



Dear Friends,

September, 2016

One of the most commonly asked questions about the Lingap project is: ***“Where do the Lingap kids come from and how do they arrive at the Lingap Center?”*** As a result, I thought I would take this opportunity to share the Ponting siblings’ story with you as a fairly representative example.

Back in 2012, we were contacted by a Toledo City merchant, telling us that a young boy, approximately age 5, was begging for food in front of their store in town. The store owner added that the boy’s father had recently died of tuberculosis and his mother had died while giving birth to him. Therefore, the boy and his four siblings were true orphans and desperately, according to the merchant, needed help!

We immediately assigned one of our four social workers to do a further investigation. Upon arrival at the store, she found ‘Clinton’ sitting in front just as described, begging for food with “a distant, empty look in his eyes.” When a customer came to the store, Clinton would immediately spring into action hoping for food. Our social worker took Clinton with her and immediately began a search for his older siblings. Clinton took her to their home which was a partially collapsed nipa hut, having no electricity and only a few dirty rags that could pass for clothing. There were no adults or relatives anywhere to be found nor had there been for a very long time.



Eventually, they found Crystal, age 11 and Kimberly age 6 scavenging for food or anything of value and she brought the three of them to the Lingap Center. Upon admission, the kids were immediately taken for a complete medical check-up. Fortunately, no signs of tuberculosis were found. However, due to malnutrition and other challenging and serious medical conditions, all three of the children had difficulty maintaining weight and had to be closely monitored requiring frequent health check-ups.

On Christmas Day, 2012, Antonio, the eldest brother who was then age 14, came to visit his brother and sisters at the Center along with their eldest sister Monina. Antonio had given his all in a courageous attempt to support the little family by gathering and selling fire wood prior to their entry into the Lingap Center. He did not immediately go to visit the Center because (according to him), he knew that his brother and sisters were in good hands with us for

which he was very grateful. It was painful to see him leave, but he considered himself to be the adult in the family and he was too proud to ask to stay. However, on January 1, 2013, Antonio returned to the Center alone. He bolstered his courage, swallowed his pride and tearfully asked if he could be allowed to join his siblings. He added that he dreamed of going to school but he told us that his greatest dream of all was simply “to not be hungry anymore.” He also informed us that their nipa hut ‘home’ had finally collapsed completely and he had no place at all to go or stay. We were more than grateful to add the now four Pontings to the Lingap family. I just thank God again and again that we had been able to build the

Lingap project so we could be there for them! When we inquired about their sister Monina, we learned that like her father, she too had tuberculosis. Monina died in 2014 at age 22.

Currently, Antonio is 17 years old, and is in grade 4 at Jacinta Larosa Elementary School. He will remain a Lingap ward until he completes his education. Crystal, 15 is also a grade 4 student at Jacinta Larosa. Kimberly 10, is in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at the private West Bay Learning Center and Clinton now age 9 is in the first grade at West Bay. He is a real character to be sure!! All four are simply great kids who previously had no hope at all. What a tremendous change for them!!



One of the many responsibilities of the Lingap Center social workers, is to help build identities for undocumented wards. In other words, we frequently need to create identities for them in the form of birth certificates and other legal documentation. Without these vital documents, they would never be able to go on to college or even obtain work permits. They would never be able to work their way out of poverty. Obtaining this documentation is often no easy task because in the case of the Pontings, both parents are deceased and relatives must be involved. The Ponting kids are a work in progress and it will take some time and complex effort, but by the time they are grown and ultimately leave the Lingap Center, they will have valid identities and promising futures. All four of the kids are doing well in school and clearly value the gift of an education. They have experienced life at its darkest but now, their futures are bright.

I hope that this story gives you a bit more insight into what the Lingap Center is all about. As you can see, lives are being saved every day. But most importantly, I hope that you will realize that it is only through the efforts and support of people like you that Antonio, Crystal, Kimberly and Clinton along with the almost 400 other children who have received some level of residential support from the Center since we opened in 2006, now have a chance to escape the insidious bonds of poverty. As for the Pontings, they are now at their new home – the Lingap Center. They are happy, healthy and energetic, very busily doing exactly what children their age are supposed to do..... just being kids.

As I think about the Pontings and the Lingap Center being their home, I can't help but recall a quote from Warsan Shire, when she said:

***“At the end of the day, home isn't where I came from.  
Maybe it's somewhere I'm going and never have been before?”***

Thank you again so much for helping to give them a home.

Sincerely,

John Drake



The Lingap Children's Foundation