Dreaming dreams, despite

She was staring at the rows of dead bodies in the basketball court. Barely four years old, she had no idea what happened. But somehow she knew it shaped the beginning of her dream.

Surviving
How many days it took the authorities to retrieve all the bodies under the rubble of mud and garbage no one remembers anymore. Not the least her generation. They are free from the memories of pain and panic and uncertainties brought by that fateful day when one side of the garbage mountain collapsed, killing hundreds. It has been twelve years. The memories have dimmed. But Payatas continue to face the consequences of failed promises about how it should have been closed long ago.

The dumpsite is both scary and amazing. It is continually expanding, eating the community away, just like a storybook monster, ever so slowly. It is both scary and amazing.

Elsa has come to realize the trashslide was a momentary setback, at least for those who believe Payatas needs it. There had been lots of discussion about dangers versus benefits, which now redounds to actually just the need to manage it better. But to her young mind then, only one thing was sure. She wouldn’t want to live with this ugly mountain.

What’s up?

Grassroots women remember Fukushima
March 9, 2013 - Payatas and Kasiglahan, women held a community event to celebrate the spirit of solidarity that came out of the Fukushima tragedy. “We are not happy for the tragedy, but we are happy for the courage and strength of the Tohoku people...” Elsa Placiente, Adhoc President of the newly-formed women organization, Kaisa declared, Highlights of the event included a fun run and symbolic giant bouquet offering for Tohoku people, capped by a solemn community prayer. More than two hundred people came to participate. A cd-documentation of the event would be sent to a Tohoku counterpart organization as a continuing gesture of solidarity. (contd on page5)
Editorial

Daluyan: an empowerment channel

Strictly, daluyan is a tagalog term for water tunnel, or water pipe. In a wider sense though, it may refer to any channel or any means ‘to distribute.’

Salt aspires to be such channel, a means, a vehicle by which services can be coursed through the grassroots. It is both a commitment and a challenge. Either way, it implies one thing: empowerment.

We think the name of this newsletter aptly reflects our mission, “to empower the people to realize improvement of their lives with confidence and hope.” We mobilize resources, energies, friendship to strengthen community capacities.

Why a newsletter? We know there are thousands out there already. Why add to information overload that nobody might read anyway?

We want to document what we do, celebrate little successes, connect with others. We can do this a hundred times better through this medium.

So if you are reading this, we might have met somewhere down the empowerment road. We hope we continue to hold hands in this challenging journey. Thank you for allowing us to officially list you as a friend.

(apologies for the English medium, it is the language friends across the board understand)

Literary

PINAS
by Calvin Cardano

Ako’y may kakilala
Isang malapit na tropa
Kaakit-akit ang itsura
At saya’y mayaman pa

Ngunit ang buhay niya
Mahahabag ka talaga
Pagkat mga anak niya
Hindi siya inaalala

Mga anak niya sumama sa iba
Pagkat sabi nila

‘Dito mas aangat ka’

Ako’y sobrang naaawa
Kanilang ina’y nagmamakaawa
Ngunit sa labas
Buhay higit maaliwalas

Sana’y matulungan niyo si Pinas
I know a friend
Who is beautiful and rich
But her life-story
Really tugs at my heart
Her children left

And forgot about her
They chose to stay with others
Because as they said
‘We have a better chance here’

I am really sorry for their mother
But they are really determined
To enjoy a better life outside

Please help their mother
The Philippines

(the poet has just graduated high-school. He lives in KV.)

The year that was

Participatory Program Evaluation
December 18, 2012 – The Children Empowerment Program (CEP) successfully culminated an evaluation that engaged the beneficiaries actively. Majority of the beneficiaries were involved in the participatory process that involved 13 workshop groups, 10 focus group discussions and 41 direct interview respondents.

CEP passed all the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability. The PPE took a total of 59 days and run between April to December 2012.

Bankers meet grassroots
September 29, 2012 – BPI-Kalayaan branch has chosen to spend the annual gift-giving event with Payatas children. They donated fifty goody bags and token cash to the institutions. The visitors gamely sang, danced and played with children, even posing for photos. A sumptuous lunch capped the happy occasion. It was a first for both Salt and BPI.

Payatas Demolition
August 28, 2012 – Since the implementation of the Task Force Socialized Housing program, 265 families have been demolished in Lupang Pangako. Of these, 62 families went back to their province, 168 had lipatbahay while 35 families were relocated at Ecoville, San Isidro. Demolition has been
Women empowerment journal

Scavenging to Cross-stitching
Dangdang’s story

I am Oraida C. Punay, 30 years old with three children. My friends call me Dangdang. I am the new leader of Likha Livelihood Program of Salt Payatas Foundation Philippines. I am glad to have quit the dumpsite at an early age.

I live at Lupang Pangako, Payatas in 1989. I was only seven then. It was not easy. There was no electricity, no water, no nearby school. We needed to ride a dumptruck to school in Montalban, Rizal. The Lupang Pangako Elementary School was built only in 1994.

I was in grade four when I learned to scavenge on the dumpsite with my siblings for our school allowance. My father had no work. We were earning about P30-40 a day, dividing it among ourselves.

I graduated from elementary school in 1995. My mother can’t provide for my high school so she sent me to my aunt. In between classes at Ramon Magsaysay, I helped my grandmother with her work as laundry-woman. I graduated eventually. College was impossible. So after high school, I worked one job after another, all on contractual basis, all expired after six months. I was a trimmer in an undergarment factory, a sewer, a service crew in a burger machine. I landed my first, and last, regular employment as a pump assistant in a gasoline station for a minimum wage. It did not last long though as my employer decided to go back to China. I was After a

Dreaming … (contd from page 1)

Struggling
There was never a time that she considered quitting school. She was absolutely sure she will do college. Like many of her lot she has pinned her hope on education. Without it she is aware her chances to a better life are slim, if at all. High school was in itself a feat, a daily struggle. In and out of the house, she had to make do with little, sometimes nothing at all. In her situation, being the youngest doesn’t mean having the best. In a family of ten (two dead at very young age), it simply implies you survive by your own ingenuity. But graduate she did, with good grades to go with it.

Their scholarship is a once-in-a-lifetime chance they could not afford to waste.

The house was a monster eating up the community. She had to make do with little, sometimes nothing at all.

Standing up to the challenge
“My scholarship is all I have,” Elsa quipped. “It helps me a lot with my expenses,” she added, sounding like an appreciative scholar that she is. It encourages me to go on. Her mother is her inspiration she said.

“We needed to ride a dumptruck to school”

She had to make do with little, sometimes nothing at all.

“And all the people around me who believe in my ability,” she added. In a community where most of her age seems to have a family, or begin to go to that direction anyway, Elsa dares to be different. She has set her goal. “I would like to improve myself,” she explained. Asked how she sees herself after college, she said she wants to work and be a better citizen of Payatas. “I will stay and see what I can contribute to the betterment of my community,” she assured.

Remembering her ‘hatred’ of the dumpsite, and her overwhelming desire to stay away from it, Elsa hastened to clarify. “I realized you don’t run away from the problem”. “You have to deal with it,” she profoundly explained.

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Millet is Manager of Salt Children Empowerment Program.
The year that was (contd from page2)

implemented in small packets throughout the previous year. Many observed that there has been no transparency. No timeframe has been made public. Community people were just basically on a wait-and-see attitude. This despite the POG’s official line that there is no demolition, only ‘voluntary effort’ of people to leave the danger zone. By October, 54 units have already been filled. Destination: Ecoville. Each housing unit measures 22 square meters, a space too small for an average Payatas family. There is electricity but no tap water. Drinking water is bought. Infirmary, school, public market and transportation are also absent, contrary to what the law requires of relocation areas. Residents depend on the IPM shuttle bus that runs twice a day (to and from). Failure to catch it means spending P80.00 (2way to Payatas). All other services are accessed from the town centre of San Isidro fifteen minutes away. More are expected to arrive.

Victory in struggle

Salt Scholar passed PUP

Angelica Villon, 16years old, graduated highschool from Justice Cecilia Munoz Palma Highschool in Payatas last March 19. But it was not the only thing that is making her smile these days. She passed the college entrance exams of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Of the 56,637 hopefuls, only 8000 were given the chance to enroll in the biggest state university in the Philippines, population-wise. Angel is a consistent presence in Salt Center in Payatas. She spends her vacant hours helping volunteer guardians maintain the Wakaba library. She also joins in hosting study tours and is often the team leader for many scholars’ projects. Everyone values her voluntary spirit and leadership potentials. Angel plans to pursue a degree in Business Administration.

Salt staff passed ALS

Vicky Castro is among the lucky eight who passed the recent exams for ALS in Payatas. About 78% in her class did not make it. “Talagang gusto kong makapa-sa, pinagbutihan ko ang pa-gahanda,” (I really prepared for it, I really wanted to pass) she said.

Relief Operation in KV

August 10, 2012 – A relief operation was conducted for the victims of floodings caused by habagat rains in Kasiglahan Village in Rodriguez, Rizal. In partnership with the concerned beneficiaries who acted as disaster preparedness committee, Salt distributed relief good items that included rice, instant noodles and some canned goods to 200 families. The project was made possible by donations from Japanese friends.

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Salt Payatas Foundation Philippines is a Japanese institution founded in 1995. It engages in capacity-building programs for the informal settlers and poor families both in the city where they currently are, or in the semi-urban communities where they are later relocated. Salt current programs are Children Empowerment Program, Livelihood and Study Tour. For inquiries please contact Jocelyn Romero, Head, Philippine Office.

Salt welcomes sponsors, donations, pledges to its college scholarship program that kicked off this year as a major component of its Children Empowerment Program. Elsa and ten others are pioneering beneficiaries. For further info, please see staffbox.
Environmental Training for Kids
April 24, 2012 — Twenty-three elementary students from Payatas and Kasiglahan Village participated in the Environmental Awareness Training at La Mesa Ecopark, Lagro, Quezon City. The training was aimed at inspiring the young to value the natural environment. Skogsmulle originated in Sweden and was introduced to the Philippines by the Japan Outdoors Association. The outdoor activity brought the kids to their feet and wit.

Summer Youth Camp 2012

Summer Youth Camp ‘12
April 9-14, 2012 — Seventeen scholars from Payatas and Kasiglahan Village participated in the annual summer youth featuring a wide array of plays, poems, songs, all workshop output. Levy Balgos dela Cruz, main Palanca awardee, served as main instructor.

Solidarity overcomes
March 10, 2012 — Salt held a community parade of balloons as a symbolic culmination of its 11th habit campaign. The campaign included a monthly activity in the communities of Payatas and Kasiglahan in solidarity with the people of Tohoku region in testament to the spirit of solidarity that can be established between countries and peoples, beyond material things.

Noh theatre at CCP
Feb 2013 — Salt scholars were guest performers at Noh theatre production “Ang Paglalakbay ni Sisa” for two years now. Playing among seasoned members of UPCA theatre ensemble, They received very good reviews from the audiences. The Sisa play did the rounds of theatres in Fort Santiago, Intramuros, CCP, UP LB and Diliman.

Yui in Payatas!

Yui in Payatas — helping in the house, Construction; drawing session with the scholars; inspecting the Area.

24-Hour TV feature: Yui in Payatas
In the midst of habagat rains in August last year, a warm surprise greeted Payatas with the visit of a Japanese actress, Yui Aragaki. It was heartwarming to see her around, not minding the difficult environment and trying her best to smile and understand. The visit was part of a program to feature and promote Japanese initiatives in the Philippines to a wider Japanese public back home. It was a new and challenging experience for Salt too. Hosting a visitor of her stature required careful planning, for her and community people. Yui and her team built a house for one of Salt scholars. She also found time to play and interact with them. Thank you Yui san for such a wonderful experience!

What’s up?
(contd from page1)
Twelve Japanese students from Kwansei Gakuin University gamely joined the event. The fun run was organized by women, as a fitting celebration of the International Women’s Day.

Women empowerment journal Dangdang (contd from page3)
Jobless again. I went back to Payatas. Then the trashslide happened. I became active with a community-based organization which was campaigning for good governance. I met my husband, Kerby, around this time.

It was 2002 when I became a sewer for Likha livelihood to which I became a full pledged member a few months later. I had lots of training in this program. In 2010, I was part of a group that attended a four-month computer course at Xavier Training School. I am luckier to have the option to quit dumpsite when I did. Many women I know today continue to go up the garbage mountain by necessity (no one does it by choice of course). Women need to be stronger as an individual and as a group. It is never too late to band together as sisters in our common struggle for a better life. I dream for my family. But also for Likha, so that helps change Payatas for the better.