

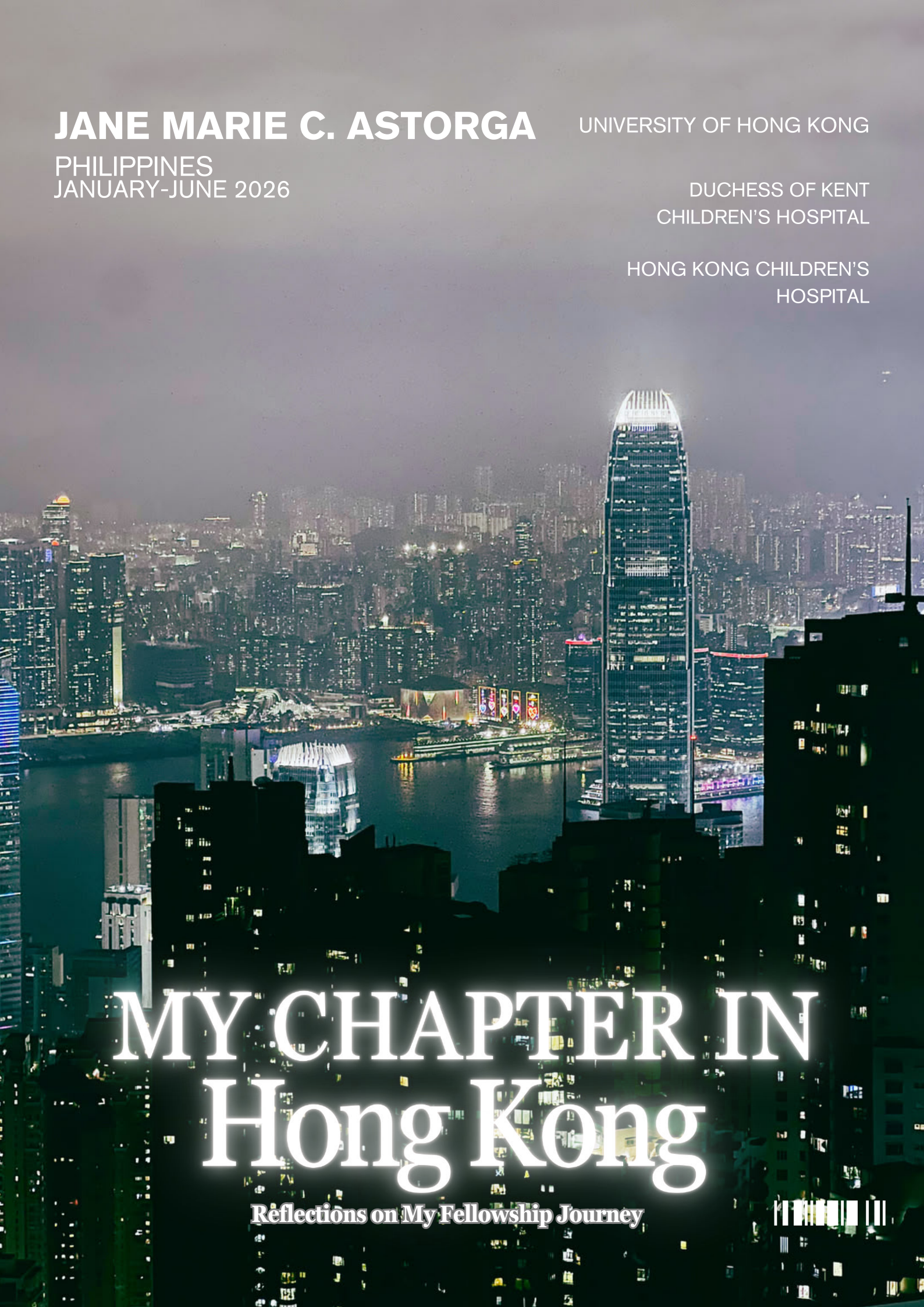
JANE MARIE C. ASTORGA

PHILIPPINES
JANUARY-JUNE 2026

UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

DUCHESS OF KENT
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

HONG KONG CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL



MY CHAPTER IN Hong Kong

Reflections on My Fellowship Journey



FOREWORD

I distinctly remember the day I chose pediatric orthopedics. While reviewing literature on Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip (DDH), I thought of my home province of Negros Occidental in the Philippines. Despite our urban centers, we face a critical shortage of subspecialists. Knowing that children with deformities might never see a specialist during their crucial growing years gave me my purpose. (Admittedly, I also considered hand surgery, but the occasional middle-of-the-night emergencies quickly cured me of that—though I maintain immense respect for hand surgeons).

My path eventually led me to the University of Hong Kong, an institution whose phenomenal reputation I first learned about from my mentor and former fellow, Dr. Legaspi. My training had actually begun with a fellowship under Professor Joshua Chang in Taiwan, and I was delighted to discover he is a close friend of the Hong Kong team. It has been a true honor to learn from such formidable educators.

My ultimate goal has always been to advance pediatric orthopedics in the Philippines and help children who might otherwise be confined to their disabilities. While we cannot cure every condition, our mission is to change their trajectory and improve their quality of life. My time in Taiwan and Hong Kong has equipped me with the precise expertise to do exactly that.

Jane Astorga

FELLOW
DKCH& HKCH
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2026





ARRIVAL AT HONG KONG



I arrived on a cold morning in January. I am grateful for Ms. May Ng, for she arranged the availability of my accomodation, hence I was able to move in right away. I was guided to my room by Secuirty Officer Jackie. He was very kind and cheerful, so my first impression of the staff was immediately good.

I am grateful for the provided accomodation as it was modest but also had everything I need.

THE HOSPITALS

My clinical work was divided between two hospitals--the Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital and the new Hong Kong Children's Hospital



THE LOBBY AT HONG KONG CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL WELCOMES PATIENTS WITH THIS MAGNIFICENT ARTWORK OF ABSTRACT TREES AND CLOUDS.



Hong Kong Children's Hospital was established in 2018. It is here that we do most operations and also hold the most clinics. We work here on Wednesdays through Fridays. The hospital has a warm atmosphere that is not at all intimidating. I think this is important so children can feel safe and more at ease during their treatment.



THE DUCHESS OF KENT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE WORLD RENOWNED SPINE UNIT OF HONG KONG UNIVERSITY AND QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL.

The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital is located at 12 Sandy Bay Road on Hong Kong Island.

It used to be a convalescent home for children recovering from Pott's Disease. I learned that Tuberculosis was quite rampant in the past, but Hong Kong has been victorious in mitigating the devastating disease. This hospital was the birthplace of the Hong Kong Procedure--and with the development of this technique it also gave rise to one of the most prestigious Spine care centers in the world under Hong Kong University.



The façade of the Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital, as seen from the intersection of Sha Wan and Sandy Bay Road.



KENNEDY TOWN

The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital sits close to Kennedy Town, once a quiet seaside village and now a lively neighborhood after the MTR arrived. My runs often took me in that direction, where I'd grab groceries or a quick snack, and if time allowed, stroll the promenade toward Belcher Bay to catch the sunset.



Kennedy Town Praya on a cold morning



THE EXCEPTIONAL TEAM

The Paediatric Orthopaedics team at DKCH and HKCH is a rather small team but with big outputs. At the forefront is Dr. Chow Wang and Dr. Evelyn Kuong and with them are equally talented consultants--Dr. Janus Wong and Dr. Clara Lee. We are also joined by one resident from Queen Mary Hospital and one from Tuen Mun Hospital.

Dr. Chow and Dr. Kuong are exceptionally knowledgeable and skilled, yet they remain humble and approachable despite their vast experience in the field. Dr. Janus and Dr. Clara are both brilliant and dedicated, ensuring that this section of the department operates seamlessly. I have had the pleasure of working closely with the residents, who, although still learning the craft, have shown a strong desire to learn and a genuine respect for their work.

Supporting this amazing team is also a dedicated team of nurses and allied health professionals. The nurses at DKCH especially are very professional and most especially kind especially to a foreign doctor like me who was initially feeling lost.



Above: (L-R, first row) Dr. Janus Wong, Dr. Evelyn Kuong, Dr. Chow Wang, Dr Clara Lee; (L-R, second row) Myself, Dr. Kevin Tsang, Dr. Brian Siu

Left: The team poses for the anniversary of the Society for the Relief of Disabled Children (photos borrowed from the SRDC)

WHAT'S A WEEK LIKE FOR A PEDIATRIC ORTHOPEDICS FELLOW AT DKCH AND HKCH?



DUCHESS OF KENT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Monday

- ✓ Scoliosis Clinic
- ✓ Surgery

Tuesday

Paed Ortho Clinic
and then Grand
Rounds



HONG KONG CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Wednesday

Preop Meeting
Special Joint Clinics with
Endocrine/Neurology
Paediatric Orthopedic Clinic

Thursday

Surgery day!
We are usually at
OT 8 or OT 5

Friday

Grand Rounds
Casting Clinic
Neuromuscular Clinic/Seating Clinic/Skeletal Dysplasia Clinic



**THE OPERATIONS ARE WELL SUPPORTED BY DOCTORS
AND A HANDFUL OF SUPPORT STAFF.**



THE LEARNING CURVE: GAINING INSIGHTS FROM PATIENTS AND MENTORS

As a fellow, my responsibilities included making ward rounds, presenting during preop meetings and grand rounds, assisting with patient care during clinics, and participating in surgeries. While some may perceive these duties as overwhelming, I welcomed it. After all, the only way to learn is getting into the thick of it. My mornings began early, allowing me to complete my rounds and participate in clinic activities. At first, I felt like a headless chicken, but gradually, I adapted to the routine.

During my rounds, the nurses at ward 5/6 in DKCH were very helpful. They guided me on using the medical system and also helped me talk to the patients. I appreciate that they respect my inputs and I likewise admire them for being competent and compassionate.

During my clinic rotations, I had the privilege of seeing patients, which provided me with invaluable firsthand experience in taking medical histories and conducting physical examinations. This practice has been a fantastic way to refine my diagnostic skills while also allowing me to engage with consultants on the appropriate management for each patient. I am truly grateful for this opportunity, as I believe that experiential learning is the most effective way to acquire knowledge.





(L-R) Myself, Dr. Chow, Dr. Pam, and Mr. Percy

(L-R) Dr. J. Wong, Dr. Kevin Tsang (from Tuen Mun Hospital), and myself after surgery

The operating theatre was arguably my favorite place. I am impressed at how efficient the team is. Everyone knows their role and they do it professionally.

To ensure a comforting and secure space, children arrive by walking (if they can) or in an electric car driven by nurses. This helps reduce their anxiety and makes the experience less scary. Even though it seems like a small detail, it shows how much the staff cares about making things better for the patients.





Besides my clinical duties, I attended several meetings and conferences. A noteworthy session was the multidisciplinary meeting on patients with mucopolysaccharidoses (pictured above), where specialists discussed management strategies. They also invited a school physiotherapist to collaborate on a rehabilitation plan.

My respect for these doctors has deepened, as they demonstrate unwavering dedication to their patients' care. The people of Hong Kong are truly fortunate to have numerous professionals who are not only experts in their respective fields but also sincerely compassionate.



I was also given the opportunity to attend the 21st Hong Kong International Orthopaedic Forum along with the other international fellows. (L-R) Dr. Paul Punzalan (Philippines-Tumor), myself, Dr. Mariam Zaighum (Pakistan-Joints) and Dr. Saqib 12 (Pakistan-Sports).



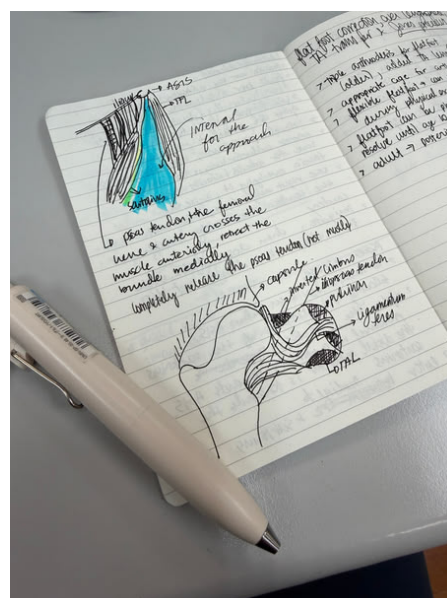
Surgery days were always a delight. I am grateful to have learned a number of techniques. I was most excited about deformity correction and peidatric sports surgeries which were frequent during my stay.

10,000 BUDDHAS SHRINE IN SHA TIN DISTRICT



OFF-DUTY HOURS

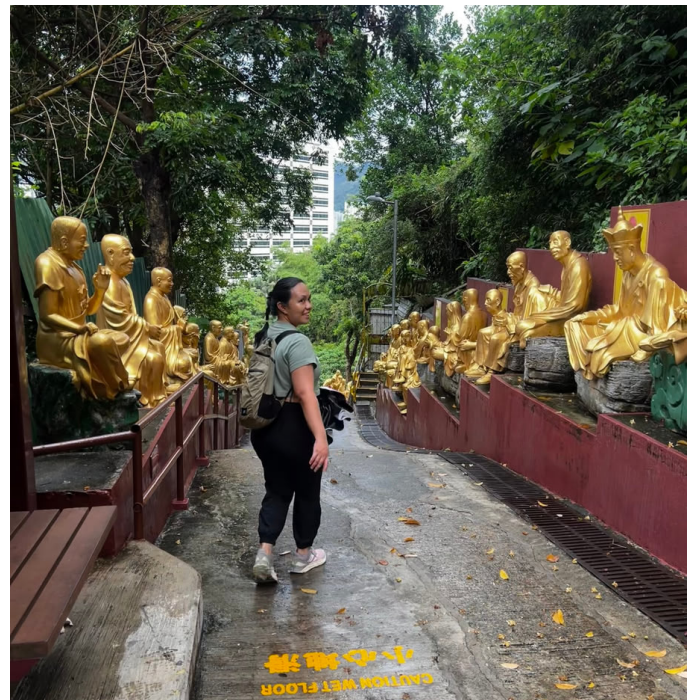
I dedicated myself entirely to the clinical work to maximize this valuable learning opportunity. During my free time on weekdays, I focused on studying cases and revising operative techniques, making notes of the procedures in my small notebook.



Immersed in the Wonders of Hong Kong

While I was occupied with clinical work during weekdays, I also found time to explore and experience Hong Kong on weekends. Although I have visited the city several times before, it is only now that I have truly come to understand it. My favorite weekend activities include hiking, going on runs, lifting weights at the gym (HKU staff enjoy free access to the nearby Henry Fok Fitness Centre!),

cycling, indulging in good food, and reading at cafes. Occasionally, I dedicate some weekends to reviewing cases I encountered during the previous week and refreshing my knowledge of operative techniques.



Meeting old and new friends

During my time in Taiwan for my fellowship, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Karen Yeung, a talented pediatric and hand surgeon from Tuen Mun Hospital. She kindly promised to catch up with me when I arrived in Hong Kong, and true to her word, she did. We also had the chance to reconnect at the Neuromuscular Clinic at HKCH, which was wonderful.



During my stay in Hong Kong, I've had the pleasure of meeting fellow doctors who are also training here. Their company has truly enriched my experience.



ECHOES OF GRATITUDE

This program holds a special place for aspiring pediatric orthopedic surgeons in the Philippines. I arrived in Hong Kong at the peak of winter, but the immediate warmth of the people made the cold vanish. Unlike many international fellowships, this program provides true hands-on responsibility—a challenge that ultimately shaped me into a better clinician and surgeon. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the phenomenal team at the **University of Hong Kong's Division of Pediatric Orthopedics**. I am deeply grateful to **Dr. Chow Wang** for his inspiring humility and guidance; to **Dr. Evelyn Kuong**, whose calm, step-by-step guidance in the operating theater made me feel she could confidently talk me through landing a plane; to **Dr. Janus Wong**, whose brilliant research and masterful OR skills deeply inspired me; and to **Dr. Clara Lee**, whose profound knowledge and meticulous guidance were invaluable, always helping me safely navigate the complex nitty-gritty of the hospital system and remaining just a message away whenever I needed help with challenging cases.

I am equally indebted to the brilliant residents and resident specialists who welcomed me as a peer and a friend. Special thanks to **Dr. Brian Siu and Dr. Samuel Fang** for the generous carpool commutes, and to **Dr. Kevin Tsang, Dr. Sally Lau, Dr. Nicola Ho, and Dr. Andy Yee** for their exceptional skill and teamwork. I must also thank the dedicated nursing and support staff who made daily operations seamless: **Nurse Vivian, Nurse Esther, and the DKCH Ward 5/6 and SOPD teams**; **Mr. Percy Ng** for his masterful casting work; **Mr. Jackie** and the security team for their warm daily greetings; the quarters staff whose kindness easily bypassed the language barrier; and **Ms. May Ng** for always keeping my administrative needs one step ahead. Finally, to the **HKU Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology**: by training international fellows from developing healthcare systems, your impact reaches far beyond Hong Kong.

You are directly extending a lifeline to thousands of children back home in the Philippines, too.



Maraming salamat!

