



**The St. Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) English Language Institute,  
Taunggyi, Shan State, Myanmar, Workshops - June 16 – June 18<sup>th</sup> 2015**

*Building A Comprehensive Community Response through Education  
Partnerships for Children*

**Summary Report – August 2015**

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## Executive Summary

### *Building A Comprehensive Community Response through Education*

#### *Partnerships for Children*

Within a community-capacity building framework, SAG staff and students along with welfare societies, monastic shelters, and other organizations supporting children and women's services, engaged in workshops focused on the development of partnerships across these groups in order to improve community outreach services. Thirty-two participants attended the 3-day course of the workshops. Topics included: Introduction & Learning Activity; Partner & Observer Presentations; Community Capacity Building Definition and Model; Steps for establishing Group Priorities & Opportunities; SWOT Analysis; Development of a Group Goal Statement; and partner site visits and individual and group reflections.

The participant group adopted "*Building a comprehensive community response through education partnerships for children and their environments*" as their group goal statement. Additionally, the participants discussed the need to continue to meet together and partner on services for children. Participants further discussed the desire to meet on a regular basis to form a network of partners committed to aligning and improving community services that support children, women and families. Areas of interest were comprehensive, covering such topics as health care, basic needs for children and child welfare, women's programs, leadership skills and the development of more resources. Improving education and Teacher Training surfaced as priority areas of focus for the majority of participants.

#### **Next Steps**

SAG staff will disseminate follow up information, consisting of this report, a participant's list and materials presented at the workshops. SAG and community representatives will form a Partnership Core Committee that will begin to develop an agenda of future partnership activities, including additional training opportunities. The University of Utah, College of Social Work will join with SAG Core Committee to assist with training topics and resources. There is a plan to conduct another set of workshops in Summer 2016.



# Workshop Schedule

## Day 1: Relationship Building, Information Sharing & Initial Assessment

- Welcome
- Overview of Agenda
- Introductions and Learning Activity
- Community Presentations
- Conversation Café: Small Group Discussions
- Group Presentations: Priorities, Needs and Opportunities for Partnership
- Observer Presentations
- Homework Assignment: *Identity something that you appreciated about today; a new connection that you made; one thing new that you learned that you can apply to your organization*

## Day 2: Building Community Partnerships

- Overview of the Day
- Reflections on Learning from the Previous Day (Homework)
- Capacity Building Partnerships with Community and Organizations: Case Example, UNP Hartland Partnership Center
- Vision Activity: Individual and Small Group Work
- Reflections on Visioning Activity: Group Reports
- Building a Comprehensive Community Response
- SWOT Analysis
- Group Work and Reports
- Site Visits



## Day 3: Building A Comprehensive Community Response through Education

### Partnerships for Children *and the environment*

- Overview of the Day
- Site Visits- SWOT Analysis
- Developing a Partnership Goal Statement
- Plans: Establish Priorities, Identify Strategies, Identify Partners – *Who is Missing?*
- Follow Up and Next Steps
- Workshop Evaluation
- Closing Reflection: Soe Soe Win
- Thank you and Closing Comments: Father Paul Dass
- Graduation – Distribution of Certificates and Group Picture
- Site Visits



# Background

St. Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) English Language Center and Teacher Training Program located in Taunggyi, Myanmar is a Jesuit school that has been in existence for fifteen years. Its primary mission is to serve the poor and to teach the English Language to children and young people in and around Taunggyi, particularly those from a poor economic background. In 2010, SAG began a full time integrated program for students completing their University of Distance Education (UDE). Taught in English, the Integrative Program provides two-years of a liberal arts curriculum and a third year of Professional Education Subjects. SAG students come from all over Myanmar; Shan State, Kayah State, Kayin State, Kachin State and the Irrawaddy Delta Region. Most of them come from economically poor backgrounds. It is the deliberate policy of SAG to train students of such backgrounds so that they can develop themselves and contribute to the betterment of their own communities, especially in the education sector. In 2011, the SAG students began a volunteer teaching program at the Oat Pho Buddhist Monastic Shelter for Children in Taunggyi. Over the years, this program has successfully grown and has had more volunteer students take part in this education engagement with the vulnerable children on a regular basis especially at the monastic shelters. During the school year 2014-15, this outreach program served over 250 children of two monastic shelters in Pan Tha Kwar village and Aye Thar Yar Township, both in the outskirts of Taunggyi (Project Proposal, 2015, Embassy of France in Myanmar grant).

Challenged with a growing number of children in shelter situations, SAG Core Team hosted 3 days of community conversations and workshops to develop a comprehensive community response. Meeting for the first time in June 2015, in Taunggyi, Myanmar, and in partnership with the University of Utah, College of Social Work, St. Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) convened the gathering of 32 community partners including; leaders of monastic shelters, welfare societies, street children's program, women's programs and health groups to address child welfare issues.



# Summary of Workshops

## Introductions & Learning Activity with Yarn

The Workshops' opening activity provided an introduction and asked participants to identify their goals and expectation for working together, establishing goals and expectations for working together over the training period. Participants shared that they were eager to learn more about the mission and programs of attending partners and how they could work together for the betterment of society. Some partners shared that they were challenged with a growing number of people seeking assistance with no additional resources. Partners shared that they were attending the workshops in order to learn from each other and share resources for a more comprehensive response to child welfare issues.

Reflection on Learning Activity: *This is a good activity to help us get to know each other. The yarn pattern is very beautiful and yet very complex just as our community is very complex. Things can be both beautiful and very complicated. We have many challenges to remember but we can work together as well.*



The first day of workshops included presentation by participants, observers and SAG. Working in small groups, participants address the following questions: What priorities or needs stand out to you as the most important to address at this time? What opportunities do you see for us as a group in moving forward? Almost all groups identified a need for improving children's education through *high quality teacher training* as a priority. Other priorities included *working with parents, increasing higher education, human rights education, and employment options for older youth and trainings on child development*. Opportunities included: *working collaboratively with SAG, welfare societies, international organization, government agencies, benefactors, and religious leaders working directly with youth groups*.

At the close of Day 1, participants were asked to do the following homework reflection assignment and Day 2 began with a sharing of the reflections.

**Homework Assignment:** Identity something that you appreciated about today, consider the following: a new connection that you made and/or one thing new that you learned that you could apply to your organization.

### Reflections:

- Sharing with groups is very useful, meaningful and knowledgeable
- Activities are very interesting; really liked how the presentations and learning about other organizations – very clear and presented step by step

- We need to see things more broadly, particularly weaknesses, and thinking about strengths, this is very useful and inspirational
- I even learned from the young ones. I thought I knew a lot about the community and the resources but I learned that I had much to learn.
- Father Amal, very interesting to understand that Myanmar is a rich country and we need to include all our people and the poor
- Connecting with Naung Taung education group; Shwe Taung Tang Monastery education center
- I want to work with “parent love” organization because I really want to teach people who really needs in education and can’t afford to study
- I realized that we really need to try our best for our environment. We need to support people as much as we can.
- I’d be very interested to use the methods used during this seminar in our organization (group sharing, activities, questions...) It is a nice experience to learn more and have new methods and activities for our future workshops and gatherings.
- Interesting learning about presentation of Jesuit social researching by Fr. Amal, PaO women organization; EMR
- Social communication is important
- I appreciate that I can see all of us here want to help people those who are needed.
- I would like to join S.A.G. for my student to be able to learn English
- My students are orphans and HIV positive living. If they can have a better education and can get medical supplies, it would be very good for them.
- Yesterday, I got many experiences from the other organizations and also I knew the value of things from their activities.
- I would like to join and connect every organization that is here because I like these organizations.

### **Forming Partnerships with Communities and Organizations**

As part of a case example presentation of the University Neighborhood Partners, Hartland Partnership Center, participants learned about the development of partnerships across community organizations serving youth and families of refugee and immigrant background and the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Using a strengths-based approach, workshop participants’ discussed community-driven needs assessments and explored how the lessons learned in the Hartland case example could be applied to the local context. Participants were interested in understanding the Salt Lake City context, particularly challenges and success stories related to how groups of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds are able to collaborate. We also began to notice the “spark” in workshop participants following small group activities. Participants began to ask more questions as the training progressed, signaling to us a grasp of the concepts as well as an interest in learning more. The questions evolved into an open and productive dialogue across participants. Similarly, the small group work provided opportunities for community partners to exchange information and begins to make one-on-one connections and plans for follow up. Partnership Principles below served as guiding principles for ongoing community collaborations.

## Partnership Principles

Partnerships:

- Are founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values
- Are beneficial to the community and partnering organizations
- Build interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Include the voices of those impacted by community work in the decision-making processes
- Recognize conflicts as opportunities for collaborative problem-solving
- Can, over time, be integrated into the mission and infrastructure of each partnering institution
- Use a strengths-based approach in which all participants are recognized as teachers and learners in mutually beneficial power-sharing partnerships
- Expect all partners to contribute appropriate resources (time, talents & treasure) to enhance the partnership (*UNP partnership principles, 2002*)



## Assess the Current Situation

Following the Case Example presentation and reflections, small group work began with a Vision Exercise, followed by interactive learning on conducting SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. Participants practiced conducting SWOT analysis during Site Visits to area community partner programs.

## Create Images of the Possibilities

Vision Activity: Imagine it is 10 years from now – what will your community look like? What will be different? If you had all the resources you needed and continued to work together, what would your organization/community look like in 10 years? Below are some participant responses.

### Vision Activity Reflections

*In 10 years the vision will be: 1) the children to be doing better; 2) to make the clinic work for their health needs; 3) and in this monastery environment we want to make it clean and green; and 4) from those students will turn into high quality teachers.*

*My vision is that the poor people understand their human rights; all of the people are able to act like adults in our country and are treated as adults; give more knowledge and information to the youth; so that they too will understand politics and the theories of education*

*We already agree on a focus on more education; we also need youth to know their human rights as a person – let the youth understand this from a very young age; children's rights even among the disabled children; in our education system we learn by memorizing without critical thinking – we want to add that – change the teaching methods to involve sports, agriculture and livelihood.*

### Building a Community Response

The Vision Activity enabled workshop participants to engage in beginning conversations that assisted the groups with identifying community priorities and shared goals across the different community groups. Workshop presentations continued with developing an understanding of what is involved in developing Community Capacity. The following definition of community capacity was used to guide the construction of a Community Goal Statement and the remainder of the group work.

**Community capacity** *is the combined influence of a community's commitment, and their resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities (Measuring Community Capacity Building: A workbook in progress for rural communities. Version 3- 96).*

Workshop participants engaged in a lively discussion regarding the Community Goal Statement. It was very encouraging to see the level of interest in discussing similarities and differences in their understanding of this statement (see below). Participants were proactive in arguing their priorities around working with youth and families, as well as addressing the circumstances that contribute to poverty. Other participants preferred a more focused view on youth only. Additionally, this conversation was complicated by translation and understanding of the word “environment.” However, in all cases, the conversations were robust and participants reported that they were encouraged that there was a space created for dialogue and challenging each other in this way. Overall, participants reported wanting more opportunities to have these discussions and also to think about how to build critical thinking into the education system. There also was a consensus around focusing on “education partnerships.”

**Community Goal Statement:** Building A Comprehensive Community Response through Education Partnerships for Children *and their environments.*

Following the formation of the Community Goal Statement, groups engaged in Developing Strategies and Next Steps for moving the partnerships forward. *Identifying Partners, Develop Strategies, Implementation and Recommendations* provided the framework for the group process. At the conclusion of this work, groups provided a report-out of their plans, including the group's priorities, their strategies for moving forward and where appropriate, identifying additional partners. Below are summary reports from the 5 participating groups.



### **Group Reports (Priorities, Strategies & Partners)**

Group 1 – Priorities are *school management and high quality teachers*. One strategy is to strengthen school management because most of the schools have only been around 3 – 4 years, so they are very new to administration and in need of learning good management skills to stabilize in their work. Additional strategies include collaboration across the schools that will enable partners to learn from one another and improve school/organizational management. A second priority is attracting high quality teachers for high quality schools. This strategy includes focusing on continuing education for existing teachers and scholarships that will enable the recruitment and training of more teachers. Partners: SAG, schools, NGO attending the workshops.

Group 2 – Priorities are *firm linking with other communities – a must! and developing a strong infrastructure*. Strategies include collaborating with persons and groups who have the same direction and goals. For example, SAG has a very firm connection to others, and

building on these connections is important. Additional discussions are necessary; we must often talk about important things; not just happen at once; must talk over and over; different groups meet regularly to discuss things. Additionally, “there should be dedicated and committed people in developing infrastructure; you start from very basics chairs and table and you can turn those resources into classes for example: from yesterday, we see that 80 students are taught how to dress and act well; I want to train students to have critical thinking skills.” Partners: EMR, Train the Trainer Models with Train the trainer models with appropriate organizations.

Group 3 – Priorities are *good leadership role, unity as a group and moving to action and evaluation*. Leadership skills are needed to provide guidance about what to do and how to do it. Strategies include developing unity as a group. All the leaders need to come together in unity so that they can accomplish things; after the unity they really need to do concrete actions; the fruit will come in the evaluation of what they do; they will know the fruit of the unity is what happens. Evaluation and collaboration are strategies for providing further development. Partners: Multi-sector approach (i.e., health and education), need collaboration across organizations that are attending the workshops.

Group 4 – Priorities are *finances, infrastructure, management skills, and high quality teachers*. Finances are a priority. For example, the school buildings need attention and we need teachers who are highly qualified and leaders who have school management skills. Strategies include increased collaboration across groups, education workshops, and developing unity among the teachers and staff. Character and moral development is important for youth. Youth need health care. Some schools have been proactive in developing businesses to support the schools. For example, one school operates a restaurant and this provides funds for the school operations and building improvements. Partners: More collaboration across groups and organizations.

Group 5 – Priorities are *expanding resources for food, health care and education*. One of the priorities is to expand resources by developing new funding sources. Strategies will involve finding partners in each of these areas. For example, working with doctors or health related groups for medical care and with education partners to develop vocational programs and high quality teacher education. Additionally, offering health care seminars and continuing education for teachers. Other priorities include trainings for professional careers. Partners: Additional connections with other groups, organizations and partners who can assist with fundraising efforts.



## Themes

The following themes emerged from the workshops.

### Partnership Development

- Continued collaborations – community partners meeting regularly for continued work on developing partnerships
- Establishing shared goals, resources, and actions
- Linking with other communities
- Information exchange – opportunities to learn from each other
- Interest in working with local group and also connecting more with EMR and Father Amal
- Developing additional partnerships with SAG

### High Quality Education

- Recruiting high quality teachers
- Workshops for teachers – suggested topics: developing critical thinking and higher level thinking skills, child development and child welfare, working with parents, school management, finance and administration.
- Increasing opportunities in higher education, including vocational training and education that leads to employment and professional careers

### Resource Development

- Expanding resources for food, health care and education
- Workshops on fundraising, grant writing, resource management
- Expanding donors and benefactors
- Developing a multi-sector approach (i.e., business, employers, doctors, other professionals)

### *Closing Reflection: Daw Soe Soe Win (SAG faculty and Outreach Program Coordinator)*

*It is very encouraging to me that we are all able to come together. Thank you to everyone for your time in healing the next generation. The numbers of children are increasing – more families are coming and we need to look ahead to the future of what we can do for all the children; I am looking forward for us to have a chance to get together again so there can be more sharing and discussions so that we can share together and accomplish more things together in the future. What has been achieved it is not just me but it is everyone that participates. For me also I have come in contact with so many people of different groups and learned from many different teachers insights. We come from a back ground where rarely discuss. Here we have come together now in a new culture of discussing things together as a group and I do believe that through this kind of discussion and deliberations and that we might be able to do more. We can apply this method of discussions in teaching and in schools. This kind of method can be used to help our teacher be more confident and they can express what they think and feel. We come at teaching more from a memorizing mentality and we need to*

*move to a more critical thinking method; this kind of workshop is a friendly atmosphere so we get to know each other better. Through this workshop I have learned many values and I will apply these methods in my teachings in my classes. Just three days of workshop is quite short but it is quite precious. We are diverse but through discussion we can come together for a new generation. In our country education is very important; it is like a living water – if the education is good then things will just flow – so we need to be brave to change to a great teaching method and need to sacrifice many things so we are teachers for a new generation. We need to be flexible to learn new things for the next generation that will have new responsibilities. I am so pleased and grateful for those who sponsored these three days; especially to the SAG teachers (as translated).*

### **Acknowledgements**

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to partner with SAG faculty, staff and students and the community groups engaged in the workshops. Thank you to the community partners who graciously hosted the group at site visits. It was inspiring to see your work. We send our heartfelt thanks to the SAG faculty, staff and students that supported the development of the workshop topics and content delivery; they were our constant companions and guides, providing high quality translation and cultural consultation in order that we could continually adapt our materials in ways that were relevant to the local community. SAG Core Committee members were extremely gracious with their time and support. Their guidance was crucial to the success of these trainings. We greatly value the experience of all participants and we are inspired by your passion and commitment to the community. In closing, we wish to share our appreciation to the University of Utah, Asia Center, and the College of Social Work, Social Research Institute for their financial support of this partnership.