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Dear Reader,

Greetings from Manila, the Philippines!

The city of Manila is full of traffic, it’s hectic, chaotic and polluted. This is the reality we face on a daily basis. On the other hand we see the beauty and dynamism of the Filipino young people – also here in the poorest part of Manila. The students of Young Focus give us sparks of hope. They made 2016 an amazing year for the staff team as we saw tremendous growth and development in their lives.

First of all we had a rapid growth in the number of preschool children. More than 200 went through the preschool in 2016. Also, almost 600 students attended elementary, high school and college. In addition about 100 children and young people were part of our ‘catch up’ programs: youth who had dropped out of school and were given opportunities to go back to school.

One highlight was the purchase of another learning center which will be used for an even bigger preschool (we are planning to have 450 children) for the next school year in 2017. The building needs some renovation though before we can use it.

Another highlight was ‘Posible’ (Tagalog word for ‘Possible’) campaign in December 2016 (see cover and page 9). Young Focus beneficiaries express their successes on huge billboards in the community.

I hope that you will be encouraged by the updates in this report. It only gives a summary of all that happened, yet it does reflect, I think, the blessings Young Focus received in 2016.

Warm Regards,

Paul van Wijgerden
Managing Director & Founder Young Focus
**Background**

In the Smokey Mountain area of Manila, tens of thousands of families rely on scavenging and recycling garbage for a living. Financial constraints, as well as a lack of educational and social support mean that many children are unable to complete their education, and in turn, are trapped in poverty. The average income for a family is $5 USD/day, meaning that many families cannot afford to send their children to school.

Young Focus has been working with children and their families in the Smokey Mountain area since 2008. Young Focus believes that education is the most powerful tool to give children and young adults so that they are able to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty. Young Focus therefore focuses on providing access to education, as well as the opportunity to develop intellectually, emotionally and psychologically. Young Focus enrolls children into government education, providing them with extra tutorials after school and at the weekend, and for those who have dropped out, they are provided with ‘catch-up’ education programs. As well as this, Young Focus runs a preschool for the little ones.

**Why education?**

Young Focus strongly believes in a holistic approach as far as child and youth development is concerned. That holistic approach goes hand in hand with believing in the potential of each child no matter what their psychological, mental, social or academic obstacles are. Young Focus also covers all ages in terms of development: starting at the preschool level up through college or university, and even beyond as Young Focus helps the graduates to find a job. Young Focus operates very close to, and in the community.

Young Focus believes that long-term investment in education is the most effective way. Our costs are low in that we use the existing government education system, acting as a ‘catalyst’ we work within this infrastructure. By not having our own ‘school’, we keep costs low, whilst maximizing impact through our comprehensive after-school tutorial programs, which also encourage creative development and personal growth.
In 2016, Young Focus carried out an extensive survey in the Smokey Mountain area. One of the objectives was to build a basis for strategy planning. The collected data was very helpful.
In 2016, 289 children attended Young Focus classes in our preschool (Child Care PLUS). The curriculum has been developed with The Bridge, an international school based in Manila, and the focus is on creative learning. Each child receives a daily meal, and there is training every weekend for parents on nutrition, life skills, play and understanding more about the importance of early childhood education. When children reach the age of 5, Young Focus enrolls them into a local government school.

Early childhood education is often neglected in the poor communities Young Focus works in. Lack of resources is often a hindrance with the result that children in these communities experience a bad ‘educational start’. They are behind in their development by the time they start elementary school. In 2016 Young Focus invested more in early childhood education than ever before. And that was just a beginning...

Sab (not her real name) used to cry when she attended the preschool. However, as she continued in Child Care PLUS Sab began to change as a student, developing self-confidence and expressing her capabilities.

“When Sab started in the preschool she didn’t know how to hold the pencil properly. She was always crying and looking for her grandmother but we saw her potential and discovered how she was doing well with all the activities. She quickly learned how to write her name, read in English and Filipino and developed enthusiasm in eating vegetables and nutritious meals.”

— Theresa, CC PLUS Teacher

With the help of our partner Firetree Asia, Young Focus has been able to purchase a building that will be turned into a second preschool for the next school year 2017/2018. The building still needs a lot of attention before the preschool program can use it. The goal for the next school year is to provide preschool education for 450 children. The building can also be used as a training and education center for older children on Saturdays.
For students aged 5 to 20+, Young Focus provides school fees, uniforms, books and other school materials so that they can attend government schooling. These are school items which are required by the local schools, but many families – without support – would not be able to afford them. In addition, Young Focus runs tutorials for all students in the program at the Student Center, which has a computer room, a library, classrooms and recreational areas for students to use. Creative activities are also held throughout the week, and students are encouraged to drop in to participate. The coordinators and the social workers provide specialized support for families who need it, and there are many activities for parents to ensure they stay engaged and keep their children in school.

In 2016 the government added two more years to the existing 4 years of high school education. That meant that in the school year 2016/2017 all Young Focus high school students moved on to ‘senior high school’ - after completing 4 years of high school. This presents extra challenges: parents will have to wait two more years before their children can help them with financial support for the family through earning an income. It also means that the students themselves are in need of 2 more years of financial support to finish their education.

Besides the 2 extra years of education, the government also added Kindergarten as an extra year before entering grade 1 for all children of 5 years of age.

Both implemented additions have not been fully developed yet and have been experiencing some start-up difficulties. Nevertheless Young Focus hopes that the extra years of education will benefit and raise the level of the educational system in the Philippines.
YoUNgLI (Young Unlimited) works with the most vulnerable 15+ year olds who have never received an education and many of whom are addicted to solvents. They are provided with a safe space to hang out and receive training in hygiene, education, personal coaching and life skills with the aim of recapturing their love for education and re-enrolling them in school.

YoUNgLI has a drop-in center located very close to the community where they live. The surroundings of the community are filthy (see picture on top on page 3), but the drop-in center is a clean, safe place where they can entertain themselves and receive practical encouragement as well as basic education.

YoUNgLI participants were invited to a campground in the hills of Tagaytay far from the city for a few days. They enjoyed the beauty of nature besides team building and life skills sessions. It was an experience that truly impacted their lives.

Jay (not his real name), who is 15 years old, has been part of YoUNgLI since February 2016. Coming from a broken family, Jay was always moving from one home to another. He ended up staying in ‘building two’ of Temporary Housing (one of the communities Young Focus is working in). At 13 years old Jay learned how to sniff glue and use crystal meth. He was caught up in negative peer pressure, joining fights and gang wars.

But since joining YoUNgLI, Jay has started to take care of himself. He left Temporary Housing and reunited with his sister who is living with her family in ‘Happyland’ (a nearby community).

Jay about himself:
“The old Jay sniffed glue, used crystal meth and joined fights. The Jay that people know now has stopped using solvents, dreams of going back to school, becoming a policeman and being reunited with his younger siblings. I am thankful to be part of YoUNgLI because they are helping me to have a better future. I really enjoy our activities especially when we discuss about giving respect and being a better person.”
Throughout 2016 we saw significant growth – in terms of numbers of both beneficiaries and staff, as well as in the development of the programs.

By the end of 2016 Young Focus employed 40 staff members.

<table>
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<th>IN ALL YOUNG FOCUS PROGRAMS:</th>
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<td><strong>1020</strong> CHILDREN</td>
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- **535** students enrolled in governments schools, benefiting from Young Focus school sponsorship programs
- **289** children were provided with quality early childhood education which prepared them for elementary education
- **41** ‘older’ drop-outs with specific needs were coached through life skills and daily support
- **105** students enrolled in colleges and vocational schools
- **405** children received daily a nutritious meal
- **1020** families were given social support, counseling, training and family assistance
- **17** students graduated from college
- **50** out-of-school children are given elementary education to prepare them to go back to a regular school
If you had ever traveled this particular road in Tondo, Manila, where the old dumpsite of Smokey Mountain was located, you would have noticed at least 10 huge billboards in succession, advertising various cheap alcoholic drinks. Imagine what kind of message it was sending out; promoting cheap alcohol in one of the poorest communities in the country.

About two years ago Young Focus realized that here was a great opportunity to spread a message of hope within the community.

With the help of a sponsor and an advertising company, Young Focus took the radical step of making use of the billboard space, replacing the alcohol advertising with positive messages to inspire the local community, as well as anyone driving past.

Ten new billboards have been installed featuring nine stories from people within the Smokey Mountain area community. These heroes continue to defy grueling odds waged by extreme poverty. They are men and women of courage who have not given in to despair, they fought and continue to fight daily to imagine and rebuild a better future for their families.

Gerson Martin, 27, is among the featured residents whose story is truly inspirational. His father was a scavenger on the Smokey Mountain dumpsite. At the age of 15, he started working alongside his father picking through the landfill’s garbage to help support their family. He was also a beneficiary student of Young Focus, studying Computer Education. After graduation, he returned to Young Focus to work as a teacher and to inspire new students. “Dream your dreams again,” he says. “Poverty is not a hindrance to reach them.”

Rosalie Lorenzo is another featured resident who had a malnourished daughter who was often sick, and needed to go hospital almost every week. She enrolled her child at the Young Focus preschool, which ensures children get access to early education and where they get nutritious meals daily. Rosalie noticed that her child’s health improved and her malnutrition problem was addressed. Rosalie then volunteered in the Combat Malnutrition Core Team, a group of highly committed mothers who untiringly offer their services, especially with the cooking and serving of healthy meals to all undernourished beneficiaries of Young Focus. She joined because she wanted to continue the nutritious meals her child gets at home and to educate her fellow mothers in the neighborhood, saying: “With only a small budget of P150 (USD 3) per day, it is indeed possible to prepare healthy food for your family.”

There are a lot more stories of featured residents who have proved that positive change is possible even in the face of so many hardships in life. These are real people with real life stories. Their testimonies remind us that we should never lose hope, and that difficulties cannot keep beautiful things from happening in someone’s life.
FAMILY CARE

Young Focus gives training on health, hygiene, family planning and parenting skills to all parents of Young Focus students. Engaging the parents is vital so that they have the skills, social support and knowledge to bring up their children in the best way possible and can support them during their studies.

Helen has been a Young Focus Family Area Leader since 2014 and has two children in the Young Focus sponsorship program. Talking to her, you can see that she really enjoys helping Young Focus in every way she can. She oversees 38 families in one of the communities and, all smiles, she encourages other parents to engage in activities to help them realize the importance of education for their children.

“We have better communication now as a family. We talk about our problems and discuss them among ourselves unlike what we did before. Through the activities in Family Care I’ve learned to be open, which has helped strengthen our relationship as a family.”
— Helen, Family Care Area Leader

The goal of Family Care to help families be empowered is being fulfilled with the help of parents like Helen. We also aim to see more parents actively involved in Young Focus, so creating more opportunities to improve their families and daily life.

Many children in Tondo are undernourished, so Young Focus provides nutritious and healthy meals for all children in the Love2Learn and Child Care programs. In addition, teaching on nutrition, health and hygiene is given to all mothers and tailored daily training for a specific group of mothers who form the ‘Combat Malnutrition Core Team’ is also provided.

Angelie Castillo joined the ‘Combat Malnutrition Core Team’ in 2015. Her child is a sponsored student of Young Focus who used to be one of the malnourished children we were helping. Prior to joining the ‘Core Team’ Angelie was a shy housewife with not many friends. She started volunteering in Child Care PLUS and found herself liking it. From there, she attended all the training activities and eventually became a ‘Core Team’ member.

“Joining the ‘Core Team’ has really helped me a lot when it comes to my relationships with other people because I used to be really shy. I am really happy that I can practice what I have been learning in our lessons as a ‘Core Team’ member. My purpose as a mother is broader now. Young Focus is really a great help. That’s why I am taking part in the programs because that’s one way of helping my child as well.”
— Angelie Castillo, Core Team Member

Young Focus not only wants to see the youth reaching their full potential, but we also want their parents to develop as well and, thus empowered, contribute even more to their family.
OTHER HIGHLIGHTS IN 2016

Summer Camp 2016
Love2Learn students and some YoUNgLI youth took part in the 3-day camp in Calauan, Laguna. The event was sponsored by AXA. The camp’s theme was ‘I can be the best that I can be’.
The program included: human bingo, movie review, group discussion, an ‘Amazing Race’, tie-dying t-shirts, zip line, swimming, badminton, basketball and volleyball, card and board games.
AXA volunteers gave advice and shared with the kids about continuing their studies, even through difficulties.

This year’s group of students from Groevenbeek (a high school in the Netherlands) were able to spend time with - and get to know - students of Young Focus Philippines. Their activities were both enjoyable and educational.
They went to the community where most of the students live and visited them in their homes. They also observed the public school facilities.

A special ‘Swan Show’ was organized for the announcement of the 4 students who would be visiting the Netherlands in April 2017.
Groevenbeek students were challenged by the Young Focus students to try Pinoy foods like ‘Balut’ (fertilized duck egg that is boiled and eaten from the shell), and enjoyed cooking adobo and singing like a Filipino.
They also toured through Manila, going to areas like Chinatown, Quiapo and Divisoria (experiencing what it is like to shop like a local Filipino), and visited the older Spanish part of the city called ‘Intramuros’. In addition they went hiking on Mount Batulao, which was a pleasant escape from the heat from the city.

Gardening
Raul Noble, an agriculturist, taught Young Focus students about sustainable backyard gardening that aims to improve nutrition while also trying to reduce poverty by providing both food security and extra income.

Theater exposure
High school and college students participated in playback theater where a group of professional performers created a short theater piece on the spot, and Young Focus students then performed their very own playback.
The workshop was held and sponsored by the Performing Arts and Recreation Center.

Art Workshop
Author and illustrator, Lizette Claudio shared her knowledge and skills on coloring and calligraphy with girls aged 12 and older during an art workshop.

Dance workshop
Grades 7 to college students spent 3 weeks of July 2016 in a dance workshop with Dutch volunteers.
The idea came up to include more reading in the English tutorials on a regular basis. The staff team had multiple goals: to improve the students’ reading fluency in English, to give the students the opportunity to cultivate pleasure - as well as discover their taste - in reading, and to encourage their use of the library.

Young Focus holds ‘Reading (English) For Pleasure’ sessions every third Saturday of the month. For the college students they follow this simple format: The students are given about 5 - 10 minutes to choose a book; then have between 20 and 30 minutes to quietly read; finishing off with about 20 to 30 minutes to share their reading experience with their fellow students.

“My impression has been that, though reading may not be every student’s passion, our goals are being achieved: an enjoyment of reading is slowly but surely growing among many students, as well as the discovery of their personal taste in books; their fluency in reading English is increasing, and they are growing more familiar with the idea of using a library for pleasure. They are indeed ripe for appreciating and enjoying our new library!” — Ann van Wijgerden, Communications

The Junior Chamber International Philippines (JCI) hosted an event called BOOKLAT. It was a fundraiser event for the new Young Focus Library which will be functional by 2017! It was well attended by students and local artists whose artwork proceeds went towards this library project.

All the support that Young Focus is getting also helps to motivate us to continue with our goal to engage students in reading for pleasure!

Rich (not his real name) was able to overcome many challenges and is now a graduate in Hotel and Restaurant Services.

“Before Rich’s mother died in 2012, she asked his student coordinator to look after him and see to it that he would not give up his dream of graduating from college.”
— Rameses, Assistant College Coordinator

Throughout his journey in school, Rich faced many problems such as bad influence from peers, financial problems and family concerns. He almost gave up during those times. He lost sight and hope of his goals and he just wanted to work in order to help his father cover their family expenses. Young Focus continued encouraging him to finish his studies first in order to be of bigger help to his family later.

Rich practiced being more open in expressing his difficulties and through the life skills sessions and counseling with Young Focus coaches he learned to balance his life and see poverty and problems in a different way.

Now he is working and supporting his siblings and father, with real hope for a better future especially when all his siblings graduate from college too.
Student Education
Grade 1 - Grade 12 and College
Sponsorship and coaching of elementary, high school and college students. In December 2016 Young Focus had 425 students in grade 1 to grade 12 and 105 college students. 17 students graduated from college.
The sponsorship and coaching give children and young people the opportunity to develop to their full potential at all educational, creative and social skills levels and to have a job following graduation.

Love2Learn
Love2Learn motivates, stimulates and encourages children and their parents concerning the importance of education, and to prepares the children for enrolling (again) at a local school.

PostCare
Children who have gone through one of our ‘catch-up’ programs like Love2Learn and are back in a regular school, become part of the PostCare follow-up program. A few times a week they get extra lessons and nutrition. A group of 25 students were part of PostCare from June 2016 onwards.
PostCare maintains the momentum they experienced when participating in the catch-up programs so they will continue to be equipped through special coaching and tutorials and stay in school.

Fair Jewelry
‘Fair trade’ and job skills training for college students to (financially) support them and their families. A total of 20 were served in 2016.
Fair Jewelry ensures that students are able to complete their college education. Students are trained in making jewelry which is sold, thus providing financial support to cover any extra expenses (such as food and transportation costs) during their studies.

Child Care PLUS
Nutrition, life skills, play and basic education for preschoolers (3-5 yrs old). In the school year 2016/2017 (starting in June 2016) we had a total of 289 children.
Child Care PLUS provides a quality early childhood care program which helps the child's social/emotional, physical and cognitive development and prepares them for elementary education.

Combat Malnutrition
In the school year 2016/2017, 405 children received a daily nutritious meal from Combat Malnutrition while attending class. The program adds teaching on nutrition for all mothers, as well as daily training for a specific group of mothers who participate in the ‘Nutrition Core Team’.
Combat Malnutrition is a complementary nutrition program that eliminates malnutrition and promotes healthy nutrition, also educating mothers on nutrition and on how to cook nutritious meals within a specified budget.

Family Care
‘Family Care’ gives social support, counseling, training and assistance to all Young Focus parents (the parents of all children and students who are Young Focus beneficiaries) to enhance their individual and collective well-being, also helping them develop their skills and their ability to resolve (family) problems. Family Care served more than 1000 families in 2016.
Family Care empowers parents with skills, confidence and knowledge on how to run a family, how to be good parents and deal with difficult issues mostly caused by poverty.
N.B. In the programs Combat Malnutrition and Family Care, Young Focus gives health education, training/ teaching the parents on hygiene, health, and family planning.

YoUNgLI (Young Unlimited)
“Young Unlimited” is a program that specifically focuses on teenagers and young adults who have not had any proper education at all. Young Focus however believes that these youth have ‘unlimited’ potential. The program provides life skills training, job training, coaching, education and sports. In 2016 YoUNgLI served 41 students. After 6 months more then half of the students moved on to Love2Learn, elementary education, high school and college!
YoUNgLI recaptures their passion for education, discovering their talents and developing their skills, opening up a more promising future.
I am Wilhermina L. Superada, 20 years old. I have 3 sisters and 4 brothers. I live in the Smokey Mountain area in Tondo, Manila.

Like the stories of other students of Young Focus, I also experienced things that no parent would want and it required so much of my time that I almost neglected my studies. The time that I quit dancing was also the time that Young Focus started accepting applications for sponsorship. When we found out about that, mom and I immediately completed all the requirements and handed them in to their office. I prayed really hard to God that they would grant my application because I didn’t know what would happen to my future if I couldn’t get a scholarship. Then I received confirmation that Young Focus had granted my application.

Being a sponsored student is such an opportunity that nobody would want to waste. We had tutorials, camps, school supplies every year, greeting cards from my sponsor, life skills and activities that helped me grow, and I had opportunities to go to different places and talk to different people. I learned and grew a lot because of Young Focus. Young Focus supported my studies for 8 years. Because of this, I tried really hard to be an active student. I volunteered in different events that we had, I stood as student leader for several years.

I still encountered hardships in my journey. I had different jobs when I was in college just to have extra money to help my family in my own way.

Young Focus didn't stop supporting me at my graduation. It paid for all the fees that I had to settle and they even offered me a job for 5 months. I am currently employed at the BPI (Bank of the Philippines).

I am forever thankful to Young Focus and their sponsors. Thank you for giving me the kind of education that I could only dream of, for helping me discover more of my talents and capabilities, for making it easier for my family to prepare for my future, and for giving every student the chance to prepare themselves in facing the real world through education.
Organization

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Date of establishment  December 28, 2007

Bank account  BPI (Bank of the Philippine Islands), Navotas  
Account no.: 4651-0036-58 / BIC/SWIFT code: BOPIPMM

History

Young Focus International was initiated in the Netherlands in 1992 to finance the education of young people living on the garbage dump (Smokey Mountain) in Manila. This was initially achieved through a partnership with a local organization in the Philippines. In December 2007 Young Focus International established itself in the Philippines with a new independent local entity: Young Focus for Education and Development (aka Young Focus = YF). This entity allowed Young Focus International to build on the successes of the previous partnership but drive the development of our programs further.

YF’s programs grew to include not only the sponsorship of students through the local schooling system but also the provision of supplementary education to build confidence, equip with life skills (including but not limited to: soft skills, English and computer lessons), as well as better opportunities for further education and better job prospects.

Over the following few years a more social approach was developed to set up holistic training and coaching programs for students and parents.

Legal Structures

Charitable organization: Registered & licensed as social welfare and development agency to implement Community-Based Programs and Services for Disadvantaged Children, their Families and Communities by the DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development - Reg. no. SWD-SB-A-001358-2015

Board of Directors: Paul van Wijgerden / President (Interim) / Managing Director, Young Focus, Loreto Jose Dapon Jr / CFO / Lawyer, Elizabeth Yu / Corporate Secretary / Businesswoman, Sunil L Bharwani / Member / Pastor of Church Simplified, Mike Turvill / Member / CEO

Accreditations, affiliations & partnerships

- Accredited by Department of Social Welfare & Development (DSWD)
- Member of ‘Education Cluster’ (initiative developed by YF to collaborate with other education NGOs in the area).

Partnerships: Partners for Technical Assistance/Collaboration, Department of Social Welfare & Development, National Nutrition Council, Local health centers (Vitas Health Center, Smokey Mountain Health Center & Posadas Health Center), Likhaan Center for Women’s Health – provision of training to the mothers of our students, ENFANCE Foundation – provision of financial seminars for the parents of our students, British School Manila – provision of funding, exposure experiences and provision of extracurricular activities, International School Manila – Saturday Service Learning for YF students & exposure experiences, The Bridge School – curriculum development for Child Care PLUS (preschool), volunteer of skills, teacher training, A variety of local elementary, high schools and colleges where our students receive their formal education

Development/Funding Partners: Young Focus International, the Netherlands, Firetree Asia

Volunteer Sending Partners: Young Focus International, the Netherlands / Church Simplified, Manila
