

## **New hope - Alex**

It is good to think that one vulnerable street child can achieve his dreams. But then; I said to myself that one day I would help my parents and siblings. I was born into this world on 2 September 1992 and I felt the warmth of my parents' love. I was the first child of my mother and father.

When I was born into this world that was also when I felt and experienced poverty. Many years went passed until there were ten of us children. Because of this our needs increased.

When I started studying when I was seven years old was when I first experienced mixing with street children. I experienced knocking on car windows and asking for small change. Until I got used to it. I also learned to sell rags in the middle of the street and in the heat of the sun. After going to school from 6am until 12 noon I would start selling rags.

On 26 June 2006 our little house under the bridge on Osmena Highway, Paco, Manila was demolished and we were relocated to Cabuyao, Laguna. As a result of extreme poverty, I stopped studying and all I wanted to do was go back to Manila. My sister and I went back to Manila with our father who was working as a pedicab driver.

For three years we put up with sleeping on the side of the sidewalk. Our companions were other street children. We had to wake early in the morning so that we could buy our stock at Blumentritt. Sometimes we experienced a speeding train passing in front of us and we chased it to the station, even if we ended up covered in mud. If we reached it in time, we would be able to get home early. After that, we would start to sell. If we didn't have any rags to sell we would get some sampaguita flowers from the owner which we would pay for when we sold them all.

In one day we made between P50 and P200. Sometimes we begged. We saved the money we earned and the sent it to our family. During this time, we became involved in Bahay Tuluyan's Mobile Unit. Here we were taught about children rights. And because of Bahay Tuluyan I was able to go back to school in 2009, with my sister and some of our friends from the street. Since 2009 I have lived at Bahay Tuluyan. I have lots of new mothers and fathers and my fellow children at Bahay Tuluyan treat me as their brother. I got new friends and classmates because I was able to start going to San Antonio National High School and was in second year. When I finished second year high school I received a medal because I was Top 9 in my class.

At Bahay Tuluyan there are programs like JE, JHW etc. I became a Junior Educator, President of Junior Health Workers and now I am President of PILAK. This year I went to Australia to share my experiences on the street and in the community. And this year I will graduate from high school. Because of Bahay Tuluyan I am slowly realizing my dreams. First, to finish studying, and second to become a professional social worker.