

Philippines- Psyche Mae

Case study and activities



“I decided to work with women and children because I’m wearing their shoes, I feel what they feel”
– Psyche Mae

When Psyche Mae featured in Project Compassion 2008, she was living in a squatter settlement, on the edge of a giant rubbish dump outside Manila, in the Philippines. Psyche Mae is now a young social worker, achieving her dream of helping others struggling to leave poverty behind them – with plans to study a Master’s degree.

A just future for Psyche Mae continues...

Psyche Mae grew up with her parents and four siblings in Bagong Silangan in Quezon City, Metro Manila, a relocation site for squatter families seeking a better life. With few skills or paid work, her family, like thousands of others desperate to make ends meet, were forced to pick through the rubbish that surrounded them and sell what they could to survive.

The family also had to borrow money from lenders at very high rates of interest to cover school fees or if someone got sick.

In the Philippines, about 22 million people live below the poverty line. Psyche Mae’s family formed part of an extensive, urban poor community, where hundreds of thousands of people struggle to survive – and many are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Then a meeting with Sister Ann from Caritas Australia’s partner, the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) changed Psyche Mae’s life.

Psyche Mae worked hard to be a good student and she encouraged her siblings to do the same. Her mother, Christina,

learnt how to make bags to sell which generated extra income for the family.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals and the support of Caritas Australia through Project Compassion, FCJ’s program helps people like Psyche Mae to learn job and income-generating skills, encourages education, addresses health issues and supports programs that enable members to save money and take out small, low interest loans through its saving and loans scheme. It’s estimated around 5000 people are assisted directly or indirectly by this integrated program.

Fast forward to 2018 – Psyche Mae’s mother is a part-time sewing teacher and her father works with the House Repair program, both run by FCJ. With their jobs and the help of a community savings plan – Psyche Mae’s entire family managed to lift themselves out of poverty and build a just future.

“When my mother was able to earn from her renewed skills, she was also able to share her skills and knowledge with others and that helped her gain self-esteem and confidence,” Psyche Mae says.

“Her earnings helped her to have more financial freedom and assist with our daily needs, instead of merely depending on the income of my father.

Psyche Mae says that their better financial position means that her mother can now afford to pay attention to her health which can be costly for poor families.

Psyche Mae herself is now a qualified social worker for the Philippines Government, helping informal settlers and people with disabilities. She is a hard worker, working full-time and studying after work at university, where she plans to continue on to study a Master’s degree.

“I decided to work with women and children because I’m wearing their shoes, I feel

what they feel,” Psyche Mae says. “If FCJ’s Integrated Community Development Program was never around, maybe we would all still be living in poverty.”

Her three brothers and her sister are all still studying, ranging from primary school to university which is a consequence of their hard work and determination.

“Life is not easy. We work so hard in order to survive daily living but we do believe that education is something to be prioritised,” Psyche Mae says. “We see to it that we do well in school, because it is the only thing that we can give back to our parents. We do so, despite the fact that we have to walk for an hour in order to reach our schools.”

Psyche Mae wants to further her education so that she can use her knowledge to provide the best support and aid to those in need.

Psyche Mae says Australian donor funds will help out with housing, education and medical needs, maintain health and wellbeing and work towards eradicating poverty...providing a just future for others like her.

“It was always my dream to have a healthy environment where dwellers have positive relationships, families are strengthened and have access to permanent employment, livelihood and other social services. And women and children and vulnerable sectors are protected.”

- Psyche Mae

“I would like to thank you for supporting Caritas Australia. It’s because of you that the FCJ are able to provide beneficial programs. Please continue to support Caritas Australia and God bless,” she says.

Psyche Mae received life-saving support because of people like you.

Her just future has started with opportunity.

A just future starts with all of us!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



FIND THE **STUDENT INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK** AT:
<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1129998726354436097>
(Click 'Refresh' if the hot spot icons don't display correctly.)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Prayer

Loving God,

You have given us the gift of education. Help us to use our knowledge to educate others about our unequal world, to help those in need and to be demanding of the world around us and of ourselves. Amen.

Or write or say your own prayer for Psyche Mae and her community.



Reflect

"Be demanding of the world around you; be demanding first of all with yourselves. Be children of God; take pride in it!"

– Pope St John Paul II

- What do you think Pope St John Paul II meant when he asked us to be demanding of the world around us and of ourselves?
- What should we demand and why? (justice, equality, empathy, compassion etc.)
- How do you take pride in being a child of God?



Catholic Social Teaching Principles: The Common Good

We believe in working towards what is good for everyone, not just what is good for ourselves.

Discuss:

- How do you see the principle of the common good reflected in Psyche Mae's story?
- How is Psyche Mae working for the common good?
- What other principles of Catholic Social Teaching can you see reflected in this story?
- How does your support of Caritas Australia strengthen communities like Psyche Mae's?

LEARNING TASKS

INQUIRY TOPIC: A JUST FUTURE STARTS WITH OPPORTUNITY



Watch Psyche Mae's original film from Project Compassion 2008- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLa_n8fL5y4

Psyche Mae also visited Australia in 2016 to speak at a Caritas Australia Women for the World event. You can watch that film here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SylAmyKEYQ&t=176s>



Task 1: Story Study

English Y7- ACELY1723, Y8- ACELY1734, Y9 ACELY1744, Y10- ACELY1754.

Read Psyche Mae's story and discuss:

- What made Psyche Mae's life challenging?
- How did Psyche Mae's life change for the better?
- How did the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) contribute?
- How did Caritas Australia contribute?
- What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice from Psyche Mae's story?



Human Wellbeing (Y10) Geography

Tasks 2-4: Geogrpahy - Liveability/ Urbanisation/Sustainability

Geography Y7 ACHGK043, 044, 046, 047 Y8 ACHGK054, Y10ACHGK076-078, 081, Senior Secondary Unit 2: Sustainable Places ACHGE039, 045, 050-053

Task 2: Urbanisation

- Half of humanity – 3.5 billion people – live in cities today.
 - By 2030, almost 60 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas.
 - 95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in developing nations.
1. Why do you think people move to towns and cities?
 2. What questions do you have about these statistics? Do any of them surprise you? Why/Why not?
 3. What might be some of the challenges or negative impacts of increased urbanisation?
 4. What is the impact on human wellbeing?

Task 3: Mega Cities

A mega-city is a city with 10 million or more inhabitants. In 1990, there were ten mega-cities. In 2017, there are 37 mega-cities, home to a total 453 million people.

- Is Manila in the Philippines a mega-city?
- What might be some of the challenges of dense and informal urban living for young people?

Task 4: Sustainable Development Goals/ Liveability

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 16 goals for all people, everywhere. They aim to end extreme poverty, inequality and climate change by 2030. SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

- How does the FCJ's Integrated Community Development Program enhance the liveability of the area, especially for young people?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

(These are not in the interactive student workbooks.)

Urbanisation PowerPoint

Geography Y7 ACHGK043, 044, 046, Y8 ACHGK054, Y10ACHGK076-078, 081, Senior Secondary Unit 2: Sustainable Places ACHGE039, 045, 050-053

This PowerPoint highlights the key issues of urban poverty for secondary school students.

There are suggested discussion questions, tasks and additional information in the 'Notes' sections of the slides. <http://www.caritas.org.au/docs/default-source/secondary-school-resources/urban-poverty.pptx>