

## GPA's overseas service work in Nepal, the Philippines and Peru

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*Pure Love Rally for youth at the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, Maribojoc, Philippines*

This year's Generation Peace Academy (GPA) participants have just completed their first week of overseas service work in Nepal, the Philippines and Peru, and they are off to a strong start. Here are the latest updates.

### **Multiple Projects Underway in Nepal**

In Nepal, GPA participants have been based in the capital city of Kathmandu, from which they depart every day to their primary worksites at the Ratna Rajya Secondary School in Dhading and the Daisy Education Academy in Ramkot. Their main projects so far have consisted of a combination of restoration, beautification, and education activities at both sites.

After a very gracious and celebratory welcome upon their first visit to Ratna Rajya, the principal, Sundar Pan Puri, explained to the GPA participants that the earthquakes which struck Nepal in the spring of 2015 had destroyed all 13 of the school's classrooms. Since then, students and staff have done their best to cope with 5 temporary classrooms constructed in the aftermath of the earthquakes. From their first day on-site, a team of GPA participants began work to restore the grounds of Ratna Rajya, preparing the foundation for a new walkway and laying concrete and bricks. Other teams have begun preparations to paint a mural and still others to teach the students at both schools simple moral lessons on topics like the value of honesty and unconditional love.

First-year participant Yasunari reflected on his takeaways from the first day of service in Nepal, "With the help of the smiling faces of the Nepali children, I was able to see beyond the challenges of my personal situation to the bigger picture of why we came to Nepal. Early on in the morning, the GPA participants formed a line where we passed bricks down to each other. It was a mundane task, but it turned into an amazing experience of unity and harmony as we began to sing songs and the students joined in on the work, eager to help out.

"Later, we had to unload a truckload of bricks and lay them out onto the school yard. I quickly fell into my own world, trying to carry as many bricks as I could, until the children came rushing in to help make the process go faster. Seeing their open-toed shoes next to my armful of heavy stones, I was reminded that service work isn't just about applying tremendous force. It is mainly about caring for those who we came to serve."

### **Church Restoration is a Community Effort in the Philippines**

GPA participants in the Philippines are stationed at the Jandig Elementary School on the island of Bohol.

Every morning, they walk for about a mile to their worksite at the Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines, where they have begun restoration and beautification work. Claire Jones-Locke reports, “The worksite is a humble church that was destroyed by the earthquake and typhoon that hit the island of Bohol in 2013. The backyard of the church is filled with dirt and rocks, but we’re putting in all our efforts, both physically and mentally, to remove the debris and support the church’s physical revival.”



*Jandig Elementary students support beautification, repurpose and paint soda bottles, Philippines*

GPA’s restoration and beautification efforts have begun from the ground up, as they first worked with members of the local community to even out and lay a new foundation for a garden where church members can hold outdoor services in the future. So far, they have rebuilt a stairway to the garden and installed new seating areas. Local children have helped GPA at each step in this restoration process, as they’ve searched together with GPA participants for rocks from among the debris to support and beautify each respective construction area at the site.

Despite the intense heat of the workday, GPA participants in the Philippines report of the local children’s eagerness to help their service work and spend time with them. “It’s quite touching to see how much the children want to spend time with us: they sit with us, staring with anticipation as we write our daily reflections outside in the yellow light of the local basketball court,” commented Claire. “During our lunchbreak the other day, too, there were fifteen local children helping out in any way possible and laughing as we tried to speak their language. We were eventually able to communicate through songs and hand motions, as we laughed together in the shade of the banana trees.”

### **Setbacks can’t Hold Back Service Efforts in Peru**



*GPA participant with new friends, Collique, Peru*

GPA participants in Peru have met with -- but are undeterred by -- several challenges to their service work in Peru. The group has been split into two teams on most service days. One team has been engaged in beautification efforts, repainting the interior of a local church in Lima, while the other travels to different construction sites and odd-jobs around the city.

On the first day of service, the construction team was tasked with helping build a local center where values education and community support services will be offered in the future. After many hours of work, however, several of the walls collapsed. After a full and productive

day of painting inside the church, the painting team returned the following day to do a second coat, only to find the first coat peeling off of the walls. Add to that a bout of stomach sickness that passed through

the group, and it might seem only natural the GPA Peru would be ready to throw in the towel.



*GPA participant using a pick axe to break up packed dirt, Puno, Peru*

But they haven't and they don't intend to. The participants have met each obstacle patiently and graciously, choosing to see these obstacles as opportunities to rest, recover, and redouble their efforts as representatives of God and True Parents. Though the future values center requires more professional support to fix, the church painting project was finally completed, and the construction team moved on to successfully build a new wall for an active community center in Lima. Later in the week, GPA also travelled to a free cafeteria in the small shantytown of Collique, where they dropped off the plentiful donations of fruit they had received in fruit markets for the use of the local children and other residents served by the cafeteria.

Less than two weeks remain before the GPA participants return home. All things considered, it sounds like they're off to an excellent start. Be sure to check back for more progress reports on their projects and experiences overseas in the weeks to come.