

# **WEave CONNECT: Immersing Young People in the Patterns of Community Leadership and Advocacy Building**

Community Visit in Pook Aguinaldo Community Learning Hub

January 14, 2024 | Barangay UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City

## **About the Program**

Project Habi Pilipinas is a program initiated by one of the [Oxfam Young Leaders Fellows](#) in the Philippines and a capacity-building program designed to instill holistic youth development in civic engagement and training young leaders to develop interwoven alternatives in the multiple crises that we are facing in the Philippines. With the support of Oxfam in Asia and the Asia Centre, Project Habi Pilipinas was successful in organizing a network of young leaders campaigning for socio-economic, gender and climate justice.

With the establishment of Habi Youth Network, the need for grounded insights of the mass struggle in unfolding not only the social realities but the systematic and structural inequalities was highlighted to make the youths as the critical partners of the society to push forward progressive changes. Having this in mind, the Project Habi Pilipinas partnered with the organizers of the Pook Aguinaldo Community Learning Hub (CHL) to conduct a community visit and immerse with the masses. Notably, youth from the area ranging from pre-school to secondary education are the learners catered by the Learning Hub. This community-led initiative to support holistic child development is a parallel effort to intensify the multi-sectoral approach centered on providing children with nurturing care as a part of the Early Childhood Care Development Program.

With the assistance of the CHL Parent-Leaders, Project Habi Pilipinas members will serve as student-teachers for a day and engage in fun learning activities with the children. A story-telling session will also be conducted to tickle the imagination of the youth and share their reflections from what they have learned.

The community visit targets to deeply involve Project Habi Members with the endeavors and challenges faced by the communities and to create a robust analysis to further engage in the youth sector. This activity also aims to bolster the capacities of the Project Habi Pilipinas members and to elevate their understanding on the critical issues in the grassroots and take up their space to push for a genuine transformation.

## **A Day full of Story-Telling and Learnings**

During the ingress, the participants and the student-teachers (STs) from the Project Habi Pilipinas gathered in the activity area. The children were asked to write down their name in the registration form with the assistance of the assigned STs. Teacher Erika (Erika Valencia, Climate Justice Committee Head) then explained the objectives and instructions for the activity.

The program officially started with the opening remarks from Parent-Leader Helen, who reminded the kids to listen carefully with their STs. Following that, Teacher Yel (Gabrielle Nejal, Gender Justice Committee Head) introduced the organization and all the STs from the Project who will be joining the learning session.

After the short introduction, the participants were divided into three (3) breakout groups: a) kindergarten to Grade 1; b) Grade 2 to Grade 3, and c) Grade 4 to Grade 6.

For the cluster of Kindergarten to Grade 1, the story assigned to them was *Si Pulong Patago-Tago* (Pilo who keeps on hiding). It is the quirky story of Pilo, a child who loves to play hide and seek. He kept on playing this game with his family and friends. One day, when Pilo was with his mother in the market, his mother hid from him. Panicking that he was lost, her mom suddenly appeared and told him she was just only playing around.

For the Grade 2-3 group, they read the story *Bruhaha... Bruhihi*, a narration observing the horrendous and witch-like appearance of Mrs. Magalit. Aside from her looks, the main character of the story explained the terrifying laugh of Mrs. Magalit in different situations. The grandmother of the narrator also believed that a witch like Mrs. Magalit is afraid of brooms and clean homes. One time, Mrs. Magalit tripped down and people made fun of her. The character helped the old lady to get up and brought her home. Defying the myth, Mrs. Magalit is not afraid of brooms and clean homes; she was just living alone and barely got any help. The narrator then finally understood her situation. They gladly watched television together and from then on, they called her "lola" (grandmother).

Lastly, the group of Grade 4-6 listened to the story *Araw sa Palengke* (A day in the market). This story is about a child who was brought by her mother to the market. Before heading, her mother asked the child to hold her hand tight to avoid getting lost. She was also told not to stop and buy things. The character shared her observations about the market – crowded, noisy, and reeking. As their baskets were filled with goods, something caught her attention: a small red claypot. However, she remembered her promise to her mother to keep her company. She went home without the claypot. As she unloads the baskets, she sees something that is wrapped in newspaper. It was the red claypot she saw in the market. To end, she was very delighted by the reward of her mother.

The learning session is truly a fun and memorable experience for both the participants and the student-teachers. After the story reading, STs facilitated engaging discussions with the children, especially on what they have learned from the stories. The coloring materials provided also introduced the characters of the featured stories. For the oldest bracket, they created a short reflection on their experiences related to the story.

In retrospect, the whole conduct of the activity reflects the eagerness of the youth to learn and interact with each other. Activities such as this stir their imagination and enable them to express their thoughts and comprehension of the given passages. Therefore, avenues and intervention provided by the CLH are deemed crucial in supplementing and complementing the education they receive beyond the four-corners of the classroom.

### **Honing the Young Minds: The story behind the Community Learning Hub**

After the learning session, Project Habi Pilipinas members seized the opportunity to have a dialogue with the parent-leaders and founders of the Community Learning Hub. From there, the story behind this initiative was shared and how they continue their operations to present.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, urban poor communities are among the hardest hit sectors. Pook Aguinaldo, a small yet close community, is no stranger to these struggles. One of the prominent issues is the gap in learning of the children in the area brought by the closure of schools due to the strict pandemic protocols.

Viewing this, the women of the Pook Aguinaldo organized the Lakas ng Nagkakaisang Kababaihan (LNK) (*The Might of Women Solidarity*), who aims to work closely with community-based concerns. The newly formed group facilitated various initiatives including urban farming, community pantry, and in conceptualizing a learning hub for their children. Consequently, the Pook Aguinaldo Community Learning Hub (CLH) was established through the help of LNK and different funding partners.

Through the years, it has continued to nurture the young minds with the continuous support of tutor-volunteers from university students across the country. Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, it did not falter the determination of the founders to provide continuing education for the youth.

The Pook Aguinaldo Community Learning Hub is indeed the brainchild of the strong women in the community, who are always at the forefront of crises such as the COVID-

19 pandemic. The great sense of solidarity has always been the foundation of the sustained efforts to hone the brightest minds of the young.

They saw the gaps that needed to be addressed especially in our educational system, the struggle of women, care providers and the working class in the hopes of better living conditions, and the unequal opportunities for the marginalized. These young leaders of the Habi Youth Network went to the community with nothing but a heart to be with communities in advancing people's campaigns. Yet, they left with a burning desire and passion that they set as a springboard to push forward progressive changes to claim our future.