

TURNING DARKNESS INTO LIGHT FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED FILIPINOS

LOW VISION PHOTO HERE

Resources for the Blind, Inc.
Annual Report, 2011

MISSION STATEMENT

To design and implement programs that will enable those with visual impairment to understand and reach their God-given potential in life and service.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In November of 2011 we received the following message from Ailyn in Calamba.

Good afternoon. Just want to ask on how can I seek help from your organization for a blind child? How can I reach you? For your info I have a niece named Vea Jassen, 8 years old, currently living here in Calamba City. Her case is inborn blindness. We don't have any idea where we can send her to school near here in the Calamba area. Thank you, Ailyn

This was in response to a multi-media public awareness campaign that we launched in Luzon to make contact with blind children and their families. Ailyn was one of over a thousand people who responded to the ads.

Our field workers responded immediately to Ailyn's request for help and within two weeks Vhea Jassen was enrolled in school for the first time and on her way to reaching the fullest potential in life and ministry that God has for her.

Here is Ailyn's response after two weeks.

My family and I are so much grateful for your help to our niece. Thanking God for your life and the whole Resources for the Blind. My niece Vea has already started schooling last Wednesday. She's just having some adjustments since it was her first time to be in school. Again thank you and may you be more blessed so you can still bless more people. Ailyn




Vhea, right, joins other mainstreamed visually impaired children in her local school.

To all of our partners, friends, and donors who helped us to reach out to Vea and thousands of other blind persons around the country in 2011, a very sincere thanks!

Sincerely,

Randy Weisser
Randy Weisser
Director

EYE CARE AND BLINDNESS PREVENTION



Roberto wants to be a soldier when he grows up. He lives in a town in Cotabato where numerous cases of bomb explosions and gunshots often terrorized the residents.

His father works as a body guard for a certain politician in the municipality. According to his mother, Berna, “My husband is rarely at home and I was left in charge of our children. There were sleepless nights for us. I feared to lose our lives. Before we sleep I initiated to tie a rope in my waist and to my children so that when emergency arises, I could hurriedly bring them along.”

Their situation was made worse by Roberto’s deteriorating vision. Both he and his 16 year old sister Rona Jane, were diagnosed with cataract in both eyes. It started with very low vision, then become more blurry and eventually they could hardly see the light.

“The situation of my two children worried me greatly. Because of their vision, they become more dependent on me and it becomes harder for them to escape and flee when the situation arises.”

When one of our field workers visited their place, a concerned teacher told us about the two children having difficulties in vision. After visiting their home we arranged for an eye check up with our partner ophthalmologist in Kabacan. After the initial diagnosis, they were brought to Davao for final check up and surgery. The surgery was finished in December of 2011.

“I thank God for showing RBI a way towards us. RBI is an answer to my prayers”, says Mommy Berna. Roberto’s excitement was hard to contain. “I am excited to go home and play with my friends. I can now be a soldier, with skills to use the gun and protect my family. I am not scared of anything.”

More importantly for us, both Roberto and Rona Jane had successful eye surgery and are able to go back to school and finish their education.

EYE CARE AND BLINDNESS PREVENTION

WHAT WE DO

There are almost half a million people in the Philippines who are blind in both eyes. Most of this blindness is either preventable or treatable. To cure this unnecessary blindness, our medical teams travel to every corner of the country to find those who need eye surgery to restore their sight.

In 2011, we checked the eyes of 25,000 people and provided 4600 eye surgeries. We also trained 2100 rural Community Health Workers to help prevent blindness.



Community Health Workers learn to recognize eye diseases.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

All of the 4600 eye surgeries we facilitated in 2011 were provided by 229 volunteer local eye doctors, working in all regions of the Philippines. They often go out to remote areas with us for up to a week at a time.

Their willingness to serve saved RBI millions of pesos and assured that even the poorest of patients could have their sight restored. These unsung heroes deserve our deepest thanks for helping to eliminate unnecessary blindness in the Philippines.

Eye Care in 2011

Eye Surgeries	
Pedia Eye Surgeries – Children (ages 0-18)	177
Adult Eye Surgeries	4508
Primary Eye Care Training	
Community Health Workers Trained	2,133
Community Eye Screening	
Patients screened	25,092

2011 Highlights

- **Public Awareness Campaign**
Almost half of childhood blindness in the Philippines is either preventable or treatable. To get this message out to parents we launched a mass media effort in 2011 to reach every home in Region III. Over 1000 people contacted us by text message after the radio ads were aired, and 500 children were identified for eye exams.
- **New Partner Doctors**
One of the problems in providing pediatric eye surgeries is that there are only a few qualified doctors outside of Metro Manila. This year we were happy to forge a partnership with two pediatric eye doctors—Dr. Nathaniel Chan in Iloilo, and Dr. Maricel Q. Luzano in Davao. Together they provided

EYE CARE AND BLINDNESS PREVENTION



EDUCATION

Myka is 12 years old. At this age, she should be graduating from grade school. But because of her blindness, the farthest she got was learning the ABC's in daycare. Myka says, *"It came to a point when I found it difficult to write. The letter would go beyond the lines on my paper. They told me that I won't be coming to school anymore. I was sad because I really wanted to learn."*

So Myka just stayed at home. *"I would seldom go out because other children tease me and ask me why I was like this. I would tell them to just stop asking because even I didn't know the answer. I didn't have playmates who are like me. It hurt because they can see, they could go anywhere they wanted to go. I couldn't. This made me cry."*

Then her mother, Malen, brought her to Manila to have her eyes checked. Unfortunately, Myka's blindness was beyond cure. But she was happy to find out about RBI's education program. That even though Myka is already totally blind, she can still go to school and learn.

Myka was so happy when an RBI fieldworker visited their home, bringing a beginner's kit in learning the braille alphabet. She informed them that RBI was already coordinating with a local school where she could enroll.

Myka was so excited to hear this news. Now, she is studying the sounds of the letters in the alphabet while practicing reading and writing the letters in braille. She wants to become a teacher for the blind someday so she could also teach them how to write and read braille.

"It was only now that I am able to dream again because I'm going back to school. There was a time when I've forgotten how to dream because I lost my sight and I couldn't go back to school."

EDUCATION

WHAT WE DO

One of our highest priorities is to help blind children complete their education. To achieve this we provide training to school teachers, school administrators, parents, and local governments about how to include blind children in their classrooms for sighted children. In 2011 we provided training to 2400 teachers and other stakeholders. This helped to increase the enrollment of blind children nationwide to about 2700, the highest number ever in the Philippines.



YOU SHOULD KNOW

Our focus is on inclusive education. Almost all of the 2700 children now enrolled in schools nationwide are in community schools mainstreamed with their sighted peers. Their teachers were trained in our university courses and are salaried by the Department of Education. This has proven to be the most cost-effective and model for including all blind children in schools nationwide.

Enrollment of Blind Students	
Pre-school/Elementary	2258
High School	346
College-Enrolment	145???
Literacy	109
Home-Based and others	138
Total	2851

Trainings	
Teachers Trained to Mainstream blind students	462
Student Teachers Trained	551
School Administrators Trained	209
Therapists Trained	98
Parents Trained	458
Other Stakeholders Trained	598
Total	

2011 Highlight

Pre-School License

The RBI Pre-school for Blind Children, with an enrollment of 70, was granted a permanent license by the Dept of Education in September of 2011. This school serves as a training venue for future teachers of the blind. Last year 800 teachers, school administrators, and student teachers visited the school to observe teaching techniques and for hands-on experience in teaching blind children.

International Lions

COUNSELING AND REHABILITATION

sdsafdsc



COUNSELING AND REHABILITATION

WHAT WE DO

Training in blindness skills, counseling, job placement, parents, job training
When blindness comes into a family, the first need is assurance that life is possible after blindness. We meet with parents of blind children to give them the skills and information needed to raise confident, competent children who will overcome the obstacles of blindness. We help newly blinded adults adjust to their sight loss and we give them new skills for doing most of the things they did while still sighted. Much of the special equipment needed by blind persons is available in our office. This includes talking watches, talking calculators, braille writing equipment, white mobility canes for independent travel, software for making computers "speak" what is on the monitor, and many other devices that help to make school, employment and recreation possible.

Data

Adult Blind in Counseling/Rehab 100
Parents in Training 458
Computer Training 150
Visitors To RBI Centers 10,843
Job Placement 22

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Our guiding philosophy is that blindness can be reduced to the level of a nuisance. This seems difficult if not impossible for newly blinded persons, but with training in coping skills, and with adapted equipment to compensate for sight loss, the roaring lion of blindness can indeed be reduced to an annoying inconvenience in daily life.

Despite having the right skills and abilities, blind persons often face an uphill battle in finding employment. The greatest obstacle is not the lack of sight but the lack opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities to potential employers. You can help by offering that opportunity to blind trainees seeking employment.

- Counseling
- O&M
- Parent support
- Pre-employment / job placement
-

Highlights:

The Philippines has become the leading provider of business process outsourcing (BPO) call centers providers in the world. This work is especially suited for blind persons who have learned how to use the computer. Sitel, which is the world's largest BPO company, with 60,000 employees worldwide, has 11 centers in the Philippines with about 15,000 employees. Last year we met with the Sitel management about employment for qualified blind applicants. In a real breakthrough for us, Sitel offered to immediately interview 30 blind candidates for possible employment, with an offer of additional training for those who didn't yet meet the requirements for employment.

COUNSELING AND REHABILITATION

Life was as it should be for Shallee Kate- she grew up pampered by her parents and despite being the only child, she had a blissful childhood. At 13, she was easily breezing through her first year in high school. Until one day when her vision started to blur. She and her parents thought that it will just be easily corrected by wearing eyeglasses. When she had her eyes checked, the doctor said that she has Congenital Glaucoma. Two years later, Shallee Kate became totally blind. This changed everything she thought about her life...



Kat, it would be better if you could trim out this cluttered background.

It was very hard for me to adjust and accept my condition since half my life I've been used to seeing and doing activities that sighted people enjoy. When my vision became blurred, I felt nervous that it might become worse. I was in my 3rd year in high school and felt quite excited that I'd soon be starting college.



When I totally lost my eyesight on that same year, I felt like I didn't know what to expect from my life anymore. Suddenly, it was impossible for me to read, write, walk, and run around. I felt very tired. It saddened me to think that I can no longer make sure if I'll be able to survive college or even start it.

COUNSELING AND REHABILITATION

This was when Shallee Kate and her family learned about RBI through one of our field workers who visited their area. She was then invited to join a workshop on college preparation for blind students. This workshop helped orient her to the skills and techniques she would need to succeed in school.

After the week-long workshop in RBI Manila, Shallee Kate was invited to join a workshop on computer usage and internet navigation in for blind students in RBI Davao.

After learning to read and write in Braille, I managed to graduate from high school. The workshops I joined helped me in deciding what to do next. I decided to take up a 2-year vocational course on Information Technology.

Now, I'm already done with the course. I also learned to completely accept my condition. If before I was bitter because I quite felt hopeless, now I know that I can still do a lot of things. I can still be productive. I want to go out of the house this time. I want to join another computer workshop and be able to work someday.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

I wanted to die when I was newly blinded, recalls Pastor Ricky. I was afraid to commit literal suicide though so I started to refuse taking food, and one time, I soaked myself out in the rain and went asleep with my clothes on. As expected, I was brought to the hospital because of high fever that almost claimed my life.

But Pastor Ricky didn't die as he hoped. After he returned home someone visited his home and talked with him about the Lord's love for him and explained that the Lord already had a plan for his life. Ricky responded to this good news and eventually joined our Bible School Scholarship program.

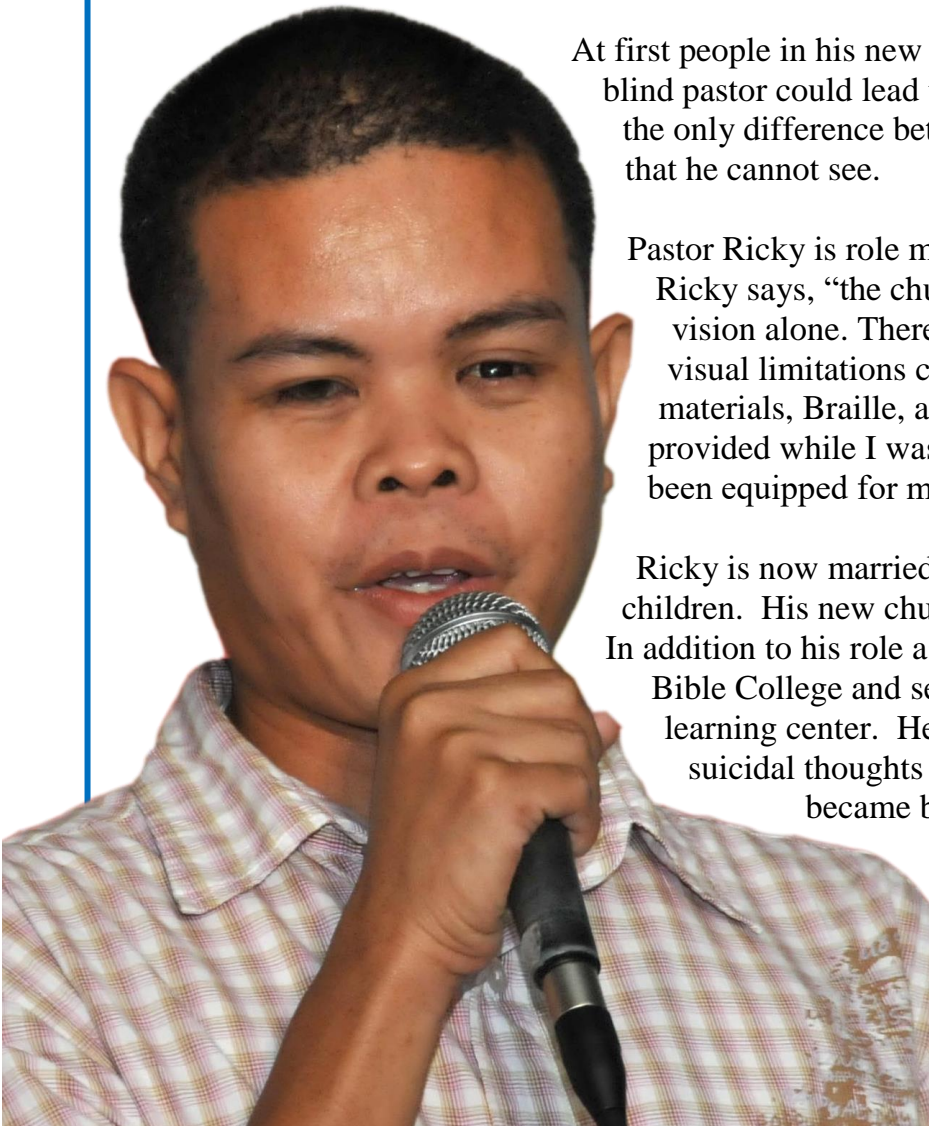
After he graduated in 2002, he was given church assignment in Palayan City. The congregation grew in number and the church under his pastoral management was given recognition from the regional church leaders.

After six years, Ricky was transferred to a larger church in Neuva Ecija, where he now serves as head pastor.

At first people in his new congregation wondered at how a blind pastor could lead their church. According to Ricky, the only difference between him and a sighted pastor is that he cannot see.

Pastor Ricky is role model for his fellow blind pastors. Ricky says, "the church work does not depend on vision alone. There are a number of ways that my visual limitations can be compensated. With adaptive materials, Braille, audio, and with skills that RBI provided while I was still in the Bible College, I have been equipped for my pastoral work."

Ricky is now married and has two active young children. His new church has grown to 270 members. In addition to his role as Pastor, he teaches theology at a Bible College and serves as principal of their church learning center. He is far too busy now for the suicidal thoughts that he had back when he first became blind.



CHRISTIAN GROWTH

WHAT WE DO

The first project of RBI was to produce a Tagalog Braille Bible. After that came Bibles on cassette tape and large print Bibles. More recently we are producing pocket size MP3 style audio Bibles especially suited for those who are blind.

The life-changing message of the Bible is disseminated through Bible Study groups, radio broadcasts, and Braille magazines. A scholarship program helps to prepare blind pastors and church workers to carry on the work of evangelism and discipleship.

Picture, maybe of the smiling camp girls. Or any smiling picture

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Blind children often deal with crippling isolation, feelings of rejection, and low self esteem. Newly blinded adults face crushing despair and fear of the future. The Good News that a loving God says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." is like a stream of water in the desert, bringing healing to the spirit and soul.

Bible Distribution	
Persons receiving Braille/Large Print Bibles or Scripture portions	864
Persons receiving digital audio Bibles	1220
Children in weekly Bible Study Groups	773
Number of Radio stations airing RBI's weekly program	???
Children in Summer Camp	120
Braille Magazine Subscribers	1355

Highlights:

In a partnership with the Philippine Bible Society, we have completed a new recording of the Cebuano Bible. In 2012 we will install these new Bibles on our digital audio players to be distributed to our Cebuano speaking blind friends.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Higher Ed story.

When I was in 3rd year High School, I was aware that RBI is helping students to study in College through a Scholarship. So I called them up to ask what are the requirements needed. When I was in my last year in High School, I submitted all the requirements. When my Scholarship was granted, we were so happy.

I enrolled in the University in Bacolod. After one year, I found out that they were not oriented to cater a blind student so I decided to transfer to another School. But I don't know where. But I still get my Transcript of Record and brought it with me when I went here in Manila (*to an RBI training*). I talked to Ate Mayette at RBI and explained everything to her. At first she refused to permit me to transfer because the enrolment was going on. And the big thing that she's worried about was, I was far from home. (Kaya mong mag-isa ka lang dito? Saan ka titira dito? Paano pag nagkasakit ka? Sino ang makakasama mo papuntang School? Tiff, Manila ito, d ka pwedeng mag travel na ikaw lang." That was some of her questions and concerns presented to me.

I was close to tears not because I was also worried, but *also* because for the first time, there was someone who showed me care, care and concern that I never heard and felt from others. I told her not to worry because I can manage myself. So I went back to Bacolod to pack up my things and formally told my grandparents that I will be studying in Manila. They were so surprised and were so worried. But I assured them: "I can surely manage myself by the Lord's grace."

When I went back to Manila. RBI helped me to look for a boarding house that was near to the Office. When I was there, I felt so sad. I was crying. But I was the one who decided to study here so I have to face the consequences. The time came that I need to wash my clothes. I can't stop myself from crying. Until my landlady saw me. "You don't know how to wash your clothes?", she asked. I was so shy but I said "yes". So she taught me how. I also don't know how to cook ulam, only noodles, rice, and hardboiled egg. So I have no choice but to buy ulam can foods or from the canteen. My first two years of staying here in Manila, I have no permanent guide. Some chose to find another job. Some pursued their studies. I also experienced to travel alone. I transferred from one boarding house to another. But in spite of that, I am happy pursuing my studies.

There are still lots of challenges, but I know that the Lord knows my heart's desire. Since I was little, He showed to me that He is always there. I have no parents who cared for me, but He makes me feel that He cares and loves me more than anyone else. It is my prayer and my heart's desire, that after I graduate I will also be a part of the Ministry of Resources for the Blind in reaching so many blind like me.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Hire Ed

What we do.

As our efforts to enroll blind children in school begin to bear fruit, and more children begin to graduate from high school, we have turned our focus to higher education. In order to open doors to higher education we have conducted workshops in inclusive education for university administrators and faculty. We have also produced informational materials to help prepare the universities to serve blind students. To address the needs of the students, we have conducted workshops in preparing blind students for the rigors of college life. We have also provided scholarships and loaned special equipment, including netbook computers to help the blind students keep pace with their sighted classmates.

Data

Higher Ed enrolment 155
Students loaned computer equipment 108
College Prep training 44
SRC 130
Scholarships 34
Students using Computer Resource Centers 20 per day



You should know.

For those with doubts about whether a blind student can really cope with the requirements of higher education, we only need to remind them of Roselle Ambubuyog. Roselle graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2001 from the Ateneo De Manila University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and a minor in Actuarial Science. She won all other awards possible for a graduating Ateneo student: the Ateneo President's award as Valedictorian of Class 2001; the Ateneo Vice-President's Most Outstanding Individual award for service and excellence; the St. Ignatius award for Outstanding Scholar; and the Departmental award for Mathematics. She currently employed as a consultant for an overseas technology company and is proof that given the right tools and the opportunity to excell, blind students are as capable as any of their sighted peers.

Highlights.

Akaraka, a newly organized educational foundation based in Singapore, has agreed to accept scholarship applications from our blind students who wish to attend college. In 2011, they provided full scholarships for four of our blind students. XXX scholarships are provided by the XXXX Foundation in Germany, XXX by the Nippon Foundation in Japan, and XXX by Union Church of Manila.

1: End Year Results

Projects/Activities	2010 Target	End Year Results
1. Workshop for College Administrators- <i>Education as a Human Right in the CRPD</i>	30	48
2. Orientation for Professors of 15 Colleges and Universities with Enrolled Visually Impaired Students	15	53
3. Produce Instructional Materials for Math and Chemistry College Professors	1	1
4. Maintain 3 Student Resource Centers	3	3
5. Daisy Book Production and Player Loan	30	56
Projects/Activities	2010 Target	End Year Results
6. Equipment Loan for College Students with Visual Impairment	79	72
7. College Preparation Course for 30 Visually Impaired Students	30	32
8. College Semester Break Check-Up	30	26
9. One Year College Scholarships for the Most Outstanding High School Students (ICEVI and ONNET)	7	7

Low Vision

What we do

Low Vision refers to those people who are not totally blind but have such poor vision that they it severely restricts the everyday activities of life. But with proper training and with the proper devices, such as magnifiers, these people can learn to function quite normally. An important part of our work is to train optometrists how to give the best assessment and treatment for people with low vision. We also help to provide special high power glasses and other optical devices to improve vision. Students with low vision may also need help with large print versions of their textbooks and other reading material.

Data

Walk-in px to RBI Low Vision Clinic	196
Low Vision devices dispensed	161
School-based Clinical Assessments	189
Teachers in Low Vision Training	240
Optometrists in Low Vision Training	51
Parents in Training	217
Other Stakeholders in training	473
Optometry Practicumers at RBI	46

You should know.

Only a small percentage of blind people are actually totally blind. Most have some usable vision. With training, they can learn to maximize their remaining vision to considerable advantage.

2011 Highlights???

Volunteers Dean of Optometry School Christine and Dr. Ikay

Topics to highlight

Braille Books	1280
Adaptive Equipment	1050
Special Projects	570
	340

Total **12,770**

Story of Jerome Batuigas

At an early age of 3, I was then diagnosed with **Microcephalus** (an abnormally small head and underdeveloped brain) which caused me to be visually impaired. My left eye can still see and determine objects but my right eye only has light perception. Starting that day, my mother has always been there to support me even if it means to beckon her career goodbye.

Being visually impaired, I had to do a lot of adjustments in order to cope up with my sighted classmates especially when I was in 1st grade. Reading regular prints and to copy notes from the

board was not easy for me. I was even re-enrolled the year after because my mother noticed that there was no improvement in my studies. It was because of her untiring support that my elementary years had become successful despite the discriminations I had received from the people around me.

It was during my High School days when I started to think inferior and that I'm different from others. I could even feel that I am nothing but a burden to my family. I was thankful to God that he had blessed me with a very supportive and understanding family. The negative feelings were gone and I acquired self confidence. Furthermore, I did not let myself be affected with other people's criticism. I realized that there were so many things that I could do better despite my visual impairment. Regardless of my eye condition, I was able to finish high school with flying colors.

It was during the semestral break of school year 2007-2008; I was invited by the Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI) Cebu for computer training. That was the time that I asked the said office to include me in the sponsorship program for my tuition fees since my parents had a hard time supporting my studies. In fact we were 3 college students; my older and younger brothers were self supporting. With the help of God, on the following year RBI had found 2 sponsors for my tuition fees.

After four years of struggle and hardships, all my sacrifices had been paid off when in I earned a degree of Bachelor of Science in Education. To become a registered teacher, I have to take and pass the Licensure Exam for Teachers but I need to enrol in a review center. Because of financial constraint I decided to have a self review but to my surprise my sponsor at RBI shoulder all review expenses. Thank God I passed the exam.

Having the desire to help my parents, I immediately look for a job. I know that eyeing for a position is not easy especially for those with visual impairment like me. But nothing is impossible with God. I am now enjoying my work in a private learning center as a teacher, though salary is not that big. Yet, I still desire to work in a government school so I can help support my younger brothers and sisters' studies in college.

For those who are visually impaired or low vision like me, we should not let our disability be a hindrance in achieving our goals in life. We should let the world know that we have the capacity to excel in different fields and we can function normally in the society where we live in. We should take the rejections and discriminations as a challenge for our success. And I truly thank God for using RBI and my 2 sponsors.

Appendix C

In this period of high technology being used everywhere, blind/visually impaired students in tertiary level needs assistive technology in doing school stuff. Unfortunately most of them do not own one; nonetheless, our main office in Manila was able to get a budget from other funding agency and bought net books for loan to our college students. They have to return the net book after graduation. Here's the testimony of net book recipient, a graduating student, Gelly Pogoy.

I am one of those students who are privilege enough to avail RBI's assistive technology program. Through RBI, I am able to loan a gadget particularly a net book, which is very helpful and useful in my studies.

Through the help of my net book, I can easily perform the tasks given by my teachers without depending on my classmates and other sighted people to help me. I can also make my projects and reports on time. Aside from that, doing research is now very easy for me.

As a whole, I could say that the net book which I have borrowed from Resources for the Blind had helped me in many ways and had improved my performance as a student. In other words, it made me very independent in doing my school works.

Disaster Relief??