



**The St. Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) Institute of Higher Studies
Taunggyi, Shan State, Myanmar, Partnership Workshops**

Community Partner Day

&

Outreach Program

Community Site Assessments

Summary Report –October 2016

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Summary Report

Background

In June 2015, St. Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) Institute of Higher Studies in partnership with faculty from the College of Social Work at the University of Utah, USA., hosted its first gathering of community partners for a 3-days course of workshops. Within a community-capacity building framework, SAG Institute staff and students along with representatives from 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.

During the 2015 workshops, 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 (additional information is available in the 2015 SAG Community Forum Workshop Report).

Based on foundational meetings and conversations that transpired throughout the year, SAG Institute Core Team identified the following goals for the June 2016 workshops.

- Conduct a Community Day Forum to provide updates on SAG Institute Outreach program and exchange information about current community priorities
- Provide training to a team of SAG Institute faculty and 4th year students on community practice frameworks and conducting outreach program assessment
- Disseminate the finding of outreach program assessment to community partners
- Build the capacity of SAG faculty and students through expanded partnerships and trainings
- Engage a select group of 4th year students in an online social work certificate program with the College of Social Work
- Work collaboratively with SAG faculty and CSW faculty to integrate social work curriculum in the current SAG Institute curriculum

Workshop Schedule

Day 1: Relationship Building, Information Sharing & Initial Assessment (Participants: Select Faculty & 4th Year Students)

Introductions and Overview of the Agenda

- Welcome
- Partners Interviews
- Overview of the Workshop Goals
- Visioning Activity – *What do you want for the children of your country in the future?*

Research

- The Research Process
- Assessment Research
- Site Assessments

Theoretical Framework

- Social Change Theory
- Social Justice
- Ecological Theory
- Eco-Maps

Introduction to Partnership with Community

- Review of Community Partner Day 2015
- Principles of Partnership
Building Community from the Inside Out

Day 2: Community Partner Day

Participants: Community Partners, Faculty, and 4th Year Students

Introductions and Overview of the Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions – Fr. Paul Dass, S.J.
- Small Group Interviews - Community Partners identified name, mission and priority areas and challenges. - a mapping activity including assets, needs, opportunities for partners coming together throughout the day.
- Welcome & Introduction of Dr. U Aung Than Maung, Minister of Ethnic Affairs
- Dr. U Aung Than Maung's Presentation

- Partner Presentations
- Dr. U Aung Than Maung's Response

Community – Identifying Resources

- Debrief and Overview
- 2015 Reports/Highlights of Learning
- Community Updates
- SAG Updates
- Mapping Exercise
- Group Reports

Day 3: Community Practice Frameworks

(Participants: Select Faculty & 4th Year Students)

Community Frameworks for Research

- De-brief and Process Community Partner Day
- Video – *Danger of a Single Story* & Discussion
- Centering Community Knowledge
- Asset-Based Community Development
- Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research

The Research Process

- Locating Workshop Participants in the Research
- Reflection Exercise: What Shapes People's Lens?
- Identify Stakeholder Groups - Data Sources (Who do you want to talk to and why?)
- Asset-Based Community Development

Developing the Data Collection Plan and Methods

- Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research
- Designing the Data Collection Plan
- Conducting Focus groups
- Developing Questions

Day 4: Data Gathering

- Participants break up into 4 teams and visit Outreach sites

Day 5: Data Analysis

- Personal Reflections
- Debrief – Processing the Data Collection Day – what did we learn?
- Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

- Small group work for Data Sorting and Coding

Day 6: Initial Assessment Findings

- Student Presentations of Initial Finding to Community Partners
- Students Receive Certificates of Completion

Community Partner Day



Community Partner Day: Highlights

Dr. U Aung Than Maung, Minister of Ethnic Affairs, Shan State, attended Community Day as the guest of honor. One of the goals of the day was to connect key community partners who are engaged with providing social services to vulnerable populations in the broader Taunggyi region with Dr. U Aung Than Maung. The community members' plan was to share their missions, goals and also the challenges that they are experiencing with providing for the welfare of children in the region. Community partners representing monastic shelters, welfare societies, health care and NGO's expressed their appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to meet with the Minister and the opportunity to share more about their organizations. The group stated that during the previous government, there was not the chance to meet like this and discuss the state of caring for children and those living in poverty. With new leadership, they were optimistic that new relationships could be established and a way forward for working together. Participants acknowledged that his attendance this day gave them hope that things would be different. Working in teams, community partners shared challenges in the areas of: basic needs, education, health, child labor, substance abuse and mental health issues. The following is a summary of issues of highest need.

Basic Needs

- Monastics Shelters and boarding schools do not have the necessary resources to adequately provide for the well-being of children in their care. They lack clean water, food, sanitation and financial resources to provide suitable housing and education facilities.
- There is an increase in the numbers of children coming to the shelter and from more diverse backgrounds. The shelters are dependent on donor support and this has decreased while the numbers of youth and the severity of the problems children are experiencing is increasing.

Education

- All partners emphasized the need to focus on education for all children, beginning in elementary grades. There is also need to increase the number of teachers, support for teacher education and teachers' salaries. One of the attending Abbotts describe it as follows;

The quality of education in elementary school is poor and this means children do not get a good foundation; they do not understand the lessons they are taught in school. Teachers cannot give their full attention to the children, as they need to find their own support, their own food. We need to increase the teacher's salary and the number of teachers. Now there are too many students per teacher. We need to attend to the welfare of our people and our children. We would like to meet more often with our government officials in order to discuss issues; only when we can talk to the officials can we solve problems together; we request the presence of government officials to work on these needs in our society.

Health

- The health partners shared that their mission is to assist patients that cannot afford health care. They provide free services and have a focus on eye problems and blindness. In one year they provided services to 200 patients and in the 2015 and 2016 year thus far, they served 500 patients. However, due to a lack of resources they have not been able to treat patients for the past four month. There is a great need for equipment for operations, as well as, doctors who are trained in this area.
- Additionally, one organization shared their experiences with schools that are not accepting children with HIV and the importance of having education available for all children.

Child Labor

- Community partners working with street children also engaged in conducting a community assessment focused on child labor and the number of children not in school. They explained:

We are collecting survey data on child labor, doing some research on our own; some shops don't allow us to enter into their shops and do not want us to get into their compound. We need assistance and suggestions from the group on how to get access to these places. When we survey

children, they do not believe us when we tell them we are there to give them new chances for training. Developing relationship is a big challenge to overcome and to gain their trust.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues

- Staff from monastic shelters, welfare societies and the street children's program discussed their concerns regarding the high use of drugs among the youth. The staff working with street children shared:

Youth around our compound are using drugs; many of them are our students; the main drug that small children are using is sniffing glue; there is very little participation with government officials in this matter. When we talk about drugs they are not very active. In one case we tried to do drug prevention education in a school site and we were asked to leave the school when they tried to talk about drugs. People don't have idea about rules and regulations to promote awareness of drugs use with children.

Dr. U Aung Than Maung's Response to Community Partners

One of the most impressive experiences of the day was Dr. U Aung Than Maung's thoughtful and detailed response to the community partners. He listened carefully, taking notes and at the end of the organizational presentations; he responded to each of the partners individually providing recommendations and referrals for assistance with their issues, as well as, areas that would need more time and where he could not assist. In particular, the Minister shared that many of the social issues discussed here are not only specific to Taunggyi and the Shan State, rather they are country-wide issues and that reform will take time. He elaborated on his desire to assist and bring these concerns to higher officials.

I never dreamed of this position that I am in now but I am very happy if there are things that I can do to help my society. Call me if you have questions; visit me at home; I am alone at home; come to my house; feel free to come and visit with me anytime. I have written some reports to the higher level official; what you have told me will not be forgotten; what you have told me will be reported over and over again. Please call me; phone me – mention that I was here and your issues so I remember and will be aware of it again.

Dr. Aung Than Maung shared that he is personally invested in supporting education and willing to provide some resources. He is connected with an organization with retired people like him who want to raise money to give to education projects. Together, the group have been supplying school with text books and story books and he would like to help the schools in this area with providing text books and sports equipment. He indicated that he would be in contact with them to start helping with some of the needs he has heard about at this meeting.

Feedback from Community Partners: Ideas for Future Gatherings

Community partners participated in providing feedback and ideas for future gatherings. Below is a list of their recommendations.

- Consider how SAG Institute can develop a Community Research Center

- Develop a Training Center for Community Partners (Topics ideas below)
 - Social research tools
 - Effective approaches to addressing social problems
 - Continue networking and collaboration with community partners
 - Leadership Skills/To challenge and to be challenged
 - More Community Partner Day gatherings

Closing Reflection: Khui Shing Ling (as translated)

We are here to talk about our hope and our experiences; so happy to hear from all of you; for being open to us; please know that we are not asking like we are the children and you are the parents; we understand that we want a collaboration that can be very good if we work together; It was never possible to stand near a minister when I was here but you come to us and come among us and we are very happy; you talk about education, drugs, and drugs are what is destroying our development; a big problem; everything that we need for education and drugs effects everyone. I hope we learn from all of us – from one another, we are not super men; we cannot just do anything alone but we have to work together; we can do a lot of things if we collaborate. At times our difficulties can make us hopeless but hearing from everyone and coming together talking about our difficulties makes it is easier to face these things together; we cannot continue fighting; for me this is a big insight.

Outreach Program Site Assessments



The Research Process

The research questions for the Outreach Program Site Assessment focused on learning about the experiences (both strengths and challenges) of those who participated in the

Outreach Program in the past year and what they would like to see happen in the future. Quantitative data regarding the number of children, teachers and Abbots were also gathered. Four sites were identified for participation in the assessment and were contacted ahead of time and agreed to participate. Three of the sites were monastic shelters and one (Periurban) was an urban community center. One monastic shelter, Yantaiaung, had not yet hosted the Outreach Program thus only future oriented questions were asked here.

The assessment team identified all the key stakeholders including Abbots, site teachers, other site staff, students of various ages, SAG Outreach Program leaders and SAG Outreach Program teachers. Data collection methods and specific interview questions were designed to match each stakeholder group's needs and abilities. The assessment team split into groups to gather as much data as possible in the limited time available. At each site some team members met with the Abbott while others met with teachers, children and other staff. Informed consent was obtained verbally in each session. Data were collected using digital recorders, researcher notes and participant drawings.



Outreach Program Assessment Sites

Site 1: Pyinyar Ou Yin –The SAG Institute partnership with this site began in 2013. The monastic shelter and school serves 670 youth from grades kindergarten – eighth grade and has 8 volunteer teachers. Many of the children living here come from rural village that are located a distance from schools. At the time of the assessment, 20 SAG Institute students were working onsite in the Outreach program.

Site 2: Seuttathuka – This is a new partnership site with outreach activities beginning in March 2016. This site serves 115 students, with children in kindergarten – 9th grade and 11 teachers. The shelter is expanding, with new classrooms under construction at the time of the assessment. At the time of the assessment, there were 11 SAG Institute students working onsite in the Outreach program.

Site 3: Periurban – A community-based education setting organized by working parents for their children. This site provides education in the evenings and weekends for 200 students ages 10 – 15. The SAG Institute partnership began March 2016 and 12 SAG students taught English, Math and Computer classes during March, April and May.

Site 4: Yantiaung – This shelter serves 277 students across 1st – 7th grade. There are 8 volunteer teachers and the students are primarily from the PaOh and Palaung ethnic communities. The administrator is interested in developing a partnership with SAG Institute. The research team met with the administrator, teachers, staff and students to assess the potential for future SAG Outreach Program activities at this location.



Initial Findings

Strengths of SAG Institute Outreach Program

Participants discussed English language learning, teaching methods, the curriculum as major strengths of the Outreach Program. Moreover, this led to better communication skills across all subjects and an increase in comprehension and retention. Partner sites

commented that SAG focused on developing critical thinking skills and included activity-based lessons.

In addition to the academic improvement seen in the classroom, teachers discussed that this improvement in communication also led to students having more confidence and enable them to have better teaching experiences. For example, students were better behaved in the classroom and they felt pride that they were experiencing success with their lessons. Participants also commented that there was a trusting relationship between the students and the SAG instructors.

The students looked up to the instructors as role models. Likewise, participants commented that the SAG teachers are caring. As one stakeholder shared, *SAG does not only teach the formal lesson from the textbook, but SAG care for the whole child.* Strong trusting relationship had also developed across teachers and administration with SAG. Administrator's discussed that they view SAG Institute as an honorable organization and long-term partner. For example one participant shared, *SAG brings knowledge and more learning ...when we look at SAG, we admire the long term commitment."*

Identified Areas for Improvement

Partners were very positive regarding their relationships with SAG and appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback and discuss areas for program improvement. Several partners acknowledged that providing feedback strengthens the partnership.

Several participants commented that registration was later this year, complicating matters onsite for the partners. In many cases it effected how many children could participate in the Outreach program. Additionally, while many SAG students come with lesson plans, there are also SAG students that come unprepared. Other areas of professionalism, such as arriving on time and being consistent with attendance were also discussed.

Classroom management and discipline was a pervasive theme across all sites. Through the focus group discussions, it became clear that there was a lack of communication between the onsite teachers and SAG students. For example, SAG students differed in their style of classroom management and discipline than that of the site teachers and staff. The two groups were not communicating around this issue, making it difficult for site teachers to maintain consistency. Similarly, there was a lack of communication across these two groups regarding the content of the lessons. Onsite teachers and staff expressed a desire to be more of a team, working and sharing lessons and materials. The onsite teachers were eager to learn and also share their own teaching methods.

Site teachers also discussed that SAG students were very supportive and capable, however, they needed additional training on how to deal with students who were struggling academically. One participant explained, *SAG teacher are good with the faster and clever students, but they ignore the slower students. We need to assist all students, the clever and the slower ones with their learning.*



Future Areas of Partnership

Outreach program partners were very enthusiastic regarding the potential to grow their partnership with SAG and expand the outreach activities. Below are their requests for future work together.

Professional Development of Site Teachers and Staff

- Workshops and Trainings (English, Computer, Social Work) – Site teachers requested training in teaching methods, English, computer skills and psychosocial education. A suggestion for accomplishing this was to offer morning classes for children and evening or weekend program for shelter teachers.

Expand Program Offerings

- Health, Hygiene and Social Skills – Shelter administration and teachers discussed the great need for lessons on hygiene, health and social skills. They suggested that SAG outreach program expand their offerings to include these subjects.

Team Approach to Learning

- Shelter staff expressed their desire to be part of a teaching team with SAG instructors. Site teachers requested that they meet regularly with SAG instructors to discuss children's learning and the areas below.
 - Program coordination
 - Alignment of curriculum
 - Classroom management and creative activities
 - Discussing individual children
 - Co-teaching with SAG instructors

Participant Researchers: Reflections

As primary stakeholders, focus groups were also conducted with the members of the research team. The following list of participant comments provides a snapshot of their reflections

- *We have much to learn from our partners*
- *We can learn from our strengths and our challenges*
- *We must become aware of some of our own stereotypes*
- *We need to do discussions with our community partners more often*
- *We need to be flexible and open to learn from others*
- *The curriculum needs our attention*
- *We need additional training in lesson planning for youth, including creative lesson and methods for teaching youth who struggle with English*
- *We need additional training in classroom management skills*
- *Relationships are important, we need to spend more time developing them with our partners*
- *SAG teachers are role models – we need to be intentional about mentoring students*
- *We need to examine the Outreach Program Structure*
- *Program level decision-making is important. The Outreach Program Coordinator needs to have the authority to make decision and be supported in their decisions*
- *We need clear program policy with accountability - consistent attendance policy for students, i.e., consequences for not attending.*

Site Visit Reflections

As participant researchers the SAG assessment team members were familiar with the sites. At every site the assessment team was warmly welcomed, often with refreshments and extended conversation prior to the interviews. At one site the Abbot asked assessment team members to write their names in his visitor book and took pictures with the team. At the Community Center participants came in the evening after having worked all day and were not likely to have had time even for supper before participating in an extended conversation.

During the site visits, it was evident that community partners have a great respect for the SAG partners and that they appreciated having the opportunity to have these important conversations. On several occasions site administrators and staff commented that they wanted to be part of an ongoing partnership with SAG and that they viewed themselves as all part of team approach, working together to support children's well-being. Similarly, they repeated that they were appreciative of participating in the Community Partner, as well as, the assessment site visits. They requested that there be more frequent gatherings and additional workshops.

Many of the themes expressed by community members during the Partner Day were repeated in the site visits. The SAG assessment team members were very professional in their interactions and were open to both the positive and the challenging comments they received. The familiarity with the sites and the individuals at each site added a level of openness and conversation that would likely not have existed had the assessment team been from outside the community.

Acknowledgements

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Participant Researchers

Maren Seng Pan; Mg Htwe; Bawk San; Ja Mai Aung; Michael Mang; Ling Khui Shing; Nang Mway Mway Min Naung; Sut Ja Noi; Aung Zaw; John Paul; Kyaw Min Htike