have easy access to healthcare services, which underscores the importance of their efforts in providing immediate assistance.

Differences

CHARM's focus is predominantly on migrants with infectious diseases, offering interpretation and accompanying services to hospitals and town halls. In contrast, El Refugio has a broader scope, addressing immediate health needs such as injuries, alongside providing them food, clothing, accommodation, legal advice, and refuge to migrants facing challenging circumstances.

Another difference is that CHARM operates in Japan, where stricter visa regulations have created barriers to healthcare for migrants. This context influences CHARM's advocacy for systemic change within the Japanese healthcare system. On the other hand, El Refugio operates in Mexico, focusing on the challenges faced by migrants passing through the country en route to the United States, thereby addressing issues of transit and temporary stay.

Also, the local communities' attitudes toward the two organizations differ. El Refugio benefits from a receptive local community, likely due to shared experiences of marginalization. CHARM's interaction with the local community in Japan is not specified but may encounter varying levels of acceptance given the unique socio-cultural context.

Conclusion

With this very enriching exercise, we were able to see a broad panorama with an international vision, which allowed us to understand what are the most important challenges that people in human mobility face in terms of health. It was quite interesting to understand that despite the geographical distance there are many similarities between the situation of Japan and Mexico in relation to migrants. In both countries we can see how migration policies have come to infringe upon the rights

of migrants, which is where organized civil society can intervene, becoming a key actor for the well-being of these people. In both cases, the organization is made up of individuals seeking to help, serving to counteract the actions or omissions of the State. However, in both cases, their work goes beyond the help they provide, and since they also carry out important activism work, in the case of CHARM in Japan, they talk about the importance of reforming the entire system that is making it impossible for migrants to access healthcare. Meanwhile El Refugio is part of a network of organizations in Mexico that not only protect, but also promote the human rights of migrants.

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Researchers



My name is **Melissa**. I am 23 years old and I recently finished my studies in International Relations. I have been involved in the migration field for a while now, which is why I have had the opportunity to be an exchange student in Mexico City where I took a class on Central America-Mexico-USA migration, working closely with a network of organizations in Jalisco as well as interning as a researcher focusing on migration and gender. I am very passionate about art, especially literature since in addition to reading I also like to produce my own writing where I can combine literature and theory from my degree.



Hello everyone! My name is **Trisia Almanzor**. I am 22 years old and currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in International Relations at ITESO. I am actively involved in a research project conducted by my university focusing on issues related to human mobility. Recently, I started working as an intern at a policy consulting firm, where I am gaining practical experience. I am particularly passionate about topics related to international cooperation and regional studies. Outside of academia, I find solace in music and was delighted to join an all-female rock band, adding an exciting new dimension to my off time.

CHARM

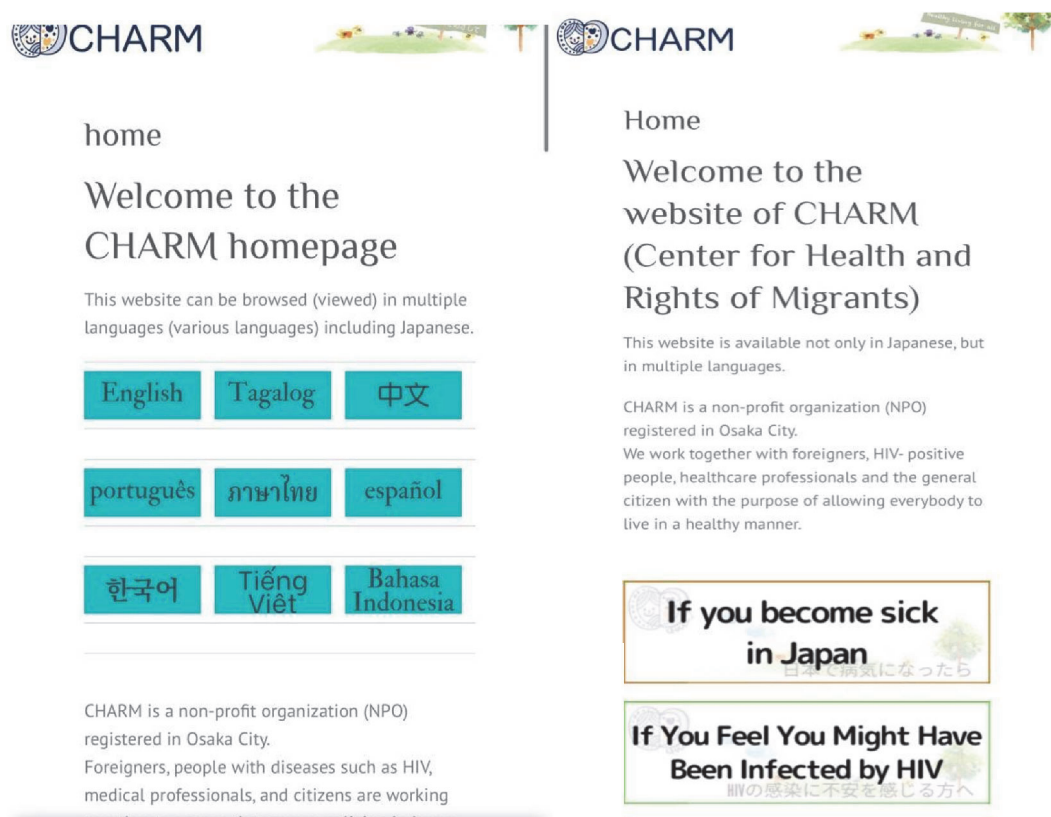
Researchers: Kokoro Nomoto & Nana Matsumoto

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies

Among industrialized nations, Japan has long been regarded as having strict immigration control. The number of immigrants in Japan is estimated to be around 3 million people, which is around 2.5% of the entire population, a 10.7% increase from the previous year. (Sugiyama, 2023). This is in part a result of a new immigration law that went into effect in 2019, which was designed to increase the number of workers (Pollmann & Yashiro, 2020). It is no secret that Japan is undergoing a demographic crisis, with an extremely low birthrate and shrinking population. The increase in immigration brings many problems, such as cultural and language barriers, work issues, housing discrimination, childhood education, and inadequate access to healthcare. It is this final issue - healthcare for immigrants in Japan - that this article will focus on.

The problems that immigrants face when it comes to their health have many causes, including language barriers, lack of information, residency status, and cost. It is important for Japan to support its immigrants in various ways in order to create a society that is comfortable for them to live in. For this reason, NGOs and other organizations in Japan have been formed to support immigrants who are having difficulties living in Japan. When it comes to supporting immigrants' health-related issues, one such NGO is called the Center for Health and Rights of Migrants, or CHARM.

Founded in 2002, CHARM is an organization that supports and collaborates with HIV-positive immigrants and people who speak languages other than Japanese, with the aim of creating a society where all people can live in good health. One might think that AIDS is not a big problem in Japan, but according to the AIDS Prevention Information Network (2023), in the three months between March and June 2023, 174 people were infected with HIV, 36 of whom were foreign nationals. Compared to the year before last and the year before that, the number of foreign nationals infected is on the increase. Therefore, the presence of CHARM is important for HIV-positive people, especially for foreigners.



CHARM's Website

CHARM's Support Activities

Over the years since its foundation, CHARM has been expanding its range of support services for immigrants. At first, they started providing telephone counseling on sexual and reproductive health issues in four different languages: Spanish, Thai, Tagalog, and English. Then, in 2004, they launched a website (CHARM, 2023) in three different languages with the help of an Australian website designer. It can be viewed in several languages so that people from different countries can find more information in their native language about HIV, about CHARM, and its past and upcoming events. In 2012, CHARM began holding health counseling sessions for foreign residents at eight different locations in Osaka prefecture jointly with support groups for foreign residents. This expanded to ten locations a year later. Following this, in 2018, CHARM began holding free health counseling sessions for foreign residents in collaboration with the other organizations.

Foreigners often need advice on where to go if they get sick, what the necessary expenses will be, what to bring, etc. This is particularly true if they are HIV positive and lack health insurance, which all people living in Japan are required to have. CHARM will provide support on the types of cautions, benefits, and help with any language barrier. In addition CHARM provides a lot of information to support women in particular, such as the difference between HIV and AIDS, and detailed information on infection routes and countermeasures. Also, when an immigrant wants to go to a facility or hospital, CHARM will provide medical interpretation and accompaniment support services to foreigners living in the Kansai area, as well as what to expect and what is needed when receiving ARV (antiretroviral) therapy treatment in Japan. CHARM will provide information on the testing process, how to read test results, and offer consultations on testing and testing locations with multi-lingual support. Their strength of support is telephone consultation for HIV sexually transmitted

diseases in foreign languages, face-to-face consultation for positive persons and their partners, accompanying support, and HIV medical interpretation services in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Portuguese.

CHARM's Contributions Beyond Japan



In 2022, CHARM held the Asian Forum on HIV and Migration to commemorate their 20th anniversary. Through it, NGOs and health care providers were able to learn more about the reality of HIV medical care in their countries and how to create an environment where HIV positive people who migrate can continue their treatment with peace of mind. At the forum, English was used as the main language to explain the process and challenges of accessing HIV medical care in different countries, and to exchange opinions with people from different countries. Countries that participated in this forum were Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea. By publishing the results of this forum, people were able to

learn about the HIV treatment systems in each country. In addition, by disclosing details about the organizations that participated in the forum, people could learn who they could consult directly.

Interview

We visited the CHARM office in Osaka on June 29th, 2023 to learn more about what CHARM is doing for immigrants and to find out more about immigration issues in Japan. We interviewed four members of CHARM, each working in a field, to learn about various aspects of immigration. They answered all of our questions and gave us insightful perspectives on the immigration issue that we could not have thought of on our own. It was a valuable experience that we could not have learned from the Internet alone.

Interviewees:

Ms. Aoki Rieko (head of the secretariat)

Ms. Ihara Noriko (medical Interpreter Support Staff)

Ms. Takeno Midori (consultant for HIV-positive foreigners)

Mr. Mohammad Masum Billah (English-speaking telephone consultant)



(From left to right: Nana Matsumoto, Ms. Takeno Midori, Mr. Mohammad Masum Billah, Ms. Aoki Rieko, Ms. Ihara Noriko, and Kokoro Nomoto)

Q: *What is the main purpose of your activities?*

Ms. Aoki Rieko: The main goal is to create a society in which all people in Japan can live a healthy life. It is a very big issue, so it is not enough for individuals to make efforts, but the society as a whole needs to work in this way, and all the people living there need to have an awareness that it is normal to live healthily. In order for this to happen, laws need to be established, education needs to be provided, English language institutions need to be established, appropriate information needs to be provided to foreign nationals, and many other things need to be done. As a small organization, we mainly provide information, consultation in foreign languages, opportunities, and assistance to solve the problem of communication difficulties with doctors, especially in the medical field.

Q: *Are there any specific aspects of the local or national government systems that you would like to see improved?*

Ms. Aoki Rieko: In Japan, there are many people whose visa status closes off entrance to medical care. Refugees are not covered by the national medical insurance, so not all of them have access to medical care. There are people who come to Japan for various reasons, so I would like to see the discrimination based on status of residence be eliminated. Insurance and visas should be obtained immediately upon arrival. When refugees suddenly get sick, they want to see a doctor, but they can't because they can't talk to the doctor.

Is CHARM taking care of that kind of support?

Ms. Aoki Rieko: Yes, but it is not possible to do everything. There are many cases where we are refused by the system because there is no law itself, even if we go to the contact point.

Q: *We understand that CHARM has been active in this field since 2002, and we were wondering if there have been any improvements or changes from 2002 to now?*

Ms. Aoki Rieko: The immigration law was revised in 2012, and until then, all foreigners were subject to the same restrictions. Until then, foreigners had to register with all local governments, and anyone could register. Once registered with a municipality, the municipality had to take care of the foreigner regardless of whether or not he or she was a resident of that municipality. But since 2012, refugees have not been able to register and do not have resident status. It's like, "Why should we (the local government) take care of them if they are not registered?" They have become really strict. Although NGOs are now doing this, since 2012 the government has not been in a proper relationship with them, so there is a clear separation between those who can receive medical care and those who can't. Until then, there were people who could get health insurance at the counter, and when I started my activities, there were people who were receiving welfare benefits. The people at the window were able to make that decision if necessary, but since we are following the government manual, it has become very difficult to deal with each individual case.

Q: *What are some of the most confusing or difficult issues to resolve with regards to immigrants?*

Ms. Aoki Rieko: We can't really decide on this one because it is a daily occurrence, but I would say the lack of a system is the most difficult. This is where the government system does not provide access to medical care. Another problem is that the people in charge at administrative offices and medical institutions do not know about the medical system. The most vulnerable people are those who do not have resident status, and there is a system in Japan that these people can use. However, there are many people who do not know about it.

Q: *What are the most common problems you have been involved with?*

Ms. Aoki Reiko: Not being able to communicate in a foreign language is a big problem. Refugees don't even know where to go in the medical field. Even if you go to a big hospital and think you will be seen anyway, it is difficult to enter through the entrance and get to the doctor, and they don't know how to fill out a medical record. I think it is difficult to go through the initial consultation procedure. It is even more difficult if it is their first visit to a doctor as soon as they arrive in Japan. Once they get to the doctor, they can only manage to speak with gestures and a little English.

Q: *Do you have any major goals for the future?*

Ms. Aoki Reiko: Rather than a goal, we are increasing the number of languages as the need arises, and the number of languages we need to support is constantly changing. We need to develop a system and train people to be able to respond to such changes, but it

is difficult to plan and execute such a system. However, we are not able to respond to all people, but our goal is to improve our quality so that we can properly respond to infectious diseases. It is not easy to do so, but the term “infectious diseases” covers a very wide range, so I hope that we can cooperate with medical institutions and government agencies to establish a system that can properly respond to new infectious diseases such as the coronavirus that has occurred this time. Although we started with HIV, HIV is not an infectious disease but rather a chronic disease that requires medication for a long time until death. There are other people who live their lives while taking such drugs, such as those with intractable disease or diabetes. If such people do not take the medicines, their lives will be in danger, so it is necessary for them to continue their treatment. I personally think it would be a good idea to gradually expand support for people who are undergoing continuous treatment, but I think the government still needs to consider whether we can establish a system and whether it is really possible to do so.

Q: What has been the personal impact on you of assisting immigrants?

Ms. Takeno Midori: I speak English better than before.

Ms. Aoki Reiko: When everyone was working here, everyone started speaking English.

Ms. Takeno Midori: As for myself, I think that just by having a Japanese person accompany them, the attitude of hospital receptionists softens towards the client, so I was able to see the current state of Japanese society objectively by working with non-Japanese people.

Ms. Ihara Noriko: I have become more patient. I was very surprised at first, because even if an interpreter was available, there are people who cannot come to the hospital on the designated date and time for a variety of reasons. However, it is not the interpreter’s responsibility, and I believe that it is through situations like this that interpreters learn more about the language, so I try to think about how to make things work out in situations like this.

Mr. Masum Billah: I have been working here for three months since April, and I think I have more opportunities to learn more about infectious diseases, as I have learned more about what I knew only by name. I have been able to deepen my understanding of infectious diseases by studying with nurses and infectious disease specialists.

Reflections

During the research project, we shared a lot of information with two young researchers from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente (ITESO), Guadalajara, in Mexico, and we also learned a lot about the current situation in their country. The major difference between Japan and Mexico on the issue of immigration is that Mexico has a very large number of immigrants moving to other countries, while Japan still has a large number of immigrants to accept. The name of their organization is El Refugio Casa del Migrante, which means “Migrant House Shelter” in English. One

thing that El Refugio Casa del Migrante and CHARM had in common was that they both had deep relationships with many other organizations. We also learned that volunteers and donations are very important to each organization. What was also very moving was the fact that both El Refugio Casa del Migrante and CHARM started their activities because the doctors and founders were actively working for those who suffered. For immigrants, the support from the local community is very important.

The reason we decided to research the relationship between refugees and health is because we believe that being healthy is crucial for people to live long lives. When we learned that CHARM was established with the goal of ensuring that everyone living in Japan can have a healthy and safe life, we thought it was a perfect fit for our project. In recent years, the number of foreigners immigrating to Japan has been increasing, and our university also has a large number of foreign students, so this topic was familiar and interesting to us. It was a valuable experience for us to conduct extensive research on immigrants and have conversations with people who are actively supporting them.

Through the interview with CHARM, we learned that Japan is a less welcoming country for immigrants compared to the past and that it is important for us as citizens to support their health. When we asked members of CHARM if there was anything we could do, they suggested that students like us should interact with international students, actively engage in conversations with foreigners, and make friends with them, as this would greatly change our perception of foreigners in various aspects of life. Instead of just focusing on changing the image of foreigners, we realized that for those who haven't had much interaction with foreigners may not know how to approach them and might find it difficult to connect with them. Therefore, we understood that rather than leaving communication barriers with foreigners unaddressed, gradually solving the problem requires us to truly see individuals and take a step towards them. It has been a wonderful opportunity, and we are grateful to everyone who has assisted us.



In CHARM's main office.

What can Japan do immediately to help immigrants?

Of course, it is very important to donate money and cooperate with organizations like CHARM. However, as the members of CHARM said, it is necessary for us to enjoy our daily life with foreigners and to know more about them. This awareness will help immigrants and make Japan a better place to live for them.

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Researchers



Hello everyone! My name is **Nana Matsumoto**. I'm from Japan and I'm 19 years old. I am a student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies in Kyoto. I live in Hyogo prefecture, and my house is very close to Osaka. In my university, I am studying Spanish as a major and I am learning French as a second language. I am especially interested in learning grammar and history. I also like English and want to speak with many people in English, so I am conscious of studying at home. My hobbies are watching stage performances, dancing, and singing.



Hi everyone! My name is **Kokoro Nomoto** and I am a student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies in Kyoto, Japan, where I study Spanish and English. Studying Spanish can be challenging, but it is a very rewarding experience when I can understand certain words or concepts and have conversations with international students or speak to my teachers during class. It's really enjoyable to see my progress and feel a sense of accomplishment.

HOPE Worldwide Penang

Researchers: Nur Ain Adlina & Andrian Lopez Matius

Universiti Sains Malaysia

HOPE Worldwide Malaysia is an organization that crosses geographical, governmental, and religious borders to effect change and improve the lives of the disadvantaged. As a non-profit and non-governmental organization, its sole motivation is the welfare and upliftment of society's marginalized groups. This nonprofit organization operates on the values of empathy and selflessness. HOPE Worldwide Malaysia team members are more than just workers; they are passionate individuals who are sincerely devoted to the goals of the organization. They see their work as a mission to better the lives of people who need it the most. Volunteers are an essential element of the team; their altruistic contributions and efforts help the organization execute its services successfully and efficiently.

An emphasis on long-term and significant solutions characterizes one of the most significant aspects of HOPE Worldwide Malaysia's approach. Rather than delivering quick solutions, the organization attempts to create and execute policies that result in long-term improvements in the lives of those who benefit. This strategy promotes an atmosphere in which assistance beneficiaries may progress towards self-reliance and independence, resulting in genuine and long-term transformation. The core services of HOPE Worldwide Malaysia can be categorized into four primary areas: Health, Food, Children's Education, and a Volunteerism Program.

- In the area of health, the organization provides medical assistance and health awareness programmes to individuals who do not have proper access to healthcare. The goal is to enhance health outcomes and provide individuals with the knowledge and resources they need to manage their own health.
- Another crucial area is food security. Recognising that regular access to healthy food is a basic human right, the organization organizes food drives and distributes necessary food supplies to society's most disadvantaged populations.
- HOPE Worldwide Malaysia recognises that education is the key to ending the cycle of poverty. They conduct a variety of educational programmes to provide children with information and skills that will enable them to seek a bright future and actively contribute to their community.
- Finally, the Volunteerism Program is a robust platform that mobilizes people to engage in direct community service. Volunteers are given chances to contribute their time, talents, and resources in meaningful ways through this programme. This experience serves the community while also allowing volunteers to learn, grow, and get a better grasp of social concerns.

HOPE Worldwide Malaysia shows that collective action can actually alter lives and create a better society. They are making a substantial difference in the lives of the impoverished and needy communities, one at a time.

The Sentul Free Clinic of HOPE Worldwide represents a pioneering initiative in community programs, marking their first dedicated effort to deliver comprehensive health care services to the urban poor, completely free of charge. This clinic, situated in the heart of the Sentul community, is making healthcare accessible and affordable to all, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Understanding the growing disparity between the urban poor and access to adequate healthcare, the Sentul Free Clinic is driven by the goal of ensuring that financial constraints do not serve as a barrier to receiving necessary medical care.

The clinic offers a broad spectrum of health care services that cater to the unique needs of its community. Ranging from general health check-ups, diagnosis and treatment of common ailments, to more specialized care and health education, the Sentul Free Clinic works tirelessly to cover all aspects of health and wellness for its beneficiaries. Staffed by a team of dedicated healthcare professionals and volunteers, the clinic emphasizes delivering high-quality care. These include experienced doctors, nurses, and health workers who share the vision of HOPE Worldwide and are committed to making a difference in the lives of the urban poor.

In addition to providing medical services, the Sentul Free Clinic also serves as a platform for health education. Recognizing that knowledge is power, they conduct various workshops and awareness programs that aim to equip individuals with the information they need to maintain good health. Topics covered range from nutrition, hygiene, to preventive measures for common diseases, helping individuals make informed decisions about their health. Furthermore, the clinic extends its reach beyond its physical premises. Community outreach initiatives, including health camps and awareness drives, are conducted regularly, ensuring that health services are taken to the doorsteps of those unable to visit the clinic.

In essence, the Sentul Free Clinic of HOPE Worldwide is more than just a clinic. It is a holistic healthcare initiative that treats illnesses and empowers the community with knowledge and resources to improve their health status. Despite being their first community program, it has set a precedent for the organization's commitment to health equity, paving the way for future initiatives.

Interview

Interviewee:

June Khoo (Senior Program Manager)

Q: How long have you been involved with HOPE Worldwide Penang?

My enduring commitment to community impact is exemplified by my inspiring 17-year journey with Hope Worldwide Malaysia in Penang, from its inception to its evolution. Simultaneously serving as a board member and dedicated volunteer, I've witnessed the organization's growth. A pivotal moment came pre-pandemic in 2019 when the country director recognized my dedication, inviting me to transition into a full-time role, bridging my board responsibilities.

I am now engaged in strategic planning, program development, and hands-on initiatives that amplify Hope Worldwide Malaysia's mission. This evolution enriches my understanding, empowering deeper

contributions to the organization's growth and the lives we touch. Each day reinforces the significance of collective efforts and the change we bring, nurturing my unwavering commitment to a brighter future through Hope Worldwide Malaysia.



Let's Talk HOPE worldwide MALAYSIA

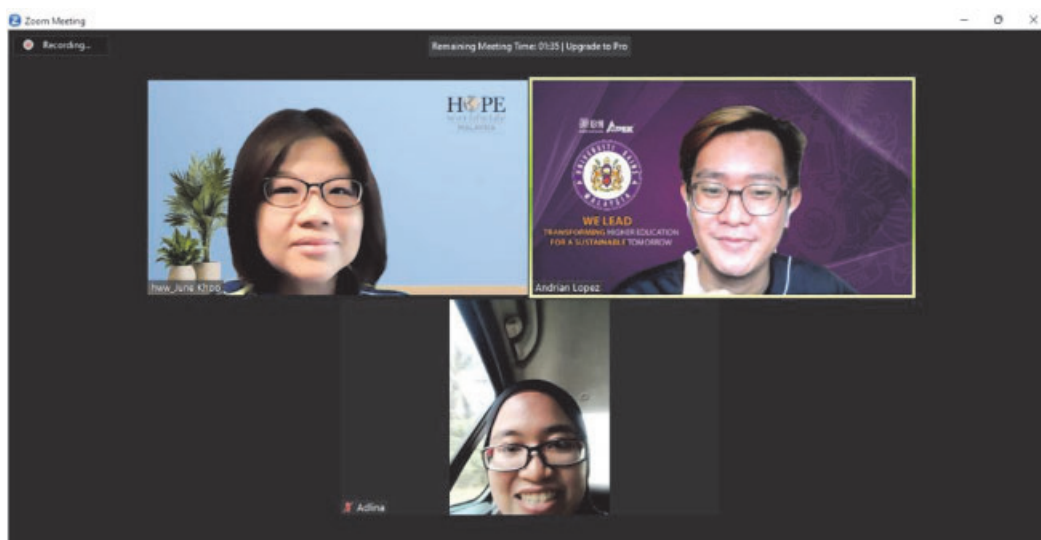
About our Speaker

▶ **June Khoo**

- Certified Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) from Mental Health Association of Malaysia.
- Certified facilitator using The Mental Health and High School Curriculum & Teach Mental Health Literacy from The University of British Columbia.
- Certified Art Therapy Practitioner

Q: What is your main job or role in the organization?

As an overseer at the HOPE Worldwide Penang office in Macallum, Georgetown, I play a pivotal role in coordinating and managing our organization's outreach operations. Focused on enriching the lives of local communities, I ensure seamless program execution, from education initiatives to vital resource offerings, fostering positive and sustainable impacts. Central to my mission is advocating for mental health, particularly among young individuals in our community database. Through empathy-driven initiatives, I design programs that address unnoticed yet profound well-being challenges. By engaging youth through workshops and open dialogues, we cultivate empathy and resilience, guiding them to navigate life's complexities confidently. In this capacity, I am not only an operational steward but a catalyst for transformative change, witnessing the positive effects of our efforts on the community's well-being and committing to the shared journey toward mental wellness alongside inspiring individuals.



Q: What is the most important thing to know or understand when volunteering at HOPE Worldwide Penang?

Central to our NGO is the core principle of volunteerism, a vital cornerstone for our non-profit's success. The dedication, skills, and expertise of our volunteers drive our mission, creating a reciprocal relationship where their contributions are the lifeblood of our endeavors. Embracing the commitment of volunteering, we stress the importance of the time sacrificed by our volunteers, aligning availability with community schedules. For instance, our pivotal Penang program, the Orang Asli Settlement Outreach at Perak grid, demands a full day's devotion to community engagement and progress. This tangible commitment encapsulates our cherished concept of volunteerism. Transparency and preparedness are equally integral to our approach. Volunteers should approach their service understanding the potential constraints of resources, fostering collective effort to maximize impact. Through open communication and shared dedication, we cultivate a volunteer community embodying compassion, adaptability, and common purpose. Ultimately, our NGO thrives on the essence of volunteerism, binding us to our community and empowering transformative change. We honor volunteers' commitment as indispensable threads woven into our collective fabric, shaping a positive impact.



Q: What has been the most difficult thing you have had to deal with while you have been at HOPE Worldwide Penang?

We are very grateful for our funding, but it also presents one of our most significant challenges. While we have corporate sponsors for specific programs, we require additional funding to cover expenses such as rent, staff salaries, and program costs. Fundraising can be quite challenging as we need to approach various individuals and organizations for support. We do have a signature fundraising event called BOLATHON, but it only takes place once every four years. If you check our website, you'll see that it coincided with the World Cup last year. This annual fundraising dilemma forces us to think creatively about how to generate the necessary funds.

Another challenge we face is related to our beneficiaries. Due to their limited knowledge and

understanding, it can sometimes be difficult for them to actively engage their children in our programs. While we provide food and groceries, we also have extensive programs for children aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty through education and building their strength and resilience for the future. However, it's challenging because many children start working at a young age. We encourage parents to send their children to us for educational support, even if it's not a formal part of our program. We have seen some success stories where parents are committed to their children's education, and approximately 10% of our beneficiaries have sent their children to us. These children have grown up to be educated and dedicated individuals. For instance, we have a young man from a single-parent family who has been with us for ten years and is now studying to become a doctor.

The challenge lies in the financial aspect. Parents often prioritize their children earning income first, making it challenging to focus on education. Therefore, we are continuously working hard to help children, youth, and their families understand the importance of education and support. We have seen progress in this regard, and we are committed to making a positive impact in our community.



Q: What do you find most rewarding about being involved in HOPE Worldwide Penang?

What I find most rewarding about being involved with an NGO is the deep connection we establish with people we don't encounter in our daily lives. It's about understanding their backgrounds and the reasons they find themselves in their current circumstances, particularly in terms of their socioeconomic status. I believe the most rewarding aspect is the connections we build with underprivileged communities. While we may not interact with them on a daily basis, when we engage in programs with them, we have the opportunity to connect with them personally. This allows us to not only comprehend their challenges but also to understand the underlying reasons for their situations.



Q: What is the philosophy of HOPE Worldwide Penang?

As an international NGO, our philosophy revolves around the idea of bringing hope and facilitating positive change in the lives of the people we assist. The tagline, “Bring hope, and they can change life,” encapsulates this philosophy. The organization aims to inspire individuals to believe in themselves and their ability to transform their lives. This philosophy is rooted in the principle of mutual support and assistance. It acknowledges that everyone, at some point in their lives, faces struggles, and in those moments, they may need help. By extending help to others, they believe in creating a cycle of support where individuals help one another, fostering positive change and hope for a better future.

Q: What role do you think HOPE Worldwide Penang plays for the people of Penang?

HOPE Worldwide Penang serves multiple roles for the people of Penang. Firstly, the organization plays a crucial role in inspiring hope and positivity in the lives of the people it assists. By offering support and assistance, HOPE Worldwide Penang encourages individuals to believe in themselves and their ability to overcome challenges. Secondly, HOPE Worldwide Penang acts as a connector between various NGOs in Penang. It plays a role in fostering collaboration and resource-sharing among different organizations. By leveraging connections and partnerships, it can enhance its programs and reach a larger audience. Additionally, the organization focuses not only on immediate relief, such as providing food, but also on education and promoting a healthy mindset. This holistic approach aims to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their lives in the long term.

HOPE Worldwide Penang also benefits from the support of the local government, allowing it to participate in government-organized events and initiatives. These collaborations further contribute to the organization’s ability to serve the community effectively. Overall, HOPE Worldwide Penang plays a multifaceted role in the community, encompassing inspiration, collaboration, education, and

support for individuals in need.

Q: How do you think you and HOPE Worldwide Penang will play a greater role in the local community in the future?

HOPE Worldwide Penang aims to play a greater role in the local community by continuing to engage and collaborate with volunteers who are willing to contribute their time and skills. The organization has established a structured process for volunteers to get involved, ensuring that their efforts align with the programs and needs of the community. Volunteers interested in participating can contact us through our website or by email. Once in contact, volunteers receive a Google Form that allows them to choose the specific area or program they want to volunteer for. This ensures that volunteers are matched with opportunities that align with their interests and skills.

The organization provides thorough briefings to volunteers before they participate in any program. These briefings include information on the program, the syllabus, and co-curricular activities. Additionally, volunteers are educated about the specific needs and sensitivities of the beneficiaries they will be working with. This preparation helps volunteers connect effectively with the community and ensures that interactions are respectful and sensitive. By actively engaging and educating volunteers, HOPE Worldwide Penang can expand its reach and impact in the local community. Volunteers become essential partners in delivering programs and support to those in need, helping the organization fulfill its mission of bringing hope and positive change to people's lives

Reflections

The research conducted by HOPE Worldwide Penang and Derust "A" Village in Zimbabwe stand out distinctly due to their individuality and distinctive approaches. These two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) share certain similarities, yet they are also characterized by significant differences that set them apart.

There are some parallels between Derust "A" Village and HOPE Worldwide Penang, in that they both aim to aid individuals, particularly in terms of their health. Derust "A" Village's responsibilities in the community include providing rudimentary medical treatment, water and sanitation, and referrals to the clinic. They also encourage expectant mothers to make early appointments for pre-natal care. The four main categories of HOPE Worldwide Malaysia's essential services for HOPE Worldwide Penang are: health, food, children's education, and a volunteer programme.

The differences between these two NGOs are in the challenges they face. Derust "A" Village encounters issues related to traditional medicine practices and the reluctance of some community members to seek medical attention at clinics. The challenge lies in changing the mindset and behaviors of individuals to prioritize modern healthcare. On the other hand, HOPE Worldwide Penang faces financial challenges despite having corporate sponsors. Securing funding for rent, staff salaries, and program collaborations remains a persistent issue, as is common in the NGO sector.

These case studies exemplify the diversity and dynamism within the realm of NGOs. While both organizations aim to uplift communities, their approaches, methods, and areas of focus differ significantly. This diversity enriches the landscape of humanitarian efforts, showcasing the various

strategies that can be employed to bring about positive change in the world. It's important to recognize that NGOs often face unique challenges shaped by the specific needs, cultures, and contexts of the communities they serve. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing effective interventions and programs that can make a meaningful impact on the lives of those in need.

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Researchers



Hi everyone! I am **Andrian Lopez Matius**. I am a third year student who is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Economics at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. I was born in Sibul, Sarawak, and currently live in Kuching, Sarawak. During my leisure time, I like playing games, watching netflix and jogging. I also like to join volunteer activities as I love to engage with and help people.



Hi guys! My name is **Nur Ain Adlina binti Mahamad Asri** and I am a third year student in Social Sciences at University Science Malaysia. I live in Pahang, Malaysia which is also my birthplace. I really like using social media such as Instagram, TikTok, X and Facebook to see makeup content, daily life vlogs, etc. My aspiration is to achieve personal growth by making a meaningful impact on the lives of others, particularly the elderly and disabled, through volunteer work.

Provision of Primary Healthcare in Derust “A”village in Chipinge district

Researchers: Nancy Mharira & Mercy Zuvarimwe

Great Zimbabwe University

Derust “A” village is located in the Chipinge district of Manicaland province in Zimbabwe. The Chipinge district is in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, located twenty-two kilometres from Chipinge town. The village consists of sixty-six households. There is a resident village health worker named Veriah Mawanga who gives primary healthcare. Veriah Mawanga works under Junction Gate Clinic. She was trained as a primary healthcare worker in June 2020. Community Health Workers often work on a voluntary basis and are agents of social change within the primary health care realm (Lewin *et al*, 2010; Werner and Bower, 1982). She focuses on disease prevention and provision of community care at the village level, where she serves as a key link between the community and the formal health system. Her duties in the village include giving health education, changing the community attitude to health and giving simple medical care, water and sanitation, encouraging pregnant mothers to book early for prenatal care, child healthcare and referrals to the clinic. Shortage of health professionals is a problem globally; a total of four million health professionals are needed to have all positions filled (Global Health Workforce Alliance and WHO, 2011). The problem is, however, more pronounced in developing countries, with Sub-Saharan Africa having only 3% of the global health providers. Staff shortages have weakened the health systems of these countries resulting in high morbidity and mortality; and this has contributed to failure by these countries to achieve targets set for health-related Millennium Development Goals.

According to the WHO, primary healthcare is a whole-of-society approach to health that aims at ensuring the highest possible level of health and well-being and their equitable distribution by focusing on people’s needs and as early as possible along the continuum from health promotion and disease prevention to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, and as close as feasible to people’s everyday environment (WHO, 2006). It is the first contact one has with the health providers when they have a health problem. Primary healthcare is a term used to describe a range of healthcare providers who work in the community. Two years after the Alma Ata Declaration in 1978, the government adopted the Primary Health Care (PHC) approach, directing resources towards disadvantaged areas and active participation of communities in transforming their health, but skills migration, low investment and limited resources have deterred this ambition. The maternal mortality ratio remains high at 651 deaths per 100,000 live births; the under-5 child mortality rate is 69 deaths per 1,000 live births, and 27% of children under 5 are stunted (Ray & Masuka, 2017). Human immunodeficiency virus prevalence rose from 15%, and 60% of villages have access to a village health worker while households contribute 25% through out-of-pocket expenditure. Government funding for health constitutes 8.7%



Interviewer Nancy Mharira (left) and Veriah Mawanga (right)

Interview

Interviewee:

Veriah Mawanga (village health worker)

Q: How long have you been working as a village health worker?

It is now four years. I started working as a village health worker in 2019 as a para-professional and I was then further trained in June 2020.

Q: What is the purpose of village health work?

My duties include giving health education, for example, practising hygiene, preventing diseases, and advising on what to do when one is ill. It is to ensure the highest possible level of health and well-being of people in the village by giving the first contact when people have health problems and to give health education.

Q: What are your duties in the village as a health worker?

I also give simple medical care to those having diarrhoea or malaria and then refer them to the clinic. I encourage the community to drink safe water and to build health infrastructures. I also encourage pregnant mothers for early bookings, child healthcare and referrals to the clinic. I take them their medication after they visit the clinic. I also visit people living with HIV, albinos, orphans, poor people, and the elderly, giving the same services and encouraging them that they are part of the community.

Q: How do you carry those duties?

I organise community meetings and sometimes I put up posters for campaign awareness and also distribute health educational pamphlets. I think I'm playing an important role because I see positive changes from the villagers. The community is now practising hygiene, I see fewer cases of diarrhoea, Blair toilets are being built by some families, and everyone now feels that they are part of the community. The elderly, albinos, orphans and the poor were being isolated from others but now everyone is part of the community. Through door-to-door visits and community meetings, no one is left out. People are now opening up about their HIV status. In the community, we no longer have home delivery, and children under five years are being taken to the clinic if I refer them.

Q: How did Covid 19 affect the work of village health?

At first the work was affected since everyone feared for his or her life. But later after being educated to use technology, the work progressed. I formed a WhatsApp group for the community, so that I can spread health awareness. I also texted to those without smartphones so that no one was left out. I also give health services for those who need my attention.

Q: What are the challenges you face as a village health worker?

Some families do not go to the clinic because of their faith, yet they become ill, and sometimes communicable diseases spread to the community, resulting in loss of life. Sometimes, I am given little medicine from the clinic, even though the people who need my attention are many. After referral, some do not go to the clinic, and some do not take their medication well, which leads to death.

Q: What are the challenges faced by the village?

We have only one spring in the village, and it is far from some of the villagers which has led to some families not practising hygiene. We have little health infrastructure in the village. A larger number of the households do not have Blair toilets because of poverty.



Veriah Mawanga - Village Health Worker - at her interview

Q: What is the most important thing a person should know or understand when volunteering to be a village health worker?

One should have people's health at heart. At the same time one should be patient enough to work with the community. Again, one should not have corruption and here I am saying this in terms of the medicine, some ended up selling it and giving it to their relatives only. So in short, one should have people's well-being at heart. One should be passionate and be a good example.



Reflections

We were paired with two young researchers in Penang, Malaysia from the Universiti Sains Malaysia. They researched and interviewed a representative from the Sentul Free Clinic of HOPE Worldwide, which provides holistic healthcare to treat illnesses while empowering the community with knowledge and resources to improve their health and overall well-being. Compared with Derust ‘A’ Village, the two community services operate similarly. In Derust ‘A’ Village, Veriah Mawanga individually volunteers to carry out Primary Healthcare services. The same applies to the HOPE Worldwide team: they volunteered. These communities don’t operate on their own, but they operate on behalf of the clinics that are the public organisation. The services offered are the same. They are both engaged in medical assistance and health awareness campaigns. They equip individuals with knowledge and resources, and they educate their communities by mobilising them. However, there is one difference in the HOPE Worldwide organisation, and that is there is food security for the disadvantaged. Again, it is a non-profit organisation, whereas in Derust, it’s an individual who is working together with the clinic.

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Researchers



Hi everyone. My name is **Nancy Mharira**. I am married, and am a mother of three. I am also a third-year student in Education at Great Zimbabwe University in Zimbabwe. I am staying in Chipinge, which is my birthplace. During my leisure time, I like singing gospel songs. I also like to join volunteer activities as I love to engage with and help people.



Greetings to you all! I am **Mercy Zuvarimwe**, a fourth-year student at Great Zimbabwe University. Studying for a Bachelors in Early Childhood Development, I see myself volunteering to assist those in need.

Pondok Kasih Foundation

Researcher: Gabriel Narendra

University of Surabaya

Health is the prosperity of physical, mental, and social well-being and isn't always about sickness or disease (Hanna, 2021). Health is a core part of day to day human activity. Without good health, we humans can't finish our daily activities, be they simple or complex.

While we should take care of our own health and we are responsible for it, the Government also has its part to play in managing its society's health. By law, health is a right that must be protected by the Government (Mikho, 2020).

But in reality, not every part of the world is protected by their Government. Indonesia for example, because it's a vast archipelagic state and the 14th-largest country by land area at almost 2 million square kilometers, means that the governmental health agencies are not able to reach every part of the country.

To increase health prosperity in Indonesia, Dr. Hana Amalia Vandayani Ananda, D.Min, who is known as "Mama Hana", founded *Yayasan Pondok Kasih* (Pondok Kasih Foundation or YPK for short) in 1991. Since its creation, YPK has provided hope and assistance to the poor and marginalized Indonesian people widely.

It all started when Mama Hana lent a helping hand to a beggar that usually sits in front of her church. A humble beginning which was followed by the provision of homes for the elderly, nursing homes for neglected elderly women, and children's homes for abandoned babies.

When a national crisis struck Indonesia in 1996, YPK quickly provided essential services and equipment to those who needed formal education for children, access to health supplies and social empowerment.

In 1999, many international organizations started to recognize YPK's devotion to the community, and 40 foot containers started to arrive containing goods, aid, and many other items through organizations such as Indonesia Relief Fund and World Blessing. At the time, many crises, conflicts and natural disasters hit Indonesia, so these aid packages were most welcome. They were distributed throughout the archipelago regardless of ethnicity, religion or socioeconomic status.



YAYASAN PONDOK KASIH

In 2003, YPK started to get more recognition from local and central government, the business community, media and academia. Mama Hana and YPK received many awards, including the *Satya Lancana Award* for Social Service from the Indonesian President in 2004, the *Satya Lancana Award* for Aceh Tsunami Catastrophe Response in 2005, and the *Dharma Karya Kencana Award* Through BKBN in 2006.

More recently, YPK received the *Global Business and Interfaith Peace Award* (2015), *Kick Andy Life Achievement Award* (2016), *CNN Heroes Award* (2017), *Kartini Award* and *Mental Revolutionary Hero* from the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs.

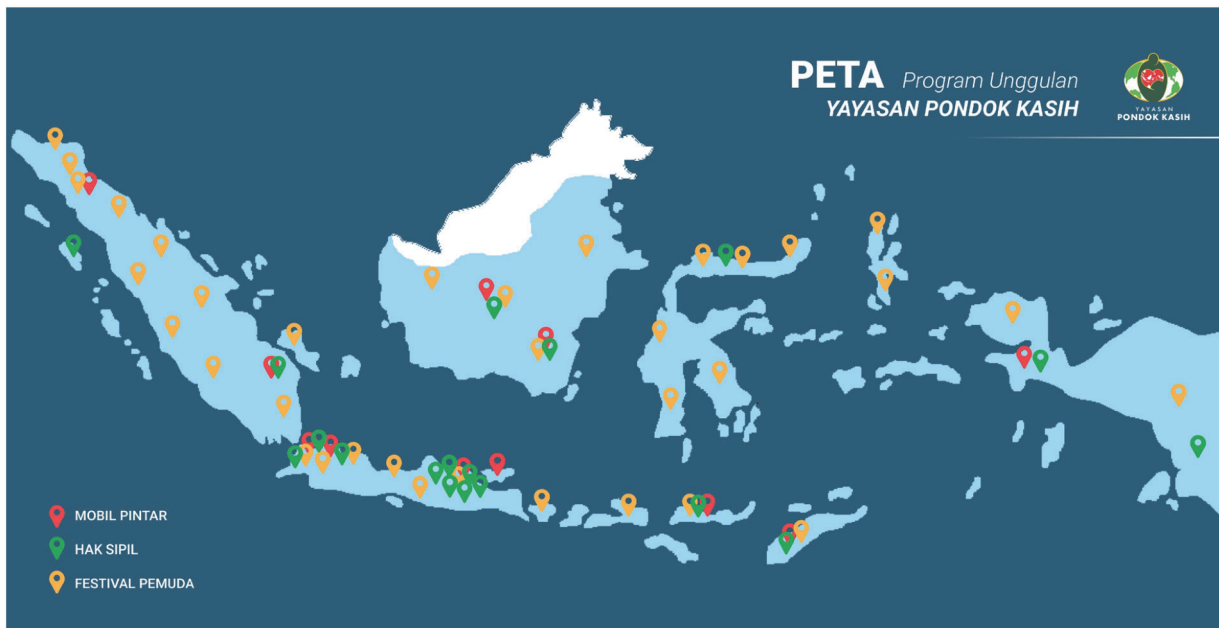
The poor not only need clothing, food, shelter, but in order to break the cycle of poverty, they need an identity card and health insurance. Without those items they cannot be protected by civil rights as citizens of the Republic of Indonesia. With those rights, anyone can enjoy the facilities provided by the government such as education, health services, safety, security, jobs, housing etc.

To fulfill its vision and mission, YPK has engaged with various influential spheres of society, including families, religions, government, the economy and business sector, scholars, media, and culture, all working together on a mission of social justice for all.

The Pondok Kasih Foundation can be contacted through their website, <https://www.pondokkasih.org/>. The website features recent news, historical information, program details, and a donation portal. The foundation operates from two offices throughout the city.

In addition to providing social healthcare services, the foundation offers an affordable education

system for pre-kindergarten to kindergarten schools at their Medokan Keputih office.



Map of Pondok Kasih Foundation Stretch

Our interviewee is Dr. Jimmy Wongui. The Health Director at YPK. He graduated from Airlangga University. He has worked in YPK since 2010.

Interview

Interviewee :

Dr. Jimmy Wongui - Director of Health at the Pondok Kasih Foundation

Q: Please introduce yourself

I'm Dr. Jimmy Wongui, Director of Health at Pondok Kasih Foundation.

Q: How long have you worked for Pondok Kasih?

If I'm not mistaken, I've been working here since 2010, April to be exact.

Q: What are the day to day tasks for the Director of Health?

We have both a post and a clinic, and it's important to note the distinction between the two. The clinic must possess a legal license, whereas here at the Medokan Office, we are registered as a post due to having a license for private practice only. Additionally, we operate a Health Clinic located at Jl. Gayungan PTT no 8, which is facilitated through BPJS (National Healthcare). Dr. Hernadi manages the Health Clinic, but I hold the overall responsibility for it. Furthermore, adjacent to the clinic, we also run an orphanage.

Q: How big was the impact that YPK had on society

The impact that YPK has had on society is quite significant. This impact is reflected in the shift in societal paradigms and behaviors. For instance, individuals who were previously careless about issues like littering, health, and general chaos began to undergo positive changes in their thinking and actions after our regular visits. We used to visit places in poor conditions, often near rivers or under bridges, where people would thoughtlessly dispose of their trash into the river without considering the consequences. However, our interventions led to positive changes in their behavior. They started disposing of their garbage in proper bins, showing greater concern for the environment and their own health.

Previously, many families would share a single toothbrush among three members. We provided them with health education, essential items like toothbrushes and toothpaste, and nutrition education. We taught them how to manage basic ingredients to meet their daily needs, especially since they lacked a stable income. We emphasized that even with just Rp10,000 (\$1) a day, they could maintain a balanced and nutritious diet primarily consisting of fruits and vegetables, as they rarely consumed chicken or beef. Prioritizing a well-rounded nutrition balance became essential. We also supplied them with vitamins and provided milk on a weekly basis. Occasionally, we distributed food packages to families in need, ensuring that each family received support.

Q: Are there a lot of people who come to the post to check their health?

Yes, there used to be a lot of people who came to the post for regular health check-ups, often on a daily basis. However, our efforts have been complemented by improved healthcare facilities provided by the government. The presence of Puskesmas (Government Health Clinics) and local hospitals has been a significant help to our cause. If we experience a decrease in the number of visitors at our post because more people are visiting Puskesmas, it doesn't make us feel like we've failed. On the contrary, it indicates that government policies and healthcare services are improving, which is their primary responsibility. We operate as a secondary service provider and work in cooperation with the government, particularly with the Social Service Agency, which provides us with some resources. Additionally, we offer ambulance services and provide free hospital referrals when needed. This commitment to free services has always been our priority.



Pondok Kasih Foundation Health Post



Pondok Kasih Foundation Office

Q: How many ambulances does YPK have at its disposal?

We have two here, but we have access to more. I can't keep count across Surabaya, and our ambulances are also sent to various places around the rest of the country.

Q: How was YPK able to grow to reach almost all communities in Indonesia in a relatively short time?

It's all God's Plan. YPK isn't great, we have no money, it is all God's Plan. I'm not paid with a salary. This is all an offering of Love.

Q: What has been the most difficult thing you have had to deal with at YPK?

Funding, of course.

Q: What do you find most rewarding about being involved in YPK?

I have been working at YPK since 2010, which is approximately 13 years. I take great pride in my work because the kind of healthcare service we provide is not readily available elsewhere. Many new doctors prefer to treat elite patients and prioritize financial gain, which is not entirely unjustified given the high cost of their education. However, I find tremendous satisfaction in serving underprivileged communities in challenging environments such as slums, under bridges, or near polluted rivers. I acknowledge that not everyone is willing to do this kind of work, but I personally find it fulfilling. I attribute the recoveries and improvements in the health of the people I serve to a higher power and find it delightful to witness their appreciation. For me, providing proper and effective medicine to cure their ailments is more important than expensive and painful treatments.



Reflections

Collaborating with Landero, Dj P. and Deo Prince, researchers from San Pedro College, Philippines who are researching the *Institute of Primary Health Care (IPHC)*, we found some things comparable in their roles in their respective communities.

From our research, we have found that both of our institutions didn't just focus on one sector, but they aim to serve the community broadly in the name of humanity. As stated in their research, *IPHC, the community extension arm of the Davao Medical School Foundation, has a distinct mandate: to go into communities and carry out community development programs*. Their operations are interestingly far-ranging, with both Indonesia and the Philippines being archipelagic states. While YPK started in 1991, IPHC has been operating since 1978, which is quite astonishing for a non-governmental organization in this part of the world.

YPK and IPHC were both established to tackle healthcare issues, but now have expanded and become multi-issue NGOs. IPHC covers a number of broad issues, for example issues of agrarian reform and community-based forest management are some issues YPK isn't equipped to handle in Indonesia. IPHC boasts a well-equipped department, particularly when compared to YPK. This is because IPHC serves as the community extension arm of the Davao Medical School Foundation (DMSF), a prestigious medical school in Davao, Philippines. With the backing of DMSF, they have more robust support compared to YPK, which relies more on donations. However, it's important to note that YPK has established collaborations with the government, both in terms of funding and equipment, to enhance their services.

Josephine B. Alindajao, also known as "Jobas," has devoted 35 years to her role as the executive director of IPHC. Similarly, Dr. Jimmy Wongui, the Director of Health at Pondok Kasih Foundation, has dedicated 13 years to his service. Their unwavering commitment to humanity is truly remarkable, as not everyone is willing to undertake the challenging work they do, as Dr. Jimmy Wongui mentioned in his interview.

In terms of staff and manpower, IPHC has an advantage. They have prepared their medical students for public health missions, providing them with valuable practical experience. In contrast, YPK relies more on volunteers, and there is no formal immersion or clinical rotation program like the one at IPHC. As quoted from Ms. Josephine: “The critical role of IPHC is to prepare the community to become active, where medical students can demand health services if they are present. They can reach out to the medical students where we are in the community. If the students have become doctors, they are equipped with what to do in public service.” IPHC’s training approach involves exposing future doctors to real-life scenarios.

In Indonesia, doctors, pharmacists, and nurses hold top-tier professional status. They receive higher salaries than many other workers, and there is a high demand for their services. Additionally, education costs for these fields are substantial. Given these factors, it’s challenging to expect graduates in these professions to work for the greater good at lower wages or for free.

Despite not being as actively involved with the government as YPK, IPHC has a broader scope of influence and is making significant changes within the community. IPHC benefits from a strong background, whereas YPK relies more on donations and external assistance. This doesn’t imply that YPK is weak; rather, it highlights the fact that the donations and equipment they receive are not sufficient to meet the high demand for improved public health rights that the government has yet to provide. Indonesia requires more organizations like YPK, as well as better government health policies. Achieving such objectives is not easy—it took IPHC 43 years to actively transform the community and YPK 32 years. However, the work is far from complete. The question remains: How many more years will it take to realize the dream of equal health rights worldwide?

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Researchers



Hello! I’m **Gabriel Narendra** and I am an Informatics Engineering student from University of Surabaya. I have an interest in cyber-network research with the dream to be a lecturer one day. I’m 18 years old, and I want to publish at least 5 publications before 25. I’m currently quadrilingual, but my passion for learning new things won’t stop me there. I’ve grown very fond of music and dance, so you can hear my joyful steps everywhere I go!

Institute of Primary Health Care

Researchers: Landero, Dj P. & Piapes, Deo Prince V.

San Pedro College, Philippines

The Institute of Primary Health Care (IPHC) is the community extension arm of the Davao Medical School Foundation (DMSF). It is a non-government organization that conducts community development. Their mission is to develop a culture of trust, honesty, and cooperation.

The aim is to build a community of competent, committed, and caring individuals, fostering graduates who are compassionate, ethical, and responsible members of the society. IPHC also aims to provide humanistic and holistic services through excellence in instruction, research, patient, and community health care. IPHC has a distinct mandate: to go into communities and carry out community development programs.

It has operated in the sector of community development since 1978. IPHC has made its presence felt in over 400 rural and urban barangays in Regions XI, XII, and Caraga over the past four decades. It has created more than 150 people's organizations (POs) with varied levels of competency and activities, the majority of which are now active development partners in their communities.

While it started out as a small NGO focused only on primary healthcare 43 years ago, it has since expanded into a multi-issue NGO with programs and projects in a variety of areas, such as financing for health care, developing water systems, family planning, gender/development, reproductive health, agrarian reform, community-based forest management, early childhood education, educational sponsorship, organic farming, adult literacy, maternal, child and nutritional health, microlending, and leader development.

IPHC is divided into four departments. The first and largest is the Community Service Department, which houses the community extension program. The second is the Support Service Department, which focuses on generating revenue to sustain the organization's initiatives. The third is the Project Development and Evaluation Department. This section is critical in obtaining funds by developing project proposals.

While IPHC receives support from the medical school for its community work, the organization has expanded its initiatives outside these boundaries. Initiatives such as transponsorship, UPNET (which provides internet connectivity), and microfinance programs are fueled by their own project proposals.

The IPHC has also embraced projects such as the Sexual Reproductive Health program, which is financed by Oxfam Philippines. In addition to its extensive range of programs, IPHC is involved in training and consulting projects such as the Municipal Leadership and Governance Program (MLGP). This initiative aims to strengthen mayors and municipal health officials in Regions 11, 12, and Caraga, bolstering effective leadership and governance.



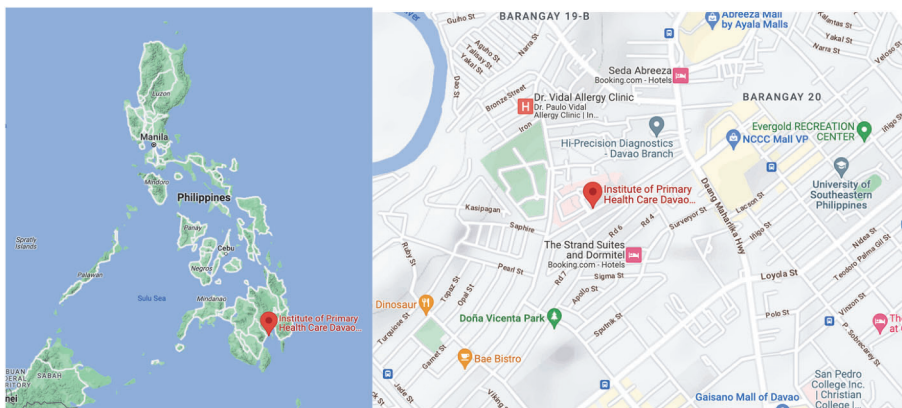
IPHC Doing Community Extension Activities in Marilog, Davao City

Josephine B. Alindajao, better known by her nickname “Jobas”, exemplifies the unwavering dedication and passion for community development of her team at IPHC. She is currently the executive director of the IPHC. She has been a crucial member of the team for around 35 years and her journey started immediately after she received her college degree. She started her professional life as a community organizer and has now advanced to the position of Executive Director, where she has served for the past nine years.



Davao Medical School Foundation Inc.

The DMSF logo



IPHC is located at Davao Medical School Foundation, Bajada, Poblacion District, Davao City, Philippines.

Interview

Interviewee:

Josephine B. Alindajao, MPD - Executive Director - IPHC



Interview with Josephine B. Alindajao on July 20, 2023

Q: What is your main role in the organization?

In a general sense, my role mandates me to oversee the entire operation of IPHC. This means I am responsible for ensuring that we generate the necessary resources to operate effectively. It's a significant challenge because, as I mentioned earlier, we rely on an annual budget of around 21 million. This budget must be generated through various means, including providing salaries to our staff, funding community projects, and running our social enterprises, such as canteens and dietary services. This financial stability is vital for sustaining our operations.

If you hold the position of executive director, your role encompasses all the functions performed by our staff within the community. In terms of salary ranking within IPHC, the lowest position, except for clerical roles, is that of a community organizer, which is at grade level 7.

Since we are just one unit within the larger context of the medical school, which consists of different units including community extension, the medical school itself, dentistry, biology, and others, it is also my responsibility as the executive director to mainstream our experiences within the entire medical school. We want our students to learn from our community experiences because the ultimate goal of the medical school is to produce graduates who are committed to public service.

Lastly, part of my role involves maintaining good relationships among the three units of the medical school. This is crucial because there are various heads within the school, including deans and heads of units, and it's essential for us to work cohesively as one institution.

In addition to these overarching responsibilities, there are times when I need to assume the role of a community organizer. This is because I cannot always be present in one location, so I need to manage my schedule and sometimes step in to address questions or issues in the community, particularly if a project manager is unavailable when funders or stakeholders visit.

Q: What are some of your duties in the organization on a daily/weekly/monthly basis?

On a daily basis, some of my duties involve reviewing the progress of our projects and signing checks or documents related to the disbursement of funds. This includes approving cash advances for staff to support project implementation or cover per diem and transportation expenses. Additionally, I am responsible for signing various documents such as project proposals, requests, and letters. We also have regular meetings as part of our daily routine.

While we don't have weekly meetings, we do have monthly management committee meetings. The management committee includes department heads from the four departments I mentioned earlier, along with representatives from the rank and file and the project manager. Every other month, we hold a general staff meeting where all staff members attend.

In addition to our internal meetings and discussions, I also attend meetings with the president, executive committee, or meetings with our partners. Furthermore, we have meetings with partners from the Department of Health (DOH) where we discuss activities and collaborations that require thorough discussion and planning. These interactions are essential to our ongoing work and partnerships.

Q: What are some common challenges you encounter?

One common challenge we encounter at IPHC is related to community dynamics. We aim to organize and work closely with communities rather than simply providing relief goods. However, this can be challenging because we often work with multiple communities, each with its unique personalities and dynamics. These communities may have different cultural backgrounds and ways of doing things. It's essential for our staff to understand and build relationships with these communities, as they will eventually need to continue the programs on their own when IPHC's involvement concludes.

Another challenge is establishing critical collaborations with our partners. For instance, when we partner with the Department of Health (DOH), there may be scheduling conflicts or issues related to their availability. Our partners have their own mandates and working hours, which may not always align with our program schedules. This can require careful coordination and flexibility.

Maintaining the continuous improvement of staff competencies is also a challenge. It's crucial to ensure that our staff are well-trained and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. This requires ongoing training and professional development to keep pace with changing needs and best practices.

Perhaps the most significant challenge, especially for a non-governmental organization like ours, is resource generation. Sustaining our operations requires resources, including funding. With a staff of 50, resource management becomes critical, and securing adequate funding can be a constant challenge.

Q: What initiatives have you taken that led to positive changes in your local community?

The IPHC plays a critical role in our local communities as facilitators and catalysts for development. We do not view ourselves as project implementers but rather as guides who assist and empower the community to manage their own development programs. We believe in partnering with the community and understanding their limitations and needs, as well as our own.

Our initiatives involve having project staff who reside in the community for 15 to 20 days each month, depending on the project's mandate. For example, in our sponsorship project in San Isidro, where we support 500 sponsored children, our staff engage with them, provide tutoring, ensure they receive school supplies and other necessities on time, and more.

We also have initiatives in microfinance, where we provide loans to community members, and our staff also collect repayments. However, our primary approach is community organizing. We employ community development workers or organizers in our communities, ensuring that our programs are part of an ongoing community development process rather than one-shot deals. While we do have programs for disaster response, most of our initiatives are designed to promote sustained development within the communities we serve.

Q: In what ways do you think that the organization can play a larger role in the local community in the future?

The IPHC, as the community extension arm of our medical school, has a significant role in preparing medical students for their future roles as healthcare providers. By exposing them to public health challenges and immersing them in community healthcare settings, we aim to instill in them a deep appreciation for public health and a commitment to serving underserved communities.

In the future, we hope that our efforts in training and exposing medical students to real-world healthcare challenges will result in a higher percentage of graduates choosing careers in public health, such as municipal health officers or rural health workers. By doing so, we aim to address the shortage of healthcare professionals in Mindanao and ensure that quality healthcare is accessible to all communities.

Our critical role is to empower communities to take an active role in their own healthcare and to create a demand for health services, especially in areas where we are present. We believe that this approach will contribute to the long-term improvement of healthcare access and outcomes in our local communities.



A photo with IPHC executive director Josephine B. Alindajao, research adviser Chalee S. Reyes, and researchers Dj P. Landero and Deo Prince V. Piapes.

Reflections

Community development organizations like the Institute of Primary Health Care (IPHC) and Yayasan Pondok Kasih play a crucial role in addressing the healthcare and social needs of people in their respective regions. IPHC operates in specific regions of the Philippines, including Regions XI, XII, and Caraga, serving both rural and urban communities. On the other hand, YPK is based in Indonesia but provides assistance and support to various parts of the country.

Despite their different locations, these organizations share several common characteristics in their approach to community development and their emphasis on healthcare and engagement strategies. Both IPHC and YPK are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work independently of the government to fill gaps in healthcare and social services. They adopt a multi-sectoral approach, addressing a wide range of issues beyond their primary focus areas. IPHC, for example, has expanded its work into gender and development, leadership and governance, and more. Similarly, YPK not only provides healthcare services but also education and other forms of assistance.

In terms of focus and approach, IPHC primarily concentrates on community organizing and development. Their main goal is to empower local communities to take charge of their own development through the formation of community organizations and the implementation of various initiatives. YPK, on the other hand, places a stronger emphasis on providing direct healthcare services and immediate assistance to those in need, operating health clinics, offering nutrition guidance, and addressing immediate health concerns.

Both organizations share a common commitment to improving their communities. IPHC, as the community extension arm of the Davao Medical School Foundation, undertakes initiatives tailored to local needs and empowers communities. YPK strives to provide assistance and support to Indonesia's impoverished and marginalized populations.

Ms. Josephine Alindajao, the Executive Director of IPHC, and Dr. Jimmy Wongui, the Director of Health at Yayasan Pondok Kasih, are both leaders in their respective organizations. Ms. Josephine oversees various aspects of IPHC's operations, including resource generation, operational monitoring,

relationship maintenance, mainstreaming community experiences into the medical school, and occasional community organizing. Dr. Jimmy primarily focuses on healthcare issues, managing a health clinic and an orphanage, providing health education, and working to enhance community living conditions. Despite their differing responsibilities, both Ms. Alindajao and Dr. Wongui are actively engaged in community development efforts.

IPHC and YPK exemplify community development organizations dedicated to addressing healthcare and social well-being challenges in their regions. While they may operate in different locations, these organizations share a common mission of helping individuals in need and empowering communities to improve their quality of life.

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Researchers



Hello! I am **Deo Prince V. Piapes**, and I live in Buhangin, Davao City. I'm the eldest sibling in the family. I'm pursuing my education right now at San Pedro College Inc. I am currently working towards my Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science, and I am currently in my fourth year of my studies. I enjoy watching movies and documentaries, reading history books, and playing video games. My ambition is to become a doctor, serving the needs and improving the health of people with dedication and care.



Hello! I am **Dj P. Landero**, and I live in Surallah, South Cotabato, but currently residing at Matina Aplaya, Davao City. I have a big family back home. I am currently studying at San Pedro College, taking the Bachelor of Science program in Medical Laboratory Science, and this is my final year of study. I don't really like to go out that much, rather stay home watch movies, anime, play games and occasionally I do calisthenic workouts and lifting. My goal is to become a successful laboratory scientist and help my mother, siblings, and the Ministry of God.

Education

Office Com Junto's Impact on Foreign Children's Education and Integration in Japan

Researchers: Ayuni Happy Melati & Boonyakida Chanikarn

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies

Japan is famous for its strong educational system, attracting numerous foreign families from diverse backgrounds who choose to make Japan their home. A considerable portion of these families belong to various minority groups. Often, they opt to enroll their children in Japanese schools, which can present challenges for the young learners due to language barriers and the distinct structure of the Japanese education system. This situation highlights the need for effective integration measures. Japan, known for its homogenous society, can sometimes pose difficulties for these minority families in terms of grasping the Japanese culture and way of life. This complex interplay of education, language, and culture emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues for a more inclusive and harmonious community.

To solve this problem, there are amazing people with a mission to help foreign children adjust to Japanese schools. They do this by organizing many learning activities outside of school. These activities help the children get ready for school and understand what they're being taught, which can be different in Japan. One group that does this is called "Office Com Junto." They're not a company; they're a volunteer group that helps without making money. They're based in Kameoka, Kyoto, and they've been doing an excellent job assisting many kids from different countries to feel more comfortable studying and living in Japan. Founded back in the year 2014, Office Com Junto came into existence through the dedicated efforts of volunteers. The individual who initiated this organization is Ms. Kiyomi Kojima. Her underlying goal is to ensure that each and every child coming from another country experiences a sense of safety and happiness during their time living in Japan. This is particularly important when these children need to attend school.



Foreign children learning the Japanese language through stories.



Retired teachers volunteer to teach the children.

This organization is supported by various other volunteer foundations. For example, in 2023 they are now supported by the Osaka Community Foundation, which has a dedicated team of 15-17 retired teachers with a great deal of collective experience teaching in schools before. This background proves advantageous as they can create educational activities that fit well with the childrens' needs. The volunteers themselves encompass a variety of ages, with people from different stages of life participating. The common thread that unites them is their shared mission with the organization; assisting minority children in their journey to learn and integrate into the Japanese school system, language and culture.

While the majority of the volunteers are Japanese, there are also volunteers from other countries who lend their support, particularly in assisting with languages like English and Chinese. Ms. Kiyomi Kojima holds a strong belief in fostering a diverse society, and her vision extends to cultivating an inclusive environment enriched by the presence of individuals from a multitude of backgrounds. In line with this belief, she has pioneered distinctive activities and programs aimed at bringing together families from all walks of life, providing a platform for them to openly share their cultures with the local Japanese community.



Office Com Junto Front Desk

The most challenging phase in attracting a greater number of foreign children to engage in community activities occurred during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic restrictions, numerous children were unable to attend the physical classes. Nevertheless, the organization adeptly transitioned to conducting online classes, offering assistance with homework and studies to the children in need. As the pandemic diminished and many children graduated, a fresh challenge arose - spreading awareness about the existence of Office Com Junto to new kids. In response, the organization collaborated closely with school headmasters across the Kyoto area, working in tandem to identify foreign children encountering challenges in their studies. This collaborative partnership significantly enhanced their outreach efforts, enabling them to connect with a broader spectrum of struggling students.



Office Com Junto Founder, Ms. Kiyomi Kojima (second from right)

In their classes, they did many different activities that were not just about helping with schoolwork. They had bigger plans to make the kids better at speaking Japanese. They told stories in a really fun way and had the kids do lots of things related to Japanese culture. This mix of activities certainly helped the kids feel more like they belonged in Japan. These fun things also let them make friends with others from different countries. This meant they got to know each other and felt better about talking to people. It was not just about fun, these activities also helped the kids do better in school. As they felt more confident, they could talk and be friends with Japanese kids in school, too. So, the school became a friendlier place where everyone felt welcome and got along.

Interview

The interview was conducted in the Office Com Junto location in Galleria, Kameoka, Kyoto on July 2nd, 2023.

Interviewee:

Ms. Kiyomi Kojima

Q: How long has Office Con Junto been in operation and who was the founder (or founders)?

Ms. Kojima: I am the founder, and since 2014. All the staff have been volunteers, not certain individuals.

Q: How is OCJ funded? Who are the main supporters?

Ms. Kojima: We have received financial support from the Osaka Community Foundation with only 200,000 yen this year, among other sources.

Q: How many staff or volunteers do you have here?

Ms. Kojima: We have around 15-17 volunteer teachers.

Q: What is the average age of a volunteer at OCJ?

Ms. Kojima: Some are in their 30s, but most of the volunteers are in their 50s, 60s, and 70s

Q: What are the nationalities of the volunteers here?

Ms. Kojima: The majority of them are of Japanese origin, while a few of them are Chinese.

Q: How often do your volunteers come here and how many hours a month do they volunteer on average?

Ms. Kojima: Events occur twice a month for two hours each time, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Q: Do you have any special guests or outside volunteers who come here?

Ms. Kojima: We usually have the same people attending our programs, but occasionally, we host researchers for special research and training programs. These programs are held 2-3 times a year, and we invite experts from various places to participate. The Kyoto Prefecture International Center also collaborates with us on these training programs. Additionally, we receive visits from people who are interested in attending classes like the Himawari class, which is not available in other parts of Kyoto prefecture. These visits are organized by the Kyoto Prefecture International Center. The Himawari class is

very rare and important, and we take pride in offering it to our students.

Q: *How long have you personally worked at OCJ?*

Ms. Kojima: The Himawari classes have been held since 2014. We also have a study session called the Global Session, which started more than 20 years ago in 1999.

Q: *What is your main role at OCJ?*

Ms. Kojima: To assist foreigners in Japan to achieve happiness, including cultural adaptation.

Q: *What are some of the challenges or difficulties you face while working here?*

Ms. Kojima: It is necessary to contact each child individually as each one has a unique family experience. I personally visit primary schools in Kameoka city to discuss the Himawari class. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, I continued to gather volunteer teachers for meetings to plan for the next class, ensuring the organization could continue. The Himawari class was held in two locations within Kameoka city, and the timing was adjusted to accommodate parents who work in Kyoto city. Lastly, being flexible with the class schedule played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the program. I faced challenges in maintaining the Himawari class during Covid-19 due to the need to accommodate different families and schedules, but I had to be flexible in order to allow the organization to continue.

Q: *Who are the main recipients of the work of OCJ, what nationalities do they represent, and do they all come from the local community?*

Ms. Kojima: They are from all over the world.

Q: *How do the people who need your services find out about you?*

Ms. Kojima: When we started the Himawari class, we had announcements in many newspapers. These kinds of newspapers told people that there are classes for foreigners and their kids, too, so they know what kind of class is being held here. There was also an office to help foreigners who moved to Kameoka with public services and so on.

Q: *What are the needs of the people who come here?*

Ms. Kojima: I believe that every child should be taught in a way that suits their individual needs. As each child is unique, they require a different approach to learning. However, in public schools, it can be challenging to provide personalized attention to each student, so we often resort to teaching in groups. This can be difficult for teachers who would prefer to teach each child individually. Therefore, most volunteers who offer additional support are former teachers who have experience in tailoring their teaching methods to suit each student's needs.

Q: *On average, how many people attend the sessions you offer?*

Ms. Kojima: There are usually around 7 or 8 people, but occasionally some may be absent.

Q: *What is the most successful or popular program? Why do you think this is?*

Ms. Kojima: We have to keep running all the programs for a long time because without it, children don't have any other place to receive similar help. This is a great space for kids to practice their native language since they are required to speak Japanese only at school. Some children may struggle with communication in a school setting, but they can be themselves here.

Q: *Do you have any plans to add new programs in the near future? If so, which ones?*

Ms. Kojima: We not only offer additional classes, but we also provide regular classes. During summer vacation, we have specific time slots dedicated to special classes such as painting or calligraphy. Additionally, Japanese schools assign a considerable amount of homework during the vacation period, so we will be introducing more classes to assist students with their homework.

Q: *What do the people who attend your sessions say about the service you offer?*

Ms. Kojima: Parents often find it hard to meet with others due to busy schedules. They usually respond with "thank you" or "that's enough for me."

Q: *Do you ever get special requests from your recipients? Can you give us an example?*

Ms. Kojima: To get into a top-tier educational institution, a strong educational background is essential. We feel the students would like to have extra tutoring to assist them with this.

Q: *In what ways do you think OCJ has a positive effect or impact on the people it serves?*

Ms. Kojima: Kids feel more confident and enjoy school. They adjust to Japanese society and review and prepare for upcoming lessons.

Q: *Can you share one or two stories of individuals whose lives have been changed because of the efforts of OCJ?*

Ms. Kojima: Two Chinese girls moved to Japan three years ago while they were in elementary school in Saitama Prefecture. However, they had to transfer to three different schools because their parents didn't feel satisfied with the quality of education provided. As a result, their academic experience is limited. To help them learn Japanese, we are using a Chinese translator. They are doing better and having more fun in school after coming to Himawari class.

Q: How does OCJ promote itself to the wider society?

Ms. Kojima: I believe that similar interactions with foreign children are happening in other prefectures as well. There are other organizations that are also doing such activities. For instance, in some other prefectures, schools have classes dedicated to international students. We aspire to have similar international classes in Kameoka too.

Q: How does OCJ keep supporters updated about its work?

Ms. Kojima: Every year, we organize a research and training workshop. On more than two or three occasions, we have received support from the Kyoto International Center. Payment for guests is handled by Kyoto prefecture. It can be challenging for the supporters to assist the children as this is not a formal school, but a support center. Additionally, it is not easy to strike a balance between studying and playing for the children, which makes it even harder for the supporters. Due to the low knowledge level of the children, it can be challenging for the supporters to help them with their studies.

Q: What are the future goals of Office Com Junto? How do you intend to achieve these goals?

Ms. Kojima: Just to continue doing what we do. I believe that even if we stop, others will continue on with the work we have started.

Reflections

Comparison and Contrast of Minority Communities' Integration Efforts: Japan and the Philippines

Efforts to integrate minority communities into mainstream societies are being pursued globally, with distinct strategies and challenges in each context. In Japan and the Philippines, two countries with diverse minority populations, initiatives have emerged to address the unique barriers these communities face. While both countries strive for inclusivity, their approaches and outcomes differ due to factors such as culture, geography, and historical context.

Japan's Approach: Nurturing Integration through Supportive Activities

In Japan, a nation renowned for its strong educational system, the integration of foreign families, particularly those belonging to minority groups, poses challenges due to the language barrier and cultural differences. However, the establishment of organizations like "Office Com Junto" showcases a grassroots effort to facilitate the adjustment of foreign children, especially from diverse linguistic backgrounds, into Japanese schools.

Office Com Junto, founded in 2014, reflects the collaborative dedication of volunteers, including retired teachers, aiming to foster a sense of belonging among these children. The group's emphasis on extracurricular activities, tailored language support, and cultural engagement provides foreign children the tools to navigate their educational journey and community integration. This approach not only helps with academics but also cultivates social connections among children from various countries.

Amid challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization's flexibility in transitioning to online classes demonstrated their commitment to continuity. By forging partnerships with school headmasters, they are expanding their reach, ensuring struggling students receive the necessary support. Their multifaceted approach, integration of academic assistance, cultural sharing, and language learning, reflects a holistic strategy to address integration challenges.

The Philippines' Approach: Empowerment through Indigenous Education Initiatives

In the Philippines, indigenous communities face significant socio-economic disparities, a legacy of historical marginalization. Among these communities, the Sama-Badjao tribes exemplify the resilience required to adapt to urban environments while preserving their cultural identity. However, these communities often encounter discrimination and barriers in accessing education.

Recognizing the need to empower indigenous communities, the Philippines enacted the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act in 1997, aimed at protecting the rights of these groups. Despite these legal provisions, indigenous students continue to experience discrimination within the education system. This discrimination often stems from both interpersonal interactions and systemic biases.

To counter these challenges, initiatives like the Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao were initiated by indigenous communities themselves. These programs focus on equipping young members with fundamental literacy skills before entering formal schools. By fostering an environment where these individuals can learn and grow in their cultural context, these initiatives aim to bridge the gap between indigenous traditions and mainstream education.

Contrasting Approaches and Common Objectives

While the contexts of Japan and the Philippines differ greatly, their initiatives share a common objective: creating environments where minority individuals can thrive while preserving their identities. In Japan, the focus is on language support, cultural engagement, and social inclusion. Conversely, the Philippines emphasizes self-empowerment through grassroots educational programs that address discrimination and promote literacy.

In both cases, the success of these initiatives hinges on collaboration and adaptation. Office Com Junto leverages retired teachers and volunteers to tailor their support, while the Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao emerged as a response to systemic gaps. These programs reflect the communities' determination to shape their members' futures positively.

Conclusion

The experiences of minority communities in Japan and the Philippines underscore the importance of tailored approaches to integration. Office Com Junto's holistic strategy showcases how collaborative efforts can bridge gaps in education and social integration. On the other hand, the Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao initiative highlights the resilience of indigenous communities as they navigate their unique challenges.

In both instances, these initiatives recognize that true integration goes beyond the academic realm—it involves fostering a sense of belonging, pride in one's culture, and the skills to engage confidently in a diverse society. While Japan and the Philippines employ distinct approaches, their shared

dedication to inclusivity and empowerment serves as an inspiration for societies striving to create harmonious and equitable communities.

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Researchers



Hi there! My name is **Putu Ayuni Happy Melati**, and I'm a Kyoto University of Foreign Studies student. I was born and raised in Bali, Indonesia, and in 2022, I decided to study abroad in Japan. I love historical places with rich cultures and not-so-busy environments, so I chose to study in Kyoto. I'm also into detective books, and my favorite is Sherlock Holmes. I love watching movies and am a die-hard Taylor Swift fan. Majoring in Global Studies has made me aware of global issues and helped me to think critically to challenge the issues. My short-term goal is to keep learning new things and enjoying my university life in Kyoto Gaidai.



Hi! My name is **Chanikarn Boonyakida**, but I usually go by **Day**. I am a 2nd year Global Studies student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. I was born and raised in Thailand, but when I was 14, I came to Japan to pursue my studies. I lived in a community where everyone spoke Japanese, which made things pretty challenging. However, with the help of my friends, I was able to overcome the challenge eventually. My interests include playing video games and watching movies and documentaries. I want to travel to different nations and experience their cuisine, learn about their customs, and meet people from all over the world.

Combating Discrimination through Education

Researchers: Angel Syth F. Luengas & Mark Gil G. Liwana

San Pedro College, Philippines

There are approximately 110 Indigenous People (IP) communities in the Philippines, with a total population ranging from 15 to 20 million. They are spread across different parts of the country, with the majority, roughly 60%, residing in Mindanao Island, 30% in Luzon Island, and less than 10% in the islands of the Visayas Region.^[1] Despite comprising about 14% of the country's population, IPs face unique socio-economic challenges. They frequently find themselves in a disadvantaged position within society, characterized by higher rates of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy against the general population. Often remote in location, they lack access to fundamental infrastructure, leading to increased rates of morbidity, mortality, and malnutrition.

The Sama-Badjao tribe, originating from Southwestern Mindanao, is known by various names among Filipinos, primarily as sea-dwellers because the sea is an integral part of their way of life.^[2] According to Melody Adjari, a member of the Badjao Community of Matina Aplaya, the ethnic group hails from Zamboanga. However, they decided to resettle in Davao in pursuit of better opportunities, given their vulnerability to displacement and forced relocation following the armed conflict between the government forces and the rebels from the Moro National Liberation Front.

Due to these difficulties, Badjao households embarked on journeys of exploration, dispersing to various locations across Mindanao and even reaching urban centers like Manila, Batangas, and Nueva Ecija. This shift in surroundings led to significant changes in their daily lives and traditional practices, as their customary way of life had centered on maritime resources. Upon their arrival in Davao City, their main source of income revolved around selling secondhand clothes and shoes. Due to their awareness of potential discrimination, attending school was not their foremost priority.

In 1997, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, aimed at granting recognition and safeguarding the rights of IP groups. Indigenous Peoples, however, do not feel that the law adequately protects them despite its enactment, primarily because they continue to experience discrimination in the educational system. Discrimination remains a deeply troubling experience for IP students, and schools are often the primary arena for these encounters. This discrimination manifests in two significant ways: through interactions with individuals and through systemic biases within the education system itself.^[1]

In early 2021, the Department of Education (DepEd) took a strong stand against discriminatory practices by issuing a resolute declaration. Aligned with both global and national equality frameworks, the DepEd has promulgated various directives and conducted a series of educational training initiatives, all with the overarching goal of firmly upholding a policy of absolute intolerance towards any discrimination.

UNICEF reports that despite the Philippines holding a middle-income economic status and provided

with ample resources for youth education, a significant portion of Filipino children remain deprived of learning opportunities. Disturbing trends are observed regarding the number of children engaged in education, the quality of their educational experiences, and the suitability of their learning environments. A lack of investment over the past decade, coupled with outdated teaching methods and an inadequate focus on nurturing children's social and emotional skills, has led to a noticeable educational gap among Filipino children. This situation is especially apparent among marginalized groups, including indigenous communities and children struggling with disabilities. Consequently, some IP groups took the initiative to establish their own educational programs, preparing their people for the realities of formal education.

Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao is an educational program dedicated to empowering young members of the community with literacy skills. The community takes pride in its first-ever degree-holder member, Melody Adjari, who now fulfills the role of a community teacher. According to Melody, due to the discrimination they have faced, they've taken the initiative to launch a preschool program. This program equips members with the essential skills required for a successful transition into formal schools, ensuring they are well-prepared for their educational journey.

Interview



Interviewee:

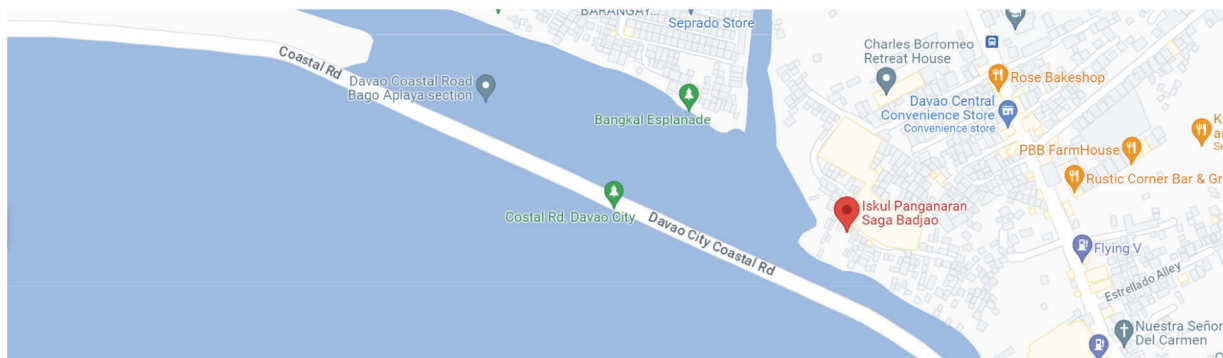
Ms. Melody Adjari - Community Teacher, Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao

Q: *Who are you and how long have you been working with the Badjao Community Association of Matina Aplaya? What are your roles and duties in the organization?*

I'm Melody Adjari, and I've been dedicated to the Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao organization for approximately four (4) years now. My association with this organization began at birth, with my parents who have been actively working since 1992. My father, of Sama heritage, embarked on a journey from Zamboanga through Vintas and settled here in Barangay Matina Aplaya, making it our permanent home. My mother, on the other hand, hails from Davao City. Along with my fellow Badjao community members, as the locals refer to us, I was born and raised here.

The organization played a crucial role in supporting my education. I attended Daniel R. Aguinaldo National High School and completed my college education at Saint John Paul II College. Currently, I'm in the process of preparing for the forthcoming license examination for teachers while also actively teaching at our local school. My role involves imparting foundational knowledge to children, preparing them for the challenges of larger educational institutions. Additionally, I extend my teaching to older individuals who missed out on schooling opportunities during their youth. However, their sessions are not regular, as they must work to provide for their families.

The journey is undoubtedly challenging, especially when working with limited resources, but my determination remains strong. My ultimate goal is to empower my community by ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to succeed in life.



Location of Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao

Q: *What are the reasons why the organization was started? Who are its main benefactors and contributors?*

The Badjao community has unfairly faced stereotypes, often being associated with begging on city streets due to the challenges of limited education and a stable income source. Acknowledging that education is the gateway to an improved quality of life, the community, in collaboration with local government units, higher education institutions (HEIs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), came together to establish a community school known as Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao. During my time as a student, my mother was the sole educator at the community school, demonstrating her commitment to breaking the cycle of stereotypes and empowering our community through education.



The only classroom of Iskul Panganaran Sama Badjao

Q: What initiatives have been implemented by the organization to help the community in terms of education?

The organization plays a vital role in sustaining the community school's operations by offering support to both teachers and students. They actively engage with other NGOs and HEIs to ensure the educational needs of the learners are met. In a collaborative effort, the Badjao Community Association of Matina Aplaya has formed a partnership with the local government. This partnership assists in the upkeep of the school's facilities and covers my salary as a teacher, enabling the continued provision of education to our young learners.

Q: What are some challenges or difficulties you face while working here?

Education is not the main priority of my people. Some of them consider education as a vain attempt since they need to allocate their time working for them to sustain their everyday needs. With this, sometimes it's hard for me to gather all of them in a classroom to conduct a class. But I understand their struggles. You can't force them to stop working because they don't have other sources of income and some of their family members rely on them.

Reflections

The role of education in shaping a nation's future is undoubtedly critical, and its capacity to offer equal opportunities to the entire population, particularly minority groups, has been a concern of frequent evaluation with regard to its effectiveness. In this context, we researched the educational systems of Japan and the Philippines, with a specific focus on their approaches to educating marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples and migrants. Despite differences in economy and culture, both countries share a common challenge: ensuring quality education for these underserved groups.

Education Systems: Japan and the Philippines

Japan and the Philippines possess distinct education systems rooted in their respective historical, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Japan is renowned for its high-quality education and technological advancements. It has great emphasis on academic excellence and uniformity in its

education system. On the other hand, due to economic disparities, regional divisions and colonial history that have had a lasting impact on its governance system, the Philippines is facing difficulties in providing consistent and equitable education.

Addressing the Challenges of Providing Education for the Minorities

Indigenous peoples in both Japan and the Philippines face unique educational challenges stemming from language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to resources. In spite of the great progress made by Japan, challenges such as educating minority groups, in particular newcomers and children from other countries, remain. That is where Office Com Junto, like many other organizations, enters to address or at least try to alleviate the problem of educating these children to adjust and bridge them to the culture in Japanese schools.

In the Philippines, the situation is complex due to its diverse indigenous population spread across various islands. These communities often lack proper infrastructure and resources, leading to unequal access to education. The Philippine government has initiated programs to promote culturally sensitive education, including incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and practices into the curriculum. However, challenges persist due to limited funding, remote locations, and a lack of trained teachers who understand the unique needs of indigenous students. Iskul Panganaran Saga Badjao is a result of these long-standing problems in the country. Due to limited resources, people are moved to create organizations to help and assist, especially those who are marginalized.

Economic Disparities and Impact on Education

Economic differences between Japan and the Philippines significantly influence their approaches to minority education. Investments in education infrastructure, teachers' training and learning materials are highlighted by the relative strength of Japan's economy. Therefore, more resources for minority students can be offered by the country to ensure that they receive an adequate education which includes their cultural heritage.

In the Philippines, economic challenges directly impact minority education. The development of schools and training of teachers in rural areas is hindered by a lack of funding. Indigenous children often face difficulties in pursuing education due to poverty, forcing them to prioritize immediate needs over long-term educational goals. Efforts to bridge this gap include scholarship programs and partnerships with non-governmental organizations that aim to provide financial support and resources to indigenous students.

Cultural Considerations in Education

The challenge of addressing the needs of minority students is also played out by cultural differences. The relatively homogenous society in Japan allows for a more standardized approach to education, which will facilitate the implementation of inclusive policies. On the other hand, an educational approach to flexibility and adaptability will be needed as a result of the Philippines' diverse cultural landscape. Recognizing this, the Philippine government aims to create a curriculum that respects and integrates indigenous cultures while addressing the broader national curriculum.

Conclusion

Japan and the Philippines, despite their economic and cultural disparities, share common concerns in providing quality education to their indigenous minority populations. Both countries recognize the

importance of addressing language, cultural, and economic barriers to ensure that marginalized communities are not left behind. While Japan's stronger economy enables it to invest more in education infrastructure, the Philippines strives to overcome economic limitations through innovative policies and partnerships with various stakeholders. As these nations continue to refine their education systems, the experiences of their indigenous peoples remain crucial touchstones for progress, serving as reminders that equitable and inclusive education is essential for building a brighter future for all.

Researchers



Hello! My name is **Angel Syth F. Luengas**. As a daughter of a healthcare worker, I was exposed to the country's healthcare conditions that ignited my passion to pursue a medical-related program of study. I am currently a fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science student at San Pedro College, Davao City, Philippines and am currently rendering my hospital duties at San Pedro Hospital. I was born and raised in a province that finds value in preserving and upholding the culture of the Indigenous people. Therefore, this study is very significant to me.



Hi! I am **Mark Gil G. Liwana**, a 4th year Medical Laboratory Science student of San Pedro College. I am currently on my clinical internship to complete my degree. Growing up in a province where education is a privilege rather than a right, I have seen people struggle to access education and basic health services prompting me to dream of becoming a doctor someday. I am a part of the Mandaya tribe and live in the mountains. I have firsthand experience on how difficult it is for marginalized people to gain education. My experiences are also part of the reason why I am inclined to do anything that I can to help indigenous peoples.

AIDS Action and Research (AARG)

Researchers: Muhamad Firdaus Mohd Nazri & Alissa Anne Alexander

Universiti Sains Malaysia

This interview session brought together two respondents at the AIDS Action and Research Group, Universiti Sains Malaysia. The interviews were conducted in a hybrid environment. The authors also had the opportunity to participate in several programs implemented by the AIDS Action and Research Group, Universiti Sains Malaysia. All the information in this report was obtained during the interview session.

AIDS Action and Research Group, Universiti Sains Malaysia (hereafter referred to as AARG USM), was established in 1994 and is now in its 29th year of existence. It operates as a unit under the management and supervision of the School of Social Sciences at Universiti Sains Malaysia. AARG USM was initiated and collaboratively formed by several key university officials and experienced lecturers in the field of Social Work, including Professor Dr. Azlinda Azman and Professor Dr. Ismail Baba. Additionally, it includes representatives from university lecturers in various fields such as Anthropology, Sociology, Counseling, Communication, Economics, Accounting, and Public Health. These individuals share an interest in the development of HIV/AIDS awareness and emphasize the importance of community knowledge and education in building a highly informed society.



AIDS Action and Research Group Building (AARG), Universiti Sains Malaysia

AARG receives support and collaboration from various partners, stakeholders, and primary funders dedicated to fostering a healthy and sustainable society. These include the Malaysian AIDS Council, the Malaysian Ministry of Health, the Malaysian Ministry of Education, the Social Welfare Department, the Malaysian Social Institution, the Ministry of Women's Development, Family and

Community, Royal Malaysian Police, Religious Affairs Department, Malaysian Prisons Department, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a shared focus on HIV education throughout the country. Furthermore, AARG has been entrusted with the operation of the Needle and Syringe Exchange Program (NSEP) in the state of Penang, funded by the Ministry of Health since 2006 and ongoing. Between 2010 and 2016, AARG also assumed responsibility for NSEP operations in the state of Perak, supported by funding from the Global Fund. In May 2019, AARG initiated a Comprehensive HIV Prevention Program (DHSKP), encompassing Men Having Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender (TG), People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), People Who Use Drugs (PWUD), and Female Sex Workers (FSW) in Penang and nationwide.

From an educational perspective, the pursuit of quality education, rooted in the National Education Philosophy, aims to cultivate individuals who possess knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes and values. This approach strives to empower individuals to proactively manage risks, prioritize their health, and embrace a healthy lifestyle while addressing social challenges. It underscores the importance of providing educational input at every societal level to promote a holistic and informed citizenry. AARG is currently under the patronage of Professor Dr. Azlinda Azman, who serves as the Convener. Dr. Azman holds the positions of President of the Malaysian Social Workers Association and Director General of Higher Education in the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. She leads the organization with support from the Deputy Convener and a team of six staff members, including event coordinators and executors responsible for mobilizing AARG. The organization also collaborates with independent volunteers, primarily university students and members of the public. Many of the staff and volunteers have transitioned from roles as activists and participants in AARG's programs and other NGOs. Most volunteers come from social work backgrounds and receive training in client handling and counseling management.

AARG's central mission and vision revolve around providing education, knowledge, and awareness about HIV/AIDS to all segments of society, with the goal of fostering a sustainable and harmonious nation. The organization also functions as a research and study unit focused on HIV/AIDS, producing educational and informative resources accessible to all stakeholders. These efforts contribute to reducing the significant stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, while promoting the creation of a healthy and inclusive society.

Interview

Interviewees:

Mr. Wan Azuan Wan Ali: Executor, AIDS Action and Research Group, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Mr. Jagathesan Kupusami: Executor, AIDS Action and Research Group, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Q: *Can you please introduce yourselves?*

Azuan: I am Mr. Wan Azuan Wan Ali, currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work. I serve as a supervisor and executor at the AIDS Action and Research Group (AARG) at Universiti Sains Malaysia. My involvement in the field of HIV/AIDS began during my undergraduate studies, and I have since gained experience in working with various target groups, including People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM),

Transgender (TG), and Female Sex Workers (FSW). AARG is not only my main focus but also my primary job alongside my full-time doctoral studies in Social Work.

Jega: My name is Jagathesan Kupusami. I hold a degree in Anthropology and Sociology and currently work as a supervisor and executor at the AIDS Action and Research Group (AARG). My journey with AARG dates back to 2006, starting with volunteering for programs recommended by the organization during my undergraduate studies. Over the years, I have gained experience in working with specific target groups, including People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) and People Who Use Drugs (PWUD).



Interview session at the AIDS Action and Research Group

Q: What are your roles at AARG?

Azuan: I serve as the driving force and coordinator at the AIDS Action and Research Group (AARG), taking on a central role in managing all aspects of administration and operations. My responsibilities include overseeing program implementation, coordinating staff mobilization, managing external partnerships, monitoring team performance, and acting as a core leader within AARG. I work diligently to ensure the smooth operation of all AARG activities.

Jega: I am an essential member of the AIDS Action and Research Group (AARG), much like Mr. Azuan. Over the years, I have directed various programs, assumed the role of program manager, and been entrusted with coordination tasks. My journey with AARG began with smaller-scale volunteer work, such as distributing needles and providing drug usage information to clients in the field. Today, I collaborate closely with Mr. Azuan to structure and oversee both current and upcoming programs.

Q: How long have you been working at AARG?

Azuan: Since 2009, so I have been associated with AARG for about 15 years.

Jega: Since 2006, which means I have been engaged with AARG for approximately 18 years.

Q: *Who is AARG trying to help?*

Azuan: Among the groups are People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Men Having Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender (TG), People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) and Female Sex Workers (FSW).



Interview session using Google Meet

Q: *How does AARG find its intended audience?*

Azuan: AARG identifies its intended audience through collaboration with hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare institutions. These healthcare providers share valuable statistics and information about the target groups. Additionally, AARG conducts health examinations that are open to individuals from all segments of society, helping us gather essential data about our clients.

Q: *How does AARG apply educational elements in the recovery process to the target group?*

Azuan: AARG incorporates educational elements into the recovery process for the target group through interventions and counseling sessions. The information and education provided are initially consulted by beneficiaries, including hospital specialists and counselors, based on the client's specific concerns. We aim to provide information disclosure, data sharing, and feedback, addressing issues such as the impact of encountered difficulties, as well as offering solutions and recommendations for rebuilding the social functions of those who faced challenges in effective implementation. This process contributes to fostering an informed and healthy community. Additionally, AARG emphasizes feedback on hygiene and healthcare, along with providing sex education on topics related to HIV transmission and infection.



Some of the programs and activities implemented by AARG

Q: How is education implemented as part of the services offered by AARG?

Azuan: The implementation of education, as mentioned earlier, is carried out through various events organized by AARG, including talks, motivational speeches, forums, town hall discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences, and dialogue sessions. These initiatives encompass comprehensive education on healthcare, HIV/AIDS, and other relevant topics, making them accessible to individuals of all age groups and target populations under AARG’s supervision. The goal is to provide a structured curriculum that offers in-depth knowledge, covering aspects such as causes, consequences, risk factors, remedial measures, and strategies for building a healthier society.

Jega: AARG also disseminates HIV/AIDS education materials through exhibit booths, brochures, infographics, and guides. These resources serve to inform and engage various stakeholders, starting from families and communities to government agencies and non-profit organizations. For instance, brochures and infographics are designed to raise awareness about the risks of drug use and needle sharing, emphasizing how HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through the circulatory system.



Among the programs and activities implemented by AARG

Q: To what extent is the importance of HIV/AIDS education needed in each group of society?

Azuan: The importance of HIV/AIDS education across society is twofold. Firstly, it provides crucial

knowledge and awareness to individuals living with HIV/AIDS who may be experiencing fear and hopelessness. It helps dispel insecurities fueled by unreliable social media content and misinformation. Secondly, in today's age of rampant fake news, HIV/AIDS education is vital in countering myths and misunderstandings surrounding this sensitive topic. Such misconceptions can lead to increased stigma and discrimination. Additionally, HIV/AIDS education fosters a positive environment by enabling those close to HIV sufferers to offer support and motivation, ultimately strengthening individuals' ability to navigate their lives with greater calm and resilience.

Jega: This education is not only focused on the target group but also on the surrounding community. Change cannot be seen if the community does not support it, because the community is an important element in the life of this target group. Therefore, we need to convey information, awareness and education to the community. For example, a family consists of a mother, father, brother and sister, so all members need to provide moral support to people who are involved in drug use. It can be concluded that this education needs to be applied to the community and society around this target group because they all play an important role in the form of support.



An exhibition booth providing information about HIV AIDS

Q: *What has been the most challenging issue during your service at AARG?*

Azuan: One of the challenges faced by AARG is addressing the stigma and prejudice that are directed at those who are HIV-positive and AIDS-positive. To attain this goal, AARG facilitates counselling and practical interventions to assist clients in regaining their ability to deal with the stigma and discrimination they encounter.

Jega: As a result of the high stigma and prejudice in the community, where individuals with HIV/AIDS are perceived as unapproachable, people living with HIV are scared to disclose themselves to anybody, including AARG itself. This is certainly one of the challenges that the AARG faces.

Q: *Does the establishment of the AARG have an impact on the community?*

Azuan: Despite the growth of AARG, which is drawing greater interest from an assortment of

resources, it is obvious that it is having an impact on nearby communities and even the entire nation through the implementation of initiatives made in collaboration with other stakeholders to create a healthy and sustainable society. While HIV/AIDS education alone may not bring about comprehensive change in an individual's life, it serves as a significant factor that offers support and motivation to those living with HIV. AARG's establishment has had a substantial impact on the development and empowerment of people with HIV/AIDS, helping them regain a positive outlook and function effectively as contributing members of a harmonious society.



Intervention and Counseling Session for People Living with HIV AIDS

Q: Looking at the future of AARG, how important is education in the formation of a sustainable country and a healthy generation?

Azuan: HIV/AIDS education plays a crucial role in forming a sustainable country and fostering a healthy generation. It is a collective effort that involves government bodies, ministries, NGOs, and the entire community. Through educational initiatives, activities, and campaigns, we aim to prevent HIV/AIDS effectively. With persistent collaboration and support from all sectors, individuals living with HIV/AIDS can reintegrate into society without stigma or prejudice. This education is essential for building an inclusive and healthy society.

Jega: I believe that the absence of HIV/AIDS education can have far-reaching health consequences for the population. Given the interconnectedness of society, a focus on health is imperative. It contributes to overall well-being, from individual families to the broader fabric of the nation.

Q: What is the message that you want to convey to people?

Azuan: I want to emphasize that HIV/AIDS education is essential for everyone, as it directly impacts our daily lives and personal hygiene. I hope this education can reach all segments of society. Additionally, I urge policymakers to develop policies that protect and ensure the well-being of individuals living with HIV/AIDS, fostering a harmonious community.

Jega: Life is relatively short, and it's crucial for everyone to prioritize their health. However, we should also not be too self-centered and extend a helping hand to those around us. If someone needs assistance, we should offer it willingly. While individuals facing challenges and social issues may be a minority, they are still human beings who deserve our attention and support. We should focus on them and provide help when needed.

Reflections

Comparisons

In light of the comparison that can be drawn between the research conducted by our international partners and related similarities and differences, Mexico selected the non-profit organization FM4 Dignidad y Justicia en el Camino, A.C (Dignity and Justice on the Road). FM4 serves as a centre for migrant transit and short-term shelter.

Challenges play a significant role in the Young Global Researcher Project, which involves multiple nations in its implementation process. The issues faced by the institutions interviewed in Mexico are quite similar in terms of limits and problems associated with stigma and prejudice, albeit in the context of different concerns and target groups. However, the commonalities in the challenges faced by both organizations are evident in how NPOs, which work tirelessly to protect the rights of affected groups and ensure their well-being, address stigma and prejudice within the community.

One challenge faced by FM4 is convincing someone that they are not too old to engage in recreational activities. The organization's predicament in this scenario revolves around finding ways to eliminate the deeply ingrained prejudices and negative perceptions held by the specific individual in question. The non-profit organization expressed that they are pressed for time when it comes to dispelling negative stereotypes about migrants, particularly those held by the migrants themselves. During the interview, the study's interviewer also delved into the issue of discrimination and the challenges individuals face as a result of being discriminated against. This issue hinders their ability to connect with their target groups, as people in those groups are often afraid to seek help due to the stigma and derogatory comments they might face.

We believe that instead of trying to completely eliminate prejudice, it is more realistic to focus on strategies that minimize its impact and the negative ideas associated with it. Firstly, this involves garnering public support and awareness for social norms and anti-prejudice initiatives. Educating the public about practices that promote respect and inclusivity for migrants and providing information about who migrants are and what they do is crucial. In essence, recognizing that every person is unique and holds different viewpoints is essential. It is inappropriate to impose our own perceptions on others and expect them to conform. People need to be mindful of the diversity in personal opinions.

As demonstrated by the research, intergroup contact emerges as one of the most effective strategies for reducing prejudice. Effective intergroup communication should be designed to capitalize on various facilitating factors, including equal status, cooperative interactions, shared goals, and support from authorities. According to the contact hypothesis, meaningful engagement in activities can influence children's racial perceptions and reduce prejudice. To contribute to the reduction of HIV stigma, we can all play a role by carefully selecting our words and opting for supportive language rather than stigmatizing terminology when discussing HIV. Open conversations about HIV can serve to destigmatize the topic and provide opportunities to debunk myths and educate others about HIV. However, it is important to exercise caution when discussing HIV and individuals who are HIV-positive.

Upon examination, the interviews conducted in the aforementioned studies shared several common elements. Both studies emphasized the importance of a supportive and nurturing community in an

individual's upbringing. To effect a change in an individual's behavior regarding the challenges they face, it is essential to involve not only family members and close friends but also the broader community and other stakeholders. The central concept here revolves around the necessity of education for individuals as well as their families, friends, and communities. Without proper education and a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, individuals may find themselves struggling to overcome challenges. This is because a sense of belonging is fostered when we are part of an active community. It enables us to establish personal connections while also supporting the continuous growth of ourselves, others, and our environment. Connecting with individuals who share our values, interests, and worldviews reassures us that we are not alone and fosters a sense of appreciation. In essence, belonging underscores the significance of community, as it provides us with a stronger sense of self and aids us in coping with challenging events and emotions.

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Researchers



Hi everyone! My Name is **Muhamad Firdaus bin Mohd Nazri**. I'm 23 years old and originally from Malaysia. I'm the second child of four siblings. Currently, I am taking my Bachelors in Social Work at the School of Social Sciences Universiti Sains Malaysia. I am active in various associations and clubs at the University. In addition, I am also involved with several charity NGOs as a volunteer. I'm involved in the field of volunteering such as participating in humanitarian missions and involved in organising programs that have an impact on the community.



Hola! I am **Alissa Anne Alexander**, but people call me Lissa. I grew up in Malaysia and have lived here 22 years. I am currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work at the faculty of Social Sciences at the Main Campus, University of Science Malaysia. As a student of social work, I am involved in The Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) which assists people who require essentials, and several other NGOs with help from the church youth organisation.

Childhood Learning Along the Way

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Established in 2009 and thanks to their constant efforts, volunteer work and collective learning, over time FM4 Paso Libre has managed to increase, strengthen, and institutionalize different processes. Acquiring better infrastructure, strategic alliances at the local, national and international level, creating different areas of comprehensive support and awareness of the complex realities experienced by people in human mobility (Martínez, et. all, n.d). As Héctor Aguilar, the FM4 collaborator whom we interviewed, mentioned to us regarding the organization, the guidelines that they have been advancing are set by the people who “are always behind the reality that we live” (personal communication, 2023).

This FM4 Paso Libre shelter is located in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, next to the railroad tracks where the train known internationally as La Bestia, passes by. The shelter offers different services according to its institutional capacity: food, showers, clothing, telephone, legal, medical, psychological attention, labor support, social integration, educational support, among others (Martínez, et. all, n.d). In order to highlight the importance of the work done by FM4 Paso Libre, as well as the challenges it faces, we consider it necessary to contextualize some aspects of human mobility in Mexico.

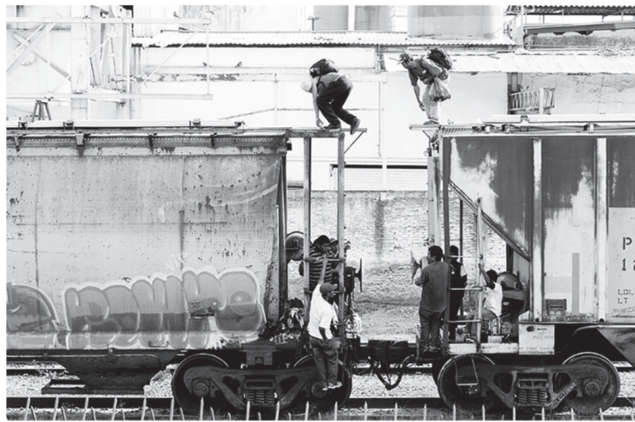


1. (FM4, 2019)

The global migration landscape is complex, so it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive analysis of each of the regions to understand the factors that generate complex dynamics within migration, while observing how various initiatives, government programs and civil society can alter that landscape, the latter being the starting point and the main topic of interest of this research (Centro de Estudios Internacionales Gilberto Bosques, 2015).

Within this framework, Mexico's geographic positioning cannot be ignored, as it is a strategic territory mainly for migrants from Central America. However, it also has one of the most dangerous borders in the world "The Southern Border", which is the main migratory route within the territory, this not only puts the physical safety of migrants at risk, but also as it generates emotional exhaustion due to the constant state of alertness required by migrants (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 2018).

During their journey, mainly those migrants who are in transit, are exposed to multiple factors and circumstances ranging from lack of awareness on the part of the Mexican population, threats, dispossession of their belongings and the exercise of different types of violence, which endangers their safety. These situations are related to discrimination, persecution by the authorities, organized crime, gangs and conflicts with other migrants (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 2018).



2. (FM4, 2019)

The migration of unaccompanied children and adolescents is rapidly increasing, making it another complex challenge. Therefore, the strategies have been changing and adapting to the different needs of the migratory profile, which may be men, women, children or adolescents or family groups.

Therefore, due to the context to which migrants are exposed, one of the ways they confront various obstacles on their journey is to be accompanied by family or friends from their country of origin, or failing that the company of other migrants with common goals, which helps to reduce distrust, fear, and uncertainty in relation to their environment. Likewise, shelters play a fundamental role, representing a safe place where migrants can find assistance, accompaniment, and support, which is essential for them to be able to continue to their final destination, be it Mexico or another country (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 2018).

By way of explanation, for this article we did not interview any user of FM4 services, given the multiple and specific conditions of vulnerability with which they live, exposing information about their life history could invite persecution, criminalization, xenophobia and expose them to greater risks than they already face.

FM4 director Luis Enrique Gonzáles-Araiza arranged for us to interview the person currently in charge of running the pilot educational program that they are calling a model for the educational insertion of

children and adolescents in human mobility, which was carried out in collaboration with Fondazione AVSI and with the shared financing of the European Union in Mexico (Martínez, et. all, n.d).

Our interviewee is Héctor Aguilar or “Tor”, who introduced himself as an art-educator because he combines both professions in his daily work. Tor was kind enough to tell us more about FM4’s work with respect to education. The latter is an issue in which the organization detected a need, since access to education for children and adolescents who are migrating is a human right.

Interview

Interviewee:

Héctor “Tor” Aguilar, art-educator

Q: *What are the main activities you carry out?*

We seek to put the model into practice, which I will explain in broad strokes: it is a map that orients certain routes in a territory which, in this case, is the shelter. It has three components that can interact and empower each other: play, design, and share. The play component is designed to provide children and adolescents in the shelter with spaces to engage in play. Its primary goal is to rekindle their curiosity, imagination, and joy, fostering a renewed interest in learning. Often, these young individuals find themselves in situations of deprivation resulting from various challenges, some of which may not be immediately visible. One such challenge is the loss of the ability to experience the pleasure, dignity, and enjoyment of learning. Their initial focus is typically on addressing immediate survival needs.

Many of these young individuals arrive at the shelter from contexts marked by war and physical violence, displacement, trauma, political persecution, natural disasters, guerrilla conflicts, and involvement in drug trafficking. Consequently, the thought of continuing their education often takes a backseat to more immediate concerns. Some of them may even arrive at the shelter without the basic skills of reading and writing. In this context, the play component assumes significant importance. Through various forms of play, it has been observed that these children and adolescents gradually rekindle their interest in education. They express their desire to learn to read and write, and they aspire to attend school once again. I love it when they tell me, “hey Tor I want to learn to read” or “I want to go to school”.



3. (FM4,2022)

Another component is the design aspect, which involves educators and professionals in the educational field dedicating time to create learning activities tailored to the specific needs of these students. It's recognized that many of them face significant educational gaps, and these activities are designed to help bridge those gaps, enabling them to catch up and not feel disadvantaged in comparison to children who have had the privilege of continuous education.

The final component is sharing, which entails employing various strategies to raise awareness among schools and their members about the importance of welcoming these children who aspire to attend educational institutions. This effort aims to overcome a multitude of obstacles, such as the fact that these students often arrive mid-school year, with significant educational deficits, and varying language backgrounds (e.g., Creole or French for some Haitian students). Additionally, they may lack the necessary documentation for enrollment and might stay for only a short period due to their family's life plans.

Indeed, the challenges are substantial, and the situation demands an extraordinary school rather than an ordinary one. These schools should be capable of embracing the complexities of diversity, adapting to the unique realities of these students. The term “extraordinary” here implies that such schools must be not only exceptional but also centered on the idea of play. Through play, children understand the world around them and learn to interact with the people and things that inhabit it, making it a fundamental aspect of their educational experience.



4. (FM4, 2022)

Q: What actors are involved, or should be more involved?

Among the actors involved in this initiative are the Ministry of Public Education, which currently lacks an education program for migrants, leaving a significant gap and an invisibility of the educational needs of individuals in human mobility. The engagement of the artistic community is also crucial, as their workshops and contributions enrich the educational experience. UNICEF has actively participated by collaborating with local schools and sharing insights into the school integration of mobile children, aligning with the play and design components of the initiative. Additionally, teachers in subjects like Spanish, mathematics, and English have expressed their interest in participating, offering vital support for tailored education. A community of volunteers has also offered their

assistance, further enhancing the learning environment. Together, these actors form a collaborative network aimed at addressing the educational challenges faced by children in human mobility, ensuring they have access to quality education and opportunities for growth.

Q: What are the challenges you face as an organization on this issue?

The challenges we face are numerous. For insA few lines would not be enough to do justice to the entire story of the non-profit organization FM4 Paso Libre Dignidad y Justicia en el Camino, A.C (Dignity and Justice on the Road), nor are they enough to tell the work they do every day inside and outside their facilities to defend and promote the rights of migrants, as well as to recognize each person who contributes in different ways to the cause and allows them to sustain actions that build bridges in a world full of territorial, physical, ideological and cultural borders.

This organization was legally estance, we encountered a young man who believes he is “too old” to play, and the lessons we’ve learned from such instances highlight the need to eradicate this idea and prejudice. How can we recover the disposition to play in individuals facing dispossession? These are profound questions. Another challenge stems from the situation of those in transit, as they typically spend only three days in the shelter. Despite this limited timeframe, we’ve learned that something meaningful can still be achieved, although it is clear that the goal is not to change the world or individuals drastically. The challenge lies in working within these constraints and addressing the levels of deprivation they face, including what I would call a form of spiritual deprivation when someone claims they no longer play or forgets how to play. Convincing them of the importance of nurturing the desire to study, akin to nourishing oneself, is essential.

Another significant challenge has been attempting to establish a sense of community upbringing. This concept entails fathers, mothers, and caregivers collectively agreeing on times and schedules to care for all the children in the shelter, aligning with the notion seen in some African communities where a child’s development depends on the entire village, not just their parents. While this idea sounds promising, the reality is that, for instance, in our current shelter with 57 people, there aren’t enough individuals to responsibly care for the 5 or 6 children present at any given time. Unfortunately, our model has not yet effectively addressed this particular challenge.



5. (FM4,2023)

Reflections

It was an honor for us to be able to talk about the complex reality of our country as a place of transit and final destination for many migrants and refugees. This causes the urgency to provide them with dignified attention and to guarantee the protection of their human rights, which becomes especially complicated due to a series of factors that we mentioned at the start of this report, such as the risk to which these people are exposed during their journey. This journey of migration is driven by the search for improved living conditions, often prompted by a complex interplay of internal and external factors in their places of origin. It's crucial to understand that the decision to leave one's home is not made lightly.

In light of this context, FM4 has taken the initiative to integrate a program aimed at providing comprehensive care for both accompanied and unaccompanied children. They have outlined some of the activities they undertake and the underlying principles of their action plan, which are not only important but also inspiring and necessary. What might initially seem as simple as offering a space within the shelter for play and designing activities that align with the children's reality becomes an indispensable component in reigniting their inspiration and subsequently, their desire to learn.

FM4's commitment extends beyond the organization's walls. They actively seek to carry out their mission by raising awareness and persuading other schools to transform conventional structures and spaces into extraordinary environments capable of welcoming and integrating children from diverse backgrounds. These children may face academic challenges due to gaps in their education and may stay for varying durations dictated by their family's circumstances, over which they have no control. FM4 also endeavors to bring elements of the school directly to the shelter, such as engaging supportive teachers, involving volunteers in homework workshops, and incorporating artistic activities, among other strategies.



6. (FM4, 2022)

One important aspect of this article is the ability to identify commonalities among different realities. In this instance, we use the AIDS ACTION AND RESEARCH GROUP program as a point of comparison. Upon analyzing our research and insights from our colleagues in Malaysia, it becomes

evident that the organizations we have collaborated with address entirely different issues. The Malaysian project focuses on the population affected by AIDS, irrespective of gender or age, while the Mexican project centers on migrant children of any gender or age.

Although these two projects may initially seem dissimilar, this is not entirely accurate. In both situations, there exists a significant degree of discrimination and stigma directed toward migrants and individuals with AIDS, respectively. These challenges pose complex obstacles for the organizations involved. Both investigations underscore the importance of fostering openness, awareness, understanding, and knowledge among the general population, as this is the most effective means of facilitating the reintegration of both population groups into society.

Another point of convergence is the significance of collaboration with various stakeholders. Despite the commendable daily efforts of civil society organizations, both our interviewee and our Malaysian counterparts emphasized the necessity of involving the organization's beneficiaries, their families, volunteers, other organizations, and the government sector.

Additionally, we observed that in both realities, family support is indispensable. In the case of migrant children, Tor mentioned that due to the hardships they have endured, they often lose their sense of childhood. Consequently, beyond providing a space for play, active family involvement in their learning and play processes is crucial. Establishing a collective caregiving dynamic within the shelter would be ideal for task distribution. Similarly, for individuals with AIDS, family support is fundamental. As our colleagues' project demonstrated, many of these individuals may feel excluded or have lost their confidence. Therefore, receiving support and assistance that restores their confidence greatly facilitates their reintegration.

Through this research, we have identified that many of these challenges persist due to the absence of government programs. Hence, it is imperative for the government sector to collaborate with civil society organizations in order to promote support and awareness of the situations faced by vulnerable populations, such as migrant children and individuals with AIDS. This collaboration should aim not only to raise visibility but also to enact transformative change.

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Researchers



Hello everyone, my name is **Neymar** and I'm 22 years old. I'm a student of International Relations at the Universidad de Estudios Superiores del Occidente in Guadalajara, Mexico. My interests are related to researching and learning about social issues such as migration, gender studies and other topics that incorporate the study and analysis of the society in which we live. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my friends and my family. I also enjoy learning interesting facts about other countries and cultures. Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this incredible project.



I'm **Nátaly Nuño Silva**, a student of international relations at ITESO, in Mexico. I'm 22 years old and I am interested in issues of migration, gender, education, childhood, and culture, so I volunteered in the organization we presented here in this report. I'm a research fellow at my university, where I also tutor Spanish writing to other students, and I'm involved in mural painting projects with social themes. My passions are reading, writing, dancing Cuban salsa, sports, cooking and other activities that allow me to feel and connect with myself and with others. I'm thankful for and I have enjoyed being part of this project.

Tapudzai Primary School

Researchers: Shylet Dangirwa & Netsai Ndlovu

Great Zimbabwe University

Founded in 1976, Tapudzai is a primary school located in the Zaka district of the Masvingo province in Zimbabwe. The school is in a rural community and is officially registered with the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education. An Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme at Tapudzai Primary School was established in 2006 in an effort to make early education accessible to the majority of young children. At first, the school had not built standard classrooms for ECD, so they had to allocate the classrooms already used by the main primary school grades, which were not user-friendly to ECD children. Establishment of the ECD programme was as a result of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, which incorporated a two-year ECD programme integrated into the mainstream primary schools as recommended by the Nziramasanga Commission Inquiry (1999). The purpose of incorporating the two-year ECD programme was to render assistance to the pre-formal education of all children in the country inclusively, whether rich or poor, urban or rural.

ECD programs aim to meet the holistic development of young children from infancy to primary school-age. ECD is considered to be a critical period for brain development of young children, as experiences and environments have a significant impact on their overall development. Available and adequate infrastructure, health, safety and good hygiene and nutrition are considered important aspects of delivering a quality ECD programme. Infrastructure is the physical facilities, materials and environments that support young children's learning. Infrastructure plays a vital role in providing a safe, stimulating and conducive learning environment. This includes appropriate facilities such as classrooms, play areas, sanitation facilities and access to clean water. It also ensures equal access and inclusivity for all children, including those with disabilities. The infrastructure should allow accessibility, enabling children of all abilities to participate fully in ECD activities. For example, ramps, wide doors, assistive technologies and a spacious environment that allows young children to participate freely in ECD activities can be incorporated to ensure inclusivity. Furthermore, infrastructure ensures the safety and health of young children. For example, well-ventilated classrooms reduce the risk of respiratory infections in children. Age-appropriate toilets, furniture and playing materials, as well as adequate sanitation facilities such as toilets and clean water play an important role in ensuring safety and health of young children (UNICEF, 2009).

Challenges in the ECD programme are similar in most African countries (Vargas-Baron, 2005). There are many challenges being faced by rural ECD schools, such as lack of appropriate infrastructure, insufficient funds, inefficiency of developmental labour, insufficient provision of developmental resources as well as poor repair and maintenance. Alinafe CBCC caregiver, Brandina Kamadzi, from Traditional Authority (T/A) Mlonyeni in Mchinji District states that most ECD buildings are made of grass and mud, which is not ideal. Also, the ECD programmes lack teaching materials, so they must rely on improvised ones.

Recent research done in Zimbabwe revealed challenges faced in remote rural ECD schools such as

inadequate, inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, poor sanitation facilities, lack of outdoor facilities, inadequate and unsuitable furniture for the ECD children (Bukaliya & Mubika, 2012). Mushoriwa and Muzembe (2011), and Tshabalala and Mapolisa (2013) confirm that most rural Zimbabwean primary schools are having ECD classes under the trees because of classroom shortages. It is very difficult for rural communities to afford building classrooms for the ECD children, especially when considering that the areas are poverty afflicted. It was also noted that the classrooms are congested. The research was done in the Chiredzi and Zaka districts respectively. It is against this background that researchers were motivated to study the state of ECD infrastructure in the Zaka district and its effect on the quality of ECD. Such research can raise awareness within the community and gain support from different stakeholders like parents, NGOs, local authorities, donors and policy makers. The research will also help to identify the specific infrastructure required to create an environment conducive to the learning and growth of young children. High-quality infrastructure also improves the learning outcomes of learners and their overall development. Communities can also mobilize themselves to help improve the ECD infrastructure through volunteering their time, skills, using local resources and expertise to maintain, build and renovate facilities. The community can also conduct a community needs assessment to identify challenges and specific needs faced with the ECD infrastructure and provide solutions for improvement.

Interview

Interviewee:

Mr. Lovemore Dzoro (Headmaster)



Mr. Lovemore Dzoro (on the right) with the Interviewer, Netsai Ndlovu.

Q: Could you introduce yourself and your main role within the organization?

I am Mr Lovemore Dzoro and I have 33 years of experience as a headmaster and am the holder of a Bachelors of Education (Honours) Degree (BED) in Administration, Planning and Policy Studies from the University of Zimbabwe. I run an outstanding school that received the 2015 Secretary's Merit Award. As the school head, I'm responsible for the overall administration of the school, including utilization of resources, management of staff, and overseeing students welfare. I also provide guidance on teaching methods, assess students progress, monitor curriculum implementation and ensure efficient implementation of the national curriculum. Finally, I also work closely with various

stakeholders such as the local communities, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and parents.

Q: What is the main purpose of this organization?

The main purpose of this organization is to provide equal education to children in rural areas, regardless of their socio-economic background and secure the opportunity to receive basic education on a regular basis. We also focus on promoting the holistic development of students by creating a safe and stimulating environment that supports the overall growth and development of students.

Q: Can you briefly describe ECD infrastructure currently available at the school, please?

Currently the ECD department infrastructure is comprised of a three-roomed classroom building, a traffic education and cultural heritage center and an ECD play center with swings, slides, soccer and netball fields. The school infrastructure is also equipped with child-sized furniture offered by parents and child-sized toilets which are still in good condition.



A 3-roomed classroom block and an outdoor ECD play centre with child-sized play equipment



A traffic education centre and well-maintained child-sized toilets.

Q: What factors do you consider crucial for quality ECD infrastructure?

We consider factors such as a safe and secure environment, inclusive environment, adequate space and facilities, adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials and resources, qualified staff, young child health and hygiene. A safe and stimulating environment with adequate space allows young children to explore and experiment in the environment freely, while also supporting their overall development. An inclusive environment fosters empathy, understanding and tolerance and mutual respect. Regardless of their different backgrounds and abilities children also feel valued, welcomed and supported when the environment is inclusive.

Q: How is the ECD infrastructure equipped to address the diverse needs of children in terms of social-cultural backgrounds?

The school is working hard to provide adequate infrastructure facilities such as classrooms and computer labs (since we have sixty functional computers at the school), along with resources showcasing diverse cultures and materials for hands-on learning experiences. We are also striving to create learning spaces that ensure inclusivity and respect the diverse cultures and backgrounds of children by displaying artwork, posters, books and teaching materials that reflect on the cultural diversity of children. For example, we have a heritage center or cultural village. The school engages the local community in the education process by inviting them to share their cultural knowledge and experiences. By providing adequate infrastructure facilities, students can have access to quality education and resources that promote inclusive learning for all.

Q: Are there any physical infrastructure challenges and how are they being addressed?

Yes there are challenges with the existing infrastructure such as lack of funds to construct or renovate damaged ECD play center equipment, classroom roofs, walls, and floors. We also face challenges in funding for school furniture, learning materials and outdoor play equipment. Shortage of these resources can hinder the provision of positive learning. The community is affected by poverty, and it's very difficult for them to afford building classrooms and purchasing furniture, outdoor play equipment and learning resources for ECD children. To address the problem the school is raising funds through cattle and goat rearing. The school is also striving to encourage parents to contribute financially and materially depending on their capabilities. To encourage strong support, schools communicate regularly with parents about the school's financial needs and projects and how important it is to invest in their children's education.

Q: Does the school infrastructure support accessibility and inclusiveness?

Yes, efforts are being made, and there is still progress to be made to ensure full accessibility and inclusivity so that all children, including those with disabilities and from marginalized backgrounds, have equal access to quality education. So far, the school has successfully installed ramps in upper grades classrooms (Grades 2 to 7). Although the school is trying to put more effort on accessibility and inclusivity in the school infrastructure, the attendance and enrollment rate of children with disabilities is very low due to inaccessible infrastructure, lack of learning resources such as Braille, hearing aids, lack of well trained personnel who hold positive attitudes and are open to inclusive

education, and parents who fear that their children will be stigmatized and discriminated against. Another major problem is lack of awareness and training of educators, parents and community members on the needs and rights of children with disabilities.

Q: Are there any plans to upgrade the current infrastructure to meet the growing needs of children and any strategies to raise funds, maintain and ensure the sustainability of the ECD infrastructure?

Yes, we are constructing a new ECD classroom block which is now at roofing level in order to curb the advancing enrollment of the school, and we're also planning to construct another ECD block to add to the one which is at the roofing level so that we can accommodate the expanding school. The school is also collaborating with the local authorities and engaging with the local community, and seeking help through education sponsorships and volunteer efforts. The school is also planning to establish sponsorship programs such as UNICEF Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Rural Schools Development Programs (ZRS DP) that support the schools to construct and renovate existing facilities such as classroom roofs and walls, and to provide learning resources and materials like ECD workbooks, textbooks, stationary and teaching aids. Plans are still in progress to construct other ramps at infant grades classrooms (ECD A & B to Grade 1) and build accessible toilets. Educational and sensitization programs along with workshops and awareness campaigns are being carried out to help parents, educators, students and community members understand the needs and rights of children with disabilities and the importance of inclusion.



The ECD block still under construction

Q: What role do you think this organization plays in the lives of its citizens?

The school plays an important role in the lives of its citizens as it provides an empowering and equal quality education. In addition to an academic education, the school also provides children with opportunities to demonstrate their talents in sports, music and art. Children with disabilities are given equal opportunities to participate fully, especially in music and art activities. However, those

with physical impairments are being excluded in some sporting activities because they're considered unable to participate. These activities instill discipline, creativity, teamwork and resilience.

Reflections

In the interview with Mr Dzoro, we've learnt that ECD is a community-based and resourced programme, and that it is paramount for ECD children as it provides lifelong learning, and allows children to reach their full potential. Several factors such as supportive learning environments, appropriate resources, children's health and hygiene and parental/community involvement were identified as crucial for quality ECD infrastructure. During the interview, we discussed the current state of infrastructure for quality ECD. One of the most important was the inadequate state of infrastructure, such as the lack of adequate classrooms and facilities, which hinders the delivery of positive learning experiences. Inclusiveness and accessibility were also discussed. During the interview, it became clear that there are inequity issues regarding enrollment of children with disabilities. ECD infrastructure often ignores the needs of children with disabilities. Lack of appropriate facilities, inaccessible infrastructure and qualified personnel in special education makes it difficult for these children to fully participate in educational activities causing problems with their development and social participation.

From the interview, we learned that there's an urgent need to improve the infrastructure for high quality ECD. By providing quality ECD infrastructure, enrolment rates can increase and children can benefit from the supportive learning environments that supports their holistic development. Additionally, involving communities in the planning and implementation process can foster a sense of ownership over the infrastructure, contributing to a sense of community development and empowerment. In addition, the organization should seek partnerships and support from various stakeholders and NGOs that specialize in infrastructure development. The government of Zimbabwe has to intervene since it's the duty bearer of the right to ECD for all children and must assist disadvantaged rural areas and communities to address equity issues.

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Researchers



Hello! I'm **Shylet Dangirwa**. I'm a fourth-year student at Great Zimbabwe University in Zimbabwe, where I'm pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development. I was born and raised in Zimbabwe. I wish to become an advocate for high-quality early childhood education.



My name is **Netsai Ndhlovu**. I was born in Masvingo, Zimbabwe and I am twenty-eight years old. Currently, I am doing my Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development at Great Zimbabwe University.

Changemakers in the Community (2)

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Changemakers in the Community (2)

The second phase of the Young Global Researchers Project (YGRP), “Changemakers in the Community (2)”, was launched in late May, 2023, with an online meeting for all the student participants, along with their faculty advisors, from each university. Four of the institutions involved in this phase of the project are members of the Asia-Pacific University Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) along with invited member institutions from Mexico and Zimbabwe. The participants represent a truly global gathering, with a total of 33 undergraduate students and 16 faculty advisors from six different countries.

Following the launch, pairs of students from each of the institutions conducted secondary and primary source research in the field on a specific issue, interviewing, and often volunteering with, an organization connected to their given theme. The overall theme for this year was “Migrants, Minorities and the Marginalized”, with sub-themes of “Work, Health and Education.” Each pair of students was also matched with a student pair from another institution in a different country, with the intention of facilitating both a communicative and collaborative approach to researching on a joint theme. Therefore, each report in this year’s body of work includes a “Reflection” section with comparative analysis of the issues on the themes for each international pairing.

Further online Zoom sessions were given in June and July, where all participants were given opportunities to discuss the issues and deliver research updates with their peers. Following the fieldwork activities, and with the guidance of their faculty advisors, participants then compiled written reports, with transcribed interviews, photos and supplementary material. The majority of reports were submitted on, or close to the deadline in late-August, and were thereafter proofed and edited by the lead researchers’ team in Kyoto. The contents of this publication showcase the fruits of their endeavors and we are sure it will be of considerable interest to members of both academia and the general public.