



THE PHILIPPINES

KUYA CENTRE for Street Children

Kuya in the local language means big brother and big brothers are meant to care. Brother Paul Murphy is the leader of Kuya and he leads a team of Filipino youth workers who are 'big brothers' to kids who are homeless on the streets of Manila in the Philippines. The Philippines straddles the equator off the 800km off the mainland coast of Asia, close to Malaysia and China. The capital city is Manila and there are about 7000 islands in the archipelago.

Kuya was established in 1991 by an association of religious brothers in the Philippines. The Centre is for young people who lose contact with their families and live on the streets. The aim is to re-unite the street kids with family or to refer them to a more stable and supportive living arrangement.

The Work:

- A street outreach that keeps contact with kids who have no family
- A house for homeless kids until they find more permanent accommodation.
- A community support team which targets 100 young people in a nearby squatter settlement and helps with their education and food.

Funding:

Kuya runs on a shoestring budget of \$4500 per month, most of which is raised by the local organisations. Br Paul has to find about AUD\$1000 per month extra. Some of this comes from the income generating work of the kids themselves and some comes from International Marist partners.

People:

The people have been influenced by Spanish colonisation since the mid 1500s. Then in 1899 the USA governed the islands until the republic achieved independence after WWII in 1946. There are 84 million Filipinos and the official languages are Filipino (related to Tagalog), English, and regional languages along with 70 local languages. Manila has a population of 14 million people and is really a collection of many cities. Most are Christian (94%) and there is a significant Muslim population (5%) concentrated in the south. Traffic and pollution make it very difficult to move around and squatter settlements are where many of the poorer people live.

Young People:

Some young people lose contact with their families. It is very easy to hide yourself or get lost in Manila. The reasons for the separation would be similar to the reasons for such a thing happening here in Australia but the whole situation is made worse by extreme poverty. Young boys survive on the streets by making money as car park attendants, car watchers, vendors, messenger/newspaper boys, collecting/selling junk, stealing, begging, prostitution and shoe shining. The only way out of this cycle is through education. The Kuya Centre helps kids stay at schools and graduate.

Marists:

Brother Paul, an Australian brother, is the Program Director. He was invited to take on this role after spending many years in the Philippines working with young Marist Brothers in a social justice outreach that went out into the cities and worked with the street kids. High school students from a variety of national and international high schools and colleges (including Australian) join in **immersion experiences** and work with the kids in their activities.

