

06/09/13

Project SANDALINE

Crisis Line for OFWs and Seafarers
UGAT Foundation, Inc.

A Multi-ICT Online Counseling Project designed to provide crisis intervention and counseling for Seafarers, Overseas Filipino Workers and their families.

- economical call, chat and messaging
- accessible and efficient counseling services
- linking the families with support groups in times of crisis



UGAT
SANDALINE
CRISIS LINE FOR OFW AND SEAFARERS



1. Brief History of UGAT

In 1987, a group of committed persons conceptualized an organization that would serve the poor of our society by addressing their social and psycho-emotional problems. This group initially held a consultative meeting in Tagaytay City, Philippines which was composed of the following grassroots workers: Fr. Nilo Tanalega SJ, Fr. Miguel Lambino, SJ, Sr. Celeste Yuzon, RGS, Lita Bambilla, Francisca Bustamante, Raphael Ocoma, Terasa Dalumpines, and Titay La Viña.

UGAT(*Ugnayan at Tulong para sa Maralitang Pamilya*) is an apostolate of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) for grassroots families. It conducts its ministry through psychological interventions and family systematic approaches.

Still keeping its original charism of providing pastoral care to the Filipino family, UGAT has veered its focus on the needs of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) and their families sometime in 1992. The year 1992 was the height of the Flor Contemplacion controversy. Flor, an OFW convicted of murder of a fellow Filipina, was hanged to death in Singapore in 1995.

UGAT considers the following as its major achievement through all these years: (a) UGAT has reached some OFW destination countries like Italy, Dubai, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore in carrying out its migration ministry in coordination with government agencies and other NGOs; (b) UGAT has reached out to schools and family care providers; (c) UGAT has become one of the sought after resources for Family Formation Programs; (d) for many years now UGAT does the leg work for ABS-CBN's Bayaning Pilipino Awards; and (e) for the past 19 years now, UGAT has been providing annual formation to provincial counselors particularly in the Visayas and Mindanao. It's latest major achievement is its debriefing/counseling services to all the repatriated OFW at the Halfway House of OWWA, a government agency, located in Pasay City.

Core Objectives

Our mission for migrants includes providing formation programs and free counseling and therapy in both home front and jobsite. Our goal is to achieve emotional ventilation for the migrants, understanding of their situation, substitution of dysfunctional coping, and establishment of support systems. We will likewise train migrant care providers i.e. NGO's, embassy employers and church workers here and abroad in counseling skills specifically tailored for expatriates and their families.

For the families left behind by the OFW, we will make counseling services accessible to them by empowering the community to set up a family support system by involving the local government units and government agencies aligned with the program from the provincial down to the barangay level, the church and other non-government organizations.



2. Description of the Project

One of the most significant challenges of an overseas worker is how to cope with the separation from the family and to maintain healthy communication despite the distance. The situation overseas would always entail a great deal of loneliness and suffering of various degrees. In order to deal with the psycho-emotional burden accompanying such living condition requires a constant and sustained intervention by means of pastoral care by competent care providers. These psycho-social interventions are even more critical in situations of crisis such as disasters, armed conflicts, displacement and maritime piracy. To facilitate that pastoral care of our OFWs and Seafarers, a crisis line dedicated to extend counseling services and other forms of interventions is a vital resource. With a multitude of communication providers online and the telecom networks in the country, UGAT embarks on an innovative use of Information and Communications Technology for pastoral care of OFWs, Seafarers and their families. This project shall be named HOPELINE.

The project aims to assist the beneficiaries through:

- a. Online counseling and psychosocial interventions using various means of internet and mobile communications in times of crisis and/or great need.
- b. Facilitating a link between the overseas workers and their families especially when the families here in the Philippines have no means to contact their relatives abroad.
- c. Forming a strong network of support (volunteers, NGOs, Church and Government Agencies) for the psycho-social intervention programs and other support services for the beneficiaries.

Why is this project important?

In our study of the dynamics of depression in relation to modern Philippine Society, we realized that the OFW group is one of those at the highest risk of suffering from depression – not just for the workers themselves, but also for the families they left behind.

There is a large upheaval on family functionality that migration brings about. The involuntary family separation propelled by economic motives, results in disruption of the family structure, dysfunctional coping on both sides of the ocean, and as professed, a lot of temptations for those going abroad as well as for those who stayed behind. There are also family-related concerns unique to migrant families like debts rooting from financial dependency on the expatriate, as well as a lack of investment and savings. They are also commonly exploited by con artists and fake business opportunities.

While much had been said regarding the tremendous effects of migration in the family, society and economy, the impact of migration on the children left behind is breaking apart the family and their future. Problems like dropping out of school, early pregnancies and drug abuse are very much prevalent among these children as a result

of their misplaced coping for emptiness and longing. After all of the sacrifices that the OFW and his/her family have gone through, most of them realize that they have done more harm to their children's lives than good.

In the light of the foregoing, a great deal of pastoral care is needed to help these workers and their families to deal with their issues. Lack of care providers in their places is a deterrent for them to seek for professional help. If they are given a chance to consult a counselor in the most convenient way, they will have a greater chance of saving their families. This is what Project HOPELINE wishes to provide. At the convenience of their houses and workplace, with their mobile phone or internet, they can have access to competent and well-trained counselors ready to serve them anytime.

Who will benefit from this project?

Overseas Filipino Migrant Worker (OFW) who are:

- a. Currently working overseas, (land-based and sea-based)
- b. Previously working overseas (land-based and sea-based)
- c. In the process of leaving for work abroad
- d. Repatriated migrant workers due to deportation and other legal reasons who are in the process of re-integration in the community and their respective families, and for some, have the possibility of going back to work abroad.
- e. Families left behind especially those belonging to the Top Ten (10) Provinces with the highest OFW Population - Metro Manila, Cavite, Bulacan, Batangas, Laguna, Maguindanao, Pangasinan, Rizal, Pampanga and Cebu.
(<http://www.congress.gov.ph/download/cpbd/fnfofw.pdf>)
- f. Spouses and partners of OFWs without children
- g. Children of OFWs
- h. Extended families who act as guardians of the children of OFWs

