From The Other Side of The Table

The Philippines under COVID-19

Appendix

Vol.35

The Philippines, Castillejos

In the Philippines, schools reopened in October but lessons are conducted online and self study by suing study materials. no class room lessons are conducted.

Since 2014, TFT has been providing lunches at a primary school in Castillejos in western Ruzon island of the Philippines, to students who were identified as malnutrition. Currently TFT provides all the students with food packs for lunch as the economic situations of many families are negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

Students and their families are facing challenges: families with their breadwinners lost their jobs or other families whose fathers can not come home because of restrictions of movement or lockdown of certain areas.



School meals served

78,638,102 meals



Starting food distribution for all the students

TFT supports a school lunch program in Balaybay area of the Castillejos region of western Luzon island in the Philippines. The area is resettled by families who lost their homes by the eruption of the Pinatubo volcano and has high unemployment and poverty rates.

Prior to COVID 19 pandemic, TFT provided school lunches to the students with malnutrition at the Balaybay primary school. Since the school closure due to the pandemic no there was no school lunches program. Instead, TFT began distributing food packs to all 726 students, whomever wish to receive considering many families lost jobs or income.



Only 40% of students can get access to online lessons

In the Philippines, the schools restarted in October. The new school year was delayed by four months. Even though the schools restarted, lessons in the classrooms were banned so they were conducted online combined with self-study, using learning material called Modular. To receive online classes, students need to have a computer and internet, but many students can not afford to have an online learning environment. It is said that 60% of students in the entire Philippines are not able to receive online lessons.

Students who can not study through online lessons have to do a self-study by using Modular. Students' guardians need to go to school every Friday to receive a new Modular. They submit homework of previous week and receive next week's Modular. When the guardians come to school to receive Modular, they receive packs of food containing rice, beans, corned beef, tinned tuna and condiments. One mother of the student told that her husband lost his job so the family lost income. For her, receiving the food pack is great support for her family.

Self-learning is challenging to everyone

Self-learning by using Modular is the first time experience for students, their families and teachers. For the teachers, they will not be able to give lessons face to face. For the guardians, they have to take the role of teacher and teach children. In school, when students do not understand the lessons, they can ask teachers. But in the self-study, guardians have to answer to the questions. This is a lot of burden on the guardians. Also, it is not easy for teachers to know whether students understand the lessons. In the Balaybay school, teachers are building a system by using SMS or social media to monitor each student and if they have questions, the students can ask teachers through those mediums.





A teacher is preparing the distribution of Modular



Prevention measures such as temperature checks and social distancing are enforced in the schools.

Tacking of Corona Virus in the Philippines

In the Philippines, more than 6000 people were tested positive with COVID-19 in a day in August, that was the highest number. Since then, the number of new positive cases are declining, still authorities carefully monitor the trend.

Strict lockdown measures were enforced in the capital Manila and surrounding areas where the highest number of positive cases were reported. Castillejos where Balaybay school is located, the number of infections is not high, therefore the lockdown measure is not so strict. Nevertheless, the youth below 21 years old and the elderly over 60 years old must stay home, which means children can not easily play with their friends. People must use not only masks but must put on face shields when using public transport.

Don't make children under COVID-19 a lost generation

Commemorating the World Children's day on November 20, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) released a report about the effects of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic to children. Generally, children are considered less susceptible to the coronavirus. However, one out of nine COVID-19 patients in 87 countries is youth or children under 20 years old, 11 percent of total infections.

Prolonged school closures have heavy impacts on children. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and social services were terminated, and an increasing number of children can not receive vaccinations and medical care for other infectious diseases.

In October 2020, 265 million children in 135 countries of the world are missing opportunities to eat lunches due to school closures. It is a worrying sign especially for disadvantaged children as the school lunch is the only nutritious meal. More children with malnutrition will be expected to increase.



Students receive their homework in the school yard.

TFT will continue to promote healthy eating habits in developed countries and deliver as many meals as possible to children in need so that we can contribute to adjusting the unequal distribution of food in the world.