

AGFI TRUSTEES UPDATE AUGUST 2017

Dear AGFI Trustees,

When I came on board AGFI in June 2014, the first big task that we had to pull off was an early literacy training (ELT) for our first Unang Aklat partner—the rural health unit (RHU) team of Samal, Bataan. Headed by Dr. Teng Espino, they were a group composed of their town’s only public health nurse and two of her staff, plus the chief midwife. They travelled all the way to our Quezon City office and attended the two-day workshop which went very well and even included a side trip to Greenhills ☺.



AGFI and Samal RHU during the ELT at Adarna House in 2014.

We were a very young foundation then: Unang Aklat was in its infancy and literacy programs coursed through the municipal health care system was something totally new. Even so, Samal agreed to host the flagship program; it was willing to venture into the unknown with us and take on the challenge of promoting early literacy.

Three years, 35 Unang Aklat sessions, two early literacy training workshops, and one reading room later, Samal continues to be a formidable ally in advocating early literacy.

Early this year, Unang Aklat Municipality: Samal (UAM) was launched. Ms. Lyn Almario, Mayor Gene Dela Fuente and Dra. Teng Espino signed the memorandum of agreement (MOA) for its implementation. After the MOA signing, some 45 barangay health workers who represent Samal’s 14 barangays attended the planning session.



Dra. Carmen, Ms. Lyn, Mayor Gene and Dra. Teng during the UAM MOA signing event.



Last August 30, we held the Early Literacy Training for UAM Samal. Resource speakers from The Raya School (Teachers Jeanne Co, Shaira Cometa and Gretel Ablang) and Philippine Ambulatory Pediatric Association-Reach Out and Read's Dr. Angga Quidlat held multiple learning sessions for Samal's 45 barangay health workers. Mayor Gene and Dra. Teng were present at the event and Ms. Queen, a nurse from the Samal RHU, was appointed the new Unang Aklat point person. After this, implementation of UAM Samal project will be in full swing.



Participants of the ELT for RHU Personnel in Samal

When asked why Samal is committed to pursuing the project despite the many challenges that come with it, Dra. Teng declares, *"dahil kahit isang bata lang ang makabasa at mabago ang buhay, worth it na."* Thankfully, we have gone beyond one. To date, we have reached 340 families, 50 RHU workers and given out 783 books in Samal.

We still have a lot of work to do in the coming years for Samal. We will provide books to all of their barangay health stations and training to all their barangay health workers through Read sa RHU, introduce the importance of early literacy to their farthest barangays through Barangay Early Literacy Program and help put up their first municipal library.

Municipalities like Samal give AGFI hope that indeed, our mission is attainable. We know that when heads of local government units truly understand the importance of our advocacy and partner with us, their people take it to heart and they work hard for the cause. If we get to replicate the work being done in Samal in more municipalities in the country, tunay na bawat batang Filipino, maaring makabasa 😊

For the Filipino children,


Ruth Martin-De Guzman

