



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330.

Tel: 67621910

website: www.chij-sisters.org

MISSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Neriza's vocation story

GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

Why me Lord?

I have never dreamt of becoming a religious sister. All I wanted is to become an accountant and succeed in this field. Of course not me Lord. There are many deserving women who want to be but not me Lord. Over my dead body. Those were my protesting words. I bombarded Jesus with all my excuses.. Jesus you don't know me/ I do not believe in God. I am nothing. I only believe in myself. I am a farmer's daughter who enjoyed the freedom of being a free and happy child. We gather at home to pray at 6 pm but I was not at home happily helping people to carry firewood and water. And I would forget the prayer time. I did well in my studies - both primary and secondary. As farmers, we do not have surplus but just enough to live but I completed my studies with flying colours.

I started working at an early age, driven by my desire to be an accountant. I worked in an import export company and studied at night. As a working student I had encountered great challenges. I had never thought of God nor prayed nor even go to mass. I was enslaved by my desire to achieve what I wanted to be. My spiritual life was empty.

THE SURPRISE.....

The company was declared bankrupt. I was out of work. This shook me terribly. I was in my last year of the course. Suddenly I became a beggar asking help from friends for food and shelter. For the first time it dawned on me that I had not been to church for ages.

God then led me to an unknown journey I have never imagined....

HONGKONG.....

I landed a job as a caregiver in Hongkong. There was so much joy. With the job, I could save and complete my college degree. To me money gave happiness. That was my priority. I put God aside, enjoyed my life, there was no need to pray. Such was my life but I felt something was missing. After working for three years there was no sense of fulfilment. I felt a void within me which I could not understand. I never knew what it was until I attended mass one Sunday morning.



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THE TURNING POINT.....my transformation

I felt I was stripped of all my defences, whims, desires, wants, pride, my whole self and my ego. It was then that I turned to God. Lord have mercy on me, I prayed. Then I found myself actively involved in many religious organizations, ministering to Filipinos and conducting evangelization seminars together with the priest and the sisters. There I felt a 180 degrees turning to follow Jesus and no turning back.

THE CALL....

I looked forward to every Sunday so that I could serve the people and other ministries. I was always at hand when some Filipinos needed help - spiritual and temporal. The joy of serving and being with the people made my Sundays fulfilled.

One day I heard the hymn, "WHOM SHALL I SEND?" I said, "Here I am, Lord". But my previous dream was still nagging at me. It took me a long time struggling to LET GO and LET GOD take control of my life through listening, discerning, praying and begging the Lord to lead me and guide me. The call was getting stronger every day. I had so much fear and many doubts. In his time he set me free from all my emotions. With the help of our Lady in Lourdes France, I acted against all my fears and I said... YES LORD.

THE SEARCH....

Which Vineyard, Lord? Where do I begin? How to begin? What's next? I prayed so hard.

I read several vocation promotion brochures. I was invited to share my vocation to many sisters. My friend, a religious sister, invited me to share life with her community for three days. None of those stays made an impact on me. Surprisingly three weeks after I came back from my holiday in Europe, I received some subscription magazines sent to me by the SVD missionaries.

My journey started from being drawn to a magazine which had an article of a Filipino group using the Convent for their celebration. The address was the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Malaysia. It was the call to the unknown by God and the unfolding of my call to mission. My heart leaped with joy. There was some stirring within me I could not understand. I had questions to ask, to whom nobody knew. However, I strongly felt this was it.

Prayers had been my consolation I did not know whom to ask for more information. With every step and decision I made, I asked Jesus for guidance.



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With daring courage, I made my first move to communicate with these people. I was full of doubts but if that was God's plan in my life, something would happen.

THE JOURNEY BEGAN to the unknown

In 1988 I posted my first letter to the convent in Malaysia, trusting that my letter would arrive safely to their post box. But there was no reply. I sent a second letter but there was still no reply. I followed with a third letter. Here came the reply: "COME AND SEE".

In 1989 I flew to Malaysia for the first time not knowing who to meet. The moment I set my foot at that unknown place I felt at home. After two weeks of visiting each community and interviews, it was time to return to Hongkong.

I waited so long for the response, Am I accepted or not? Deep within me I was not giving up. For one and a half years I waited PATIENTLY HOPING FOR A POSITIVE RESPONSE. Finally in 1991, I tried to connect with the people whom I had met in Malaysia hoping for an answer YES OR NO but it was truly a challenge. I was prepared to accept their response. At the last recourse when I was able to speak to the Provincial, I was given directives.

THE JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWN CONTINUED ...

March 25, 1991 - the FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION. After three years of waiting came the real journey to another unknown shore. In my heart wherever the Lord leads me I will follow HIM.... To SINGAPORE.... This is it.

Departing Hongkong with mixed feelings and the numerous teardrops flowing down my cheeks, I saw that the LORD had sent me again to an unknown land, people, culture. There were words I could not understand, voices whispering to me, questions crowding my mind. Did I make the right decision?

The plane landed at 6 pm and there was an immigration problem. I was not allowed to enter Singapore because I did not have a return ticket. I was interrogated but I was not perturbed. I knew the purpose of my coming. Even though I knew nobody in this place, I believed Someone up above had planned for it. The Lord sent me angels to help clear the way for me.

Trust in the Lord was all I had that day. After 4 hours I was allowed to enter Singapore. I never knew but God alone knows that this would be my second home.

Two sisters, Sister Celine and Sr Philomena, and Angie their friend welcomed me. We were strangers to each other starting out on this journey. But we became daughters of Fr Nicolas Barre.



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My whole formation was in Singapore.

The Entry Point SINGAPORE 1991

Formation, Learning and Discernment

MARSILING

From the airport we headed to Marsiling community, my first home. Four Sisters welcomed me – Srs Bernard, Joseph, Simone and Agnes. The following day I went out with Sr Joseph for my first exposure to the less privileged families around.

Sr Joseph worked in the centre where children came to learn the basics of Maths and English. I assisted her daily in teaching those slow learners. It was an inspiring experience...

ANG MO KIO - Home for the handicapped orphans (ladies)

Then I was sent to look after 17 handicapped ladies, some had multi-disabilities - blind, deaf, wheelchair-bound ...

Here was a test of patience, love and understanding - a very challenging apostolate. To me it was a sanctuary where I learned to care, love and serve those who were unable to care for themselves.

It was a humbling experience as well as appreciating the gift of my being able.

JALAN KAYU – Galilee Centre

My involvement in this centre with Sr Grace was a gift and blessing. It was a foreshadow of God's plan to co-mission with him in the Philippines.

There, we

- taught the children Maths and English
- gave them space for growth
- helped them learn values in life
- respected their dignity
- build harmonious relationships with mothers
- gave them meals

I made my first Profession in May 1995.



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NIGERIA

I volunteered to be sent on mission to Nigeria for 7 years from 1999 to 2006.

NIGERIA – 1999 – 2006 (7 years)

I learned that going to a new place, one must take off her shoes. The place is Holy Ground. Life in Nigeria was a great challenge. Basic necessities like water and electricity were lacking. Recreational facilities were limited, food too. But the heat was hardly tolerable. However, Nigeria was a gift. It was an avenue to learn the spirit of humility and acceptance. The fruits of my mission was my self-transformation.

ST MONICA Nursery / Primary School

I was short of experience and capability as well as in training but I was made Administrator of the school. Great responsibility fell on my shoulders to run the schools. I was on the job training. It was a normal co-educational school where boys and girls were given equal rights to education. The Infant Jesus Sisters spearheaded the opening of the school where girls were given the priority to study. We followed the curriculum of the government but we made some revision on some subjects fitting for our vision.

For better communication, English was implemented as the language in school without neglecting their mother tongue.

We helped in

- Improving school facilities and learning environment
- Inculcating values
- Teacher training
- teaching the children to share

COGEO, Antipolo , Philippines

My present mission is in my own native land in the little village called COGEO in Antipolo Philippines.

Do not be afraid I am always with you.

Jesus was already there before I even reached the place.

Whatever happens remain always at peace and trust the Lord.



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TO GOD BE THE GLORY.....

Thank you Lord.....

Sr. Neriza E. Nicolasora ,IJ

(Read Sr's mission in Cogeo in the [Mission in the Philippines](#)) There's a Chinese version on the Chinese page.

How the mission began in the Phippines

In the mid 1980s, a Japanese sister visited Negros, a very deprived area in the Philippines. Later other Japanese sisters, with some lay volunteers, went to see how they could help the people there. For the past 10 years one Japanese sister has remained there, supporting the local people in their desire for development. She works through a wide network of supportive people, both in Japan and in the Philippines.

Now many of the people in the Negros area have become self-supporting, helped by workshops and formation in agricultural skills. Many have been given scholarships to do further studies, which will also help them to offer some service to their own people.

Sr Neriza Nicolasora, a local Infant Jesus sister who had been in Nigeria for some years, is back home teaching catechism and values, and tutoring children.

[Sister Neriza's story of her call and her mission in Cogeo, Antipolo](#)

It was in 2010 that I discerned God's call to me to return as a native missionary to serve my people in the Philippines. I had been away for several years serving God in his people in mission in Hong Kong, Singapore and the last seven years in Nigeria.

The re-entry to my homeland was indeed very challenging. Society has changed and Philippines has changed and is still changing to respond to world trends and developments. It was a call to let go of what I have become used to and to adapt to my people and country.



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I needed to get a licentiate for teachers from the Philippines although I had training in other fields when I was away. After years of active ministry like overseeing the development of a school from scratch and being responsible for running it for the children in Nigeria, it was no easy task to start studying again. I managed to pass the exam for the licentiate at the first try.

[... The Search](#)

The next step on my journey was where and who the Lord wanted me to serve. During this period of searching, I began each morning with, *“Lead me, Lord, to where you want me to serve you”*. After three months of visiting parishes and schools and speaking with the relevant people, God directed me to a parish in a small village of COGEO in Antipolo City. The church is named “ THE INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE” as the people in Cogeo have a great devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The parish priest and the catechists welcomed me and were happy to have me as the first sister in the parish.

[The story continues ...](#) On July 4, 2010, together with the catechists, I was commissioned to serve the parish as a religion teacher in the schools in the district, a pastoral worker and a person contributing to the faith formation of the laity.

The daily travel from Charles Borromeo Convent in Manila to my place of ministry in Cogeo was very challenging in time and energy especially during the rainy season. After much prayer and discernment, I discovered that it was a call to live near the people I have been sent to serve. I discussed my difficulty with my Provincial and her Council and together we decided that my request was a move in the right direction. As such, with the help of the catechists and the parishioners, I found a small room to rent.

[My Mission](#)

As a volunteer missionary, I joined the catechetical ministry where I taught catechism and formed the children in values in public schools. Through sharing with the children, I saw in their eyes their appreciation of the beauty they saw within themselves and their desire for the love of God. It was an education of the heart to the simple and the poor children of our villages. I saw the thirst and desire of the laity to know more about their faith and grow more in their love of God. The little I can contribute to parents, the laity and the children has been rewarding, it is heart reaching out to heart. The people in Cogeo have been generous in the care they took of me.



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Sent by my sisters in the Province of Singapore and though I am the only IJ sister in the Philippines, I feel supported by my sisters and my new and extended community of lay people. The lay groups and I meet regularly to break the Word and share it. In so doing, we enrich one another in our faith and our love of God.

Though "alone" in my own homeland, I have learnt that I am never really alone as God is with me and I must say I have grown in greater trust in the Lord ... indeed, I have complete trust in my God who never deserts her daughter. The words of our founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre - "God's excessive love is our only security" and "Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God" - have always been an inspiration to me and will give me courage whenever the challenges appear to be difficult.

[... growing in the gifts of service](#)

The third important event of my journey took place in Jan 2012. I was invited to join the team of health personnel (doctors, nurses, midwives) and the social service group. I was to help in the spiritual nourishment of the indigenous families (most of them are typhoon victims, the urban poor and the informal settlers). Again after much prayer and discernment, I gladly accepted the invitation to journey with this new group as they made their outreach to those at the margins of society.

Within two years, I can see the mustard seed growing in the little ones. The children are happy spending time with God in prayer and in small ways, they practise small acts of kindness as expressed in their thoughtfulness and generosity with each other. The other committed team members provide the children with nutritious food, and see to their health and medical needs, especially during the vulnerable years of their growth. Walking along with both the team members and the children have kept the spirit alive in my heart.

Our sharing with one another in the professional team has been enriching and grace-filled. The team recognize that they are ready for another step on the journey as they saw the response from both the children and their parents. Thus, the team felt called to give the group a name. The inspiration of having them called "THE LITTLE ONES OF THE INFANT JESUS" will continue to challenge us in our task to help them in their growth and development in the image and likeness of God.



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[Challenges of the future – renewal and self-transformation](#)

I feel called at each stage of my journey to look deep into myself and to listen to what God wants ... in the words of our founder, Bl Nicolas Barre, “Lord, I want nothing more, I desire nothing more, only to desire what you desire and as you desire it ...”

It is a call to let go... to change my mindset, to be open to something new and to have the courage to respond with generosity.

This I believe I can do only if I am rooted in Jesus Christ. I believe that with the deep relationship with Jesus Christ, I can begin to see God in others and to believe that every encounter is a call from God to radiate the joy of the Gospel, the Good News. My deepest wish is to live a life rooted deeply in Jesus Christ.

[The call to evangelise and be evangelised](#)

I believe that I am evangelised by the people I am called to evangelise. I realize the need to spend time knowing in greater depth my faith, the Bible and the church teachings and to share the joy of the gospel with all the people I meet each day.

How can I become “attractive” to the people in the midst of this world of technology? - to be simple but credible in my actions and words. It is simple but a great challenge to all of us: that people can see JESUS in us. It is not a huge accomplishment but a gift I can give all whom I encounter – the love of God for each person.

[Evangelisation through education](#)

Our IJ mission is to present Jesus as a saviour to all people.

Education of the heart is necessary to bring the Gospel values to the children through our authentic way of life. The children must feel loved and respected by all who teach them. We must appreciate that each child is precious and unique in God’s eyes and that is what I want to share with every child and every person who crosses my path.

I have a dream ...

“My journey has led to a DREAM...”



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I dream of a place where the poor children can find rest and learn. I dream of a small centre where the people they encounter love them as precious and unique persons in the eyes of their Creator. They are encouraged to develop their God-given talents and given opportunities to learn about themselves, their family, their values and God's love for them. The centre will contribute to develop them holistically especially in areas where a bridging is needed for their academic pursuits too. It is a place of welcome and hospitality where children can be themselves in their play, prayer and learning."

THE HARVEST IS GREAT BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW.

I pray for more labourers to the IJ vineyard in the Philippines.

Jun 2014

Sister Neriza writes again ... in 2015

My dream is beginning to take shape. It may be slow but it is always in GOD'S TIME. He will make all things possible and beautiful.

Being involved in the basic ecclesiastical community, I have met a lot of children, some with no home, no family and no education.

During this summer 2015, we visited Sitio Tulagsis which is on a hillside. The people living there are informal settlers; they have no land and they are not allowed to build any permanent structures. Most of them live in bamboo houses. We were invited in to see what we can do to help these many children in this village. We first gathered the children together in a small dilapidated house. Together with their parents, these children spent the afternoon learning values and the Catholic faith. The whole community then spent time praying and singing hymns and songs, followed by fellowship with some snacks.

Many other children and their parents asked to join us when we visited the community the following weeks. They saw that those who attended our weekly Tuesday afternoon classes benefitted from our visits. We are happy to have contributed to the learning of the children especially in the areas of character development and faith formation.



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My partners and I feel the support of the parents. At times, the children have to miss the classes as we experienced difficulty in going to this village on rainy days when there are floods.

Some seeds are growing there. The youth too are interested in what we are doing and I hope to involve them to work with us in that village. This we do very gently in God's time. We hope that some changes can happen.

Every day we visit different villages and we see that there are so many children who need help in their studies, character development and faith formation. Parents especially mothers need a place to come together to share and support each other and be self-reliant. To date, we are grateful to Dr Olive who has kindly offered her place to be used for the education and formation of the children every Thursday. On weekends the parents come with their children after mass to Dr Olive's place. The mothers gather together for sharing whilst the children have their values and faith formation studies.

As our outreach is to 6 villages at the moment, there are many children we can help especially in their academic work and values education. The children go to schools where each class has 80 to 100 children and a Primary school has an average of 7000 or 8000 children.

The 20-30 children we are helping on weekdays have shown signs of growth both in their studies and in their attitude and behaviour. They radiate goodness and kindness in their actions. They have developed self-confidence. On one occasion, the mothers and their children were invited to participate as guest performers in a charity dance competition and they did us proud in their performance. The children displayed confidence in performing for the public.

There is a greater call and urgency for us now to reach out to the many children who are knocking at our door wanting to be included in the group we are helping at the moment. Mothers have also asked for a place to come together for their faith formation, sharing the Word of God and picking up skills to be self-reliant.



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I look forward to finding a suitable place for this mission centre to realise their dream and we know we will find it and furnish it with God's help and that of our generous benefactors. Please pray for us.

(Sr did find a place and there was great rejoicing. However, the owners took it back.)

It is with gratitude that I end my update of our mission in the Philippines. We assure you of our prayers too.

(Sr now helps the children in her own little place).

Sr Neriza's update in 2017 [... read more](#)

More below...



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The Little ones of the Infant Jesus

Cogeo, Antipolo, Philippines

Philippines is prone to earthquakes as it lies in the western part of the Pacific ring of fire. Oftentimes, torrential rains, typhoons and floods will disrupt work and affect the community. The Philippines has a population of 100 million people and ranks the 12th most populated country in the world.

Urbanization is rapidly congesting the city and many people live in the slums where there is no access to safe drinking water and electricity.

WELCOME TO COGEO

Since the village was hit by typhoons in 2009, many families were devastated as their homes were completely destroyed. Family members were displaced and many children suffered malnutrition. Most of the families stayed in an environment not conducive to their growth. These children were constantly exposed to multiple risks; such as drugs, alcoholism, gambling and theft. Despite the multiple struggles they face everyday, many of these children strive to go to school on foot and oftentimes without food.

The lives of these very poor children and teenagers are often disrupted by disasters. Without external help and meaningful intervention, they may turn wayward. In order to prevent these young people from turning to vice, it is vital that their time and effort be directed to meaningful activities which can enable them to stay faithful to God, develop their gifts and talents and help them serve their community in small ways

THE LITTLE ONES OF THE INFANT JESUS

In a collaborative spirit, the team, consisting of professionals - religious, medical doctors, retired teachers and members of the Social Service Ministry, pull our resources together and respond to the needs of those vulnerable members of our community who stay in the peripheries.

THE LITTLE ONES OF THE INFANT JESUS was born from this sector of the community. In order for us to help them keep off the streets and minimize their exposure to risk elements, we assist in their educational needs, faith and character development.

Their parents see the importance of a good education and together we embark on this project "DARE TO DREAM BIG, START SMALL"



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Doctor Olive E. Ongcangco, a village physician, who is equally moved by the plight of these children offered the use of her home garage to help kick-start this project. September 29, 2013 saw the materialization of this dream. Since then, we have conducted our programmes, catechetical instruction, values formation and skills training at this garage every Sunday.

With some forthcoming progress, it appears hopeful...

the children learn to appreciate our efforts and they are self-motivated and disciplined and strive to study hard.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES ...

In 2013, some children needed help in English and Mathematics. Every Saturday, they come for this tutorial class in the Catholic Sister's residence. Gradually more children joined the group. As the number of children increased, a bigger place was needed. . Since then, the garage has been their classroom on Sundays accommodating sixty children.

TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Indeed, the Lord is good. Three volunteers came forward to take the children for spiritual nourishment, character development and skills enhancement.

Every Sunday the children look forward to come together to pray, learn, bond, sing, dance and celebrate life. Many of them will linger a little bit longer creating joyful bonding and laughter. The garage is no longer the space for the car but home for the "Little Ones".

PROVIDING BASIC NUTRITION

In November 2015, Sr Maria and Sr Jocelyn visited Cogeo. After realising that many children go to school without breakfast, it was decided that the children be provided with a simple meal, eggs twice a week, when they come for help in their studies.

In January 2016, my home became a multi- purpose place; a classroom, prayer room, meeting room, a place for meals and a playground for these lovable children eager to reach their dreams.

We began by taking in fifteen young children. Half of them come for the morning session and the rest in the afternoon. At the end of the year, remarkable results were achieved. The children were



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more positive in their behaviour and became more hardworking, giving priority to their studies.

One mother volunteered to prepare the food but volunteer teachers found it hard to commit themselves. This was a big challenge to the mission. However, we thank God for all that has been and we close the year with gratitude for His Providence.

This year 2017, despite the space, we accepted twenty-six children, eleven of them for the morning session and fifteen for afternoon classes.

Faith and Trust in God's Providence is necessary to accomplish this charitable work. A major challenge was the lack of volunteer teachers to help in this ministry. It calls forth from each of us humility and trust that our gracious God will not abandon the cries of the children and we continue to trust in God whom we believe will never be outdone in generosity.

We can testify that in this ministry, God has shown that He provides and will continue to provide for us through the generosity of kind people who respond to God's call.

We now have two mothers, Lanie and Nida volunteering to take charge of the food and maintenance, while one young woman, Anabelle, imbued with the spirit of service, offers her time and effort to come three times a week to teach the children wholeheartedly.

It is truly inspiring to see these young people grow a little better in their attitude, showing great eagerness to study hard which has been manifested in their academic performances. We are aware of their difficulties academically but with gentle persuasion, one day it will yield fruits that last. The children have also developed self-confidence and a sense of community.

We believe that with the passage of time, each child will shine as s/he develops her/his God-given talents. Given space to learn, opportunities to grow in a caring environment and the experience of love and concern, these children will excel. It may not be in academic pursuit but they will turn out as persons with compassionate hearts.

We envision a holistic approach to strengthen their self-esteem, character and belief that God loves them. It is not a one way ticket but a reciprocal empowerment.

All throughout these years, there have been many little miracles happening but the best is when it produces fruits we call a " Change of Heart".



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MY HOME IS THE CENTER AND THE CENTER IS OUR HOME.

Since the center is my home, space is limited for the children to explore other activities that will enhance their thinking skills.

The house becomes the study place from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. There are four adults running this tutorial programme. Two mothers have volunteered to be in charge of food and two teachers assist the children in their academic studies.

Our priorities are directed towards developing study habits, working projects and completion of assignments. We inculcate values like self-discipline, respect for each other and self-confidence. We train them to develop their skills and take up responsibilities.

To allow us to function smoothly every day, we have some rules and a timetable to guide our daily work.

There is time to play, to exercise their creativity and patience. This would help them develop teamwork, working with and sharing with others.

Recognizing their potential talents and providing adequate help contributes a lot to a responsive child.

Thus, the integrative components of having a good meal, supervised studies and prayers will help grow a child more holistically.

I HAVE A DREAM...

WE HAVE A DREAM...

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE OUR DREAM COME TRUE.

WE CONTINUE TO DREAM, UNAFRAID OF THE FUTURE

NOW I KNOW OUR DREAM WILL LIVE ON

2018

Sr Neriza now has three sessions from morning to night taking in a minimum of 30 pupils each day. On weekends, she reaches out to another 30 pupils and she has a gathering of mothers too. With the provision of food at the IJ centre and the self-disciplined and self-directed learning approach, Sr has seen an improvement in the children's focus, studies, self-esteem and self-confidence.



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With help from Sr and the volunteer teachers, one of the students topped the class. Another was third, yet another fourth and sixth in their respective classes.

We are certain that given the right support, the children can achieve.

Let us continue to support Sr and her mission !

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