



Chair's Annual Report 2020- 2021

During 2020-2021, we operated a residential children's home (Mango Tree House) and a scholarship programme (Grapevine). Our early years school (Cashew Tree) which was in temporary accommodation during 2018-2019 has been rebuilt and is now capable of taking 200 students.

The COVID 19 pandemic impacted operations as all face to face teaching was banned and the communities we serve were in harsh lock-down. Maintaining health became the primary objective. Families were destitute with no income to feed themselves. Funds were diverted to an emergency feeding programme during the harshest period of lock-down.

Innovative methods had to be designed to maintain children in education where family's access to internet or data is a major limiting factor.

We are proud that the team in Manila were able to keep services operating and children receiving educational input across all projects.

The key priority for the charity this year has been maintaining services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In Manila, the lock-down was draconian and the communities we serve were unable to earn any money at all. All face to face teaching was banned with teachers and students having to devise new ways to teach and learn.

Services in Manila continued to operate under the jurisdiction of local regulatory agencies and the board members of Asian Students Christian Foundation (ASCF). The local environment continues to change as the closure of Payatas dumpsite drives populations to move to San Isidro, the new scavenging site; where living conditions are atrocious.

Scavenger communities continue to reside in Payatas as the recycling businesses are well established in the vicinity. Fortunately, our facilities are conveniently situated equi-distant between Payatas and San Isidro and can serve both communities as well as the nearby resettlement town of Kasiglahan which houses people who have been evicted from their squatter shelters.

Mango Tree House has provided a loving residential home for over 40 children from four years of age. The increased national emphasis on re-integration with family has led to a significant policy change in operational practice for ASCF which has been jointly adopted with the UK. In 2020-2021, the findings from reassessments conducted in the previous year were started to be implemented with some children being reintegrated into safe family environments. The charity will continue to support their education where necessary through the Grapevine scheme. The implementation was slowed due to the pandemic and further progress will be made next year. In the year covered by this report, places vacated at Mango have been filled with new children who are in need of a safe and loving environment. In future years, it is envisaged that fewer children may be accommodated in Mango and more supported in the community through Grapevine.

Grapevine has supported 75 children to receive their education (virtually this year) while living with their family. This avoids the need for the children to work scavenging to assist the family income and provides them with optimal opportunities to complete their education. Children who succeed in education, will utilise their new earning power to support their

siblings and family to also step up from poverty. One child's life transformed thus impacts on many others.

At Cashew Tree School, which achieved its full registration in February 2021; the pandemic meant that our new building could not be used as planned. Teachers devised ways to teach at a distance using modular methods delivered to families on a weekly basis and supported by online tutorials where possible. Numbers were kept to 100 as the delivery methodology was unproven and costs uncertain. Despite the challenges, the children have all fared well and we are proud of their achievements.

In the UK, the drive to improve value from every penny continues alongside the expansion of our communications with donors and supporters. This year, the challenge of fundraising in a pandemic has taxed our most creative thinkers. New and innovative ideas have been implemented with the positive financial out-turn a testimony to their efforts and to our wonderful loyal supporters. An online quiz has proved popular, thanks to the dynamic quiz master and motivated teams.

Hard copy communications between children and their sponsor had to be suspended during the pandemic. This was such an important part of sponsor engagement and the UK office has adapted with more digital communication. Thank you cards are sent on sponsor and regular donor anniversaries. Social media coverage on Facebook and Instagram has increased thanks to the efforts of dedicated volunteers which has generated more followers and proved effective for birthday fundraisers.

Fundraising has had to adapt to changing trends in giving. Child sponsorship remains a key tenant for our charity, but we have placed much greater emphasis on raising awareness and funds through social media, grants and national campaigns. Our biggest effort was focused on the Big Give Christmas Campaign where donations are doubled. 2020 was a unprecedented success thanks to the response by supporters, meaning it constituted nearly 20% of our annual income.

The partnership with ASCF in Manila has been strengthened this year with a formal partnership agreement being signed off by both Boards.

A new marketing group consisting of volunteers and Trustees has been established to provide focus on how the charity promotes its work and raises funds.

Despite all the challenges that 2020 brought, we were blessed that all our families and children in our care were kept healthy and safe. Education continued in its new form and children have adapted and succeeded. Donors and supporters gave willingly and generously to ensure that the charity could continue to do its utmost to deliver its beneficiaries the best possible help and support.

Kay Mackay
Chair of Trustees