

Another Week Beyond - 1301

Dear Team

Simon smiled like he was the happiest boy in the world as he walked into school all ready to begin his first day in formal education. He is 9 years old and last month during a camp he told us that he was not proud of himself as he had to lie when participants were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name and the school they came from. He did not go to school but was too embarrassed to say so and simply spurted out the name of the school near his home. He added that he felt worse after that as he could not say anything more about the school and was glad that for the rest of the day, no one spoke about school.

Simon was introduced to us by his grandmother whom we met as we were speaking to some boys about a football activity in September last year. As someone protective of the children in her neighbourhood, she asked us what business did we have with them. After being assured that we had no ill-intentions and learning that it was in our interest to keep children in school, she asked if we could help her grandson. Simon was born out of wedlock in Singapore but his mother is not a citizen. For some years now, his mother has been out of reach and Simon has been cared for by a couple who is a long-time family friend. Grandmother proudly declared that both of their families had been living in the same kampong many years ago.

Simon's foster parents shared how they had been trying to register him for school unsuccessfully. Without citizenship and a parent or legal guardian, he could not be registered for school. Hence, they submitted an application to adopt him but the application could not proceed. Anyway, we linked Simon with a volunteer who did a wonderful job of preparing him for formal education. She coached him twice a week at his home and Simon did his part by diligently completing his assignments. He is now better prepared to begin primary school education. We also worked closely with his welfare officer from the government who did a brilliant job of facilitating a foreign student's pass for him.

So for Simon, it is better late than never and an exciting start to the New Year. As another year passes, we are all older but may every day from here be newer.

Happy New Year.

Gerard

Let our New Year's resolution be this, we will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word. - Goran Persson

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