

## Many Freedoms Remain Elusive to the Filipino People - MabuhayRadio

Written by Victoria P. Garchitorena

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As we celebrate the declaration of our independence in 1898, let us not forget that there are still many freedoms that remain elusive to our people. One of these is FREEDOM FROM HUNGER.

The last SWS survey released in May 2008 revealed that fully 40% (!) of our people experience hunger. With the increase in oil prices, the rice crisis, and the increasing inflation, it may get worse before it gets better. But hunger is merely a symptom of the underlying poverty that still stalks our homeland, or the inability of Filipinos to earn a level of income that addresses their basic needs. In turn, most economists believe that this is in great part due to the lack of education – quality education that can prepare them to enter the workforce or start a micro-enterprise.

Today, let us join hands and do what we can do address this age-old problem that continues to beset our beloved Philippines. One strategic solution that has shown impact is GILAS (for Gearing up Internet Literacy and Access for Students). It is a multi-sectoral Social Consortium that aims to put computer labs with Internet access in ALL 6,300 of our public high schools across our 7,100 islands. GILAS believes that in today's increasingly connected world, computer and internet literacy can be the key that can open the doors of opportunities to our kababayans, whether they go abroad or stay at home.

As of the end of May 2008, with the passionate and persistent efforts of GILAS and its partners, 1,837 of these public high schools have been connected to the Internet, offering the world of information to more than 918,500 underprivileged youths. It is an amazing achievement, probably one of the best examples of public-private partnerships in social development.

But fully 70% or 2.1 million of our youths in the public high schools still do not enjoy this access to technology and information. Clearly, they will be disadvantaged vis a vis their peers. Information, after all, is the basis of knowledge and hopefully of wisdom. Without up-to-date, accurate information, we cannot make good decisions and we cannot manage well our lives, our careers, and our future.

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We invite you, Dear Reader, to join us in this great adventure that is GILAS. Just \$13 will connect one Filipino youth to the Internet; \$650 will connect 50 of them; \$6,500 will connect an entire public school. Do it for our young students who need a helping hand to face the future. Do it in honor of your mother or father. Do it for God and for country. # # #

FREE OUR YOUTH FROM IGNORANCE! GIVE THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET. Donate to GILAS now!

Please watch the [YouTube video on GILAS](#) \* and the celebration of our Philippine Independence and post your own. Magpakitang GILAS tayo! MABUHAY AND GOD BLESS!

Editor's Notes: Victoria P. Garchitorena is the president of the Ayala Foundation USA. She headed before the Presidential Management Staff of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. \*The video was prepared by Carlos Garchitorena, son of Ayala Foundation President Victoria P. Garchitorena. To know more about [GILAS](#) and how you can celebrate Philippine Independence Day with Filipinos from all over the globe, visit the GILAS website or log on to [Ayala Foundation USA](#)

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