

## Good Shepherd Philippines-Japan

### International day of the Girl Child

The Coronavirus 2019 pandemic has taken a toll on our students and the girls in our various centers and ministries. The pandemic has caused us to be physically separated from our loved ones and friends, but the crisis has introduced us to various ways we can stay connected and to talk about the very important issue of the girls' rights.

A shelter in Pagadian City, in the southern part of the Philippines, culminated the late summer program for the girls on October 11, 2020. The summer program is part of the healing and integral development of girls who have suffered abuse and exploitation. It comprised of expressive art activities such as painting, singing and dancing as well as healing with Mother Earth through the ecological therapeutic programme. On the other side of the Philippines, our girls in Bicol sang the official IDG song of Good Shepherd Asia Pacific. The consolidated women ministry for women and children in Metro Manila held a celebration of girls' rights on October 24, 2020. They set up a booth and held a program showcasing the talents of the children. It highlighted the importance of children's rights with the theme "My Voice = Our Future."

Technology is crucial in being connected during this pandemic, however the cyberspace is also a fertile ground of various threats that pose great risks of abuse and exploitation to children. Communities in the Cities of Manila and Batangas, conducted awareness raising sessions on online safety.

Although on a virtual learning platform, our schools have come up with creative ways to celebrate IDG 2020 by utilizing social media in spreading awareness of the girl-child. Last October 5, St. Bridget Schools, facilitated a session called Usapang Lalaki (translated as "Men Talk"), where the male staff of the school got to talk about the importance of the girls' rights and why men should be involved in this conversation.

St. Mary Euphrasia Integrated Development Foundation Inc. (SMEIDFI), also gathered on October 19 to look back on the congregational position paper on the Girl-Child and to look forward as to what more needs to be done. Its member-agencies directly involved in responding to the needs of the children share their work, the challenges they had encountered due to the pandemic and the victories won in fighting for the girls' rights.

Through simple and creative ways, we stayed connected and continue to be connected especially in amplifying our voice to fight for the rights of every girl and to celebrate 'girls' all over the country and the world.

**SMEIDFI**

**RGS Philippines**