



FIRST IN ASIA RP's street paper Jeepney aims at poverty reduction. JEEPNEY

Jeepney, the street mag; buy it to help the homeless

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Contributor

FOR ROLANDO TIONGSON, A FORMER garbage collector, selling "Jeepney" magazine has changed his life.

"Before, I earned very little. Now, I earn a good income. I even get to save money, so whenever my child is sick,

we take money out of my savings to take him to the doctor. I can now even afford to get married!"

Tiongson is one of the vendors of Jeepney, a unique publication launched in March 2008 with a two-fold aim: To present the stories and needs of the poor and to provide a job that will earn

JEEPNEY/A8

Jeepney the street mag; buy it to help the homeless, jobless

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for them a living wage.

Published by the Urban Opportunities for Change Foundation, Jeepney is the country's first "street paper," and is part of a global movement to end poverty through the development of independent publications that provide unique employment opportunities and social programs for the poor and the homeless.

The first street paper was developed in New York in 1989, and the idea was to print a newspaper and employ homeless people to sell it on the streets for a percentage of the cover price. There are now more than 200 street papers being sold in 40 countries.

Lives of the poor

"Jeepney has one main goal: To create and provide jobs for the homeless people that meet or exceed the minimum wage. We do that in part by presenting the lives of the poor through professional images and journalism," said Bill Shaw, the American founder of the Urban Opportunities for Change Foundation.

Jeepney is a glossy that comes out six times a year and is sold through a network of vendors around shopping malls and campuses in Metro Manila.

To qualify to be a vendor of Jeepney, one must be mainly a street dweller or homeless person 16 years old and over, and making less than the minimum wage.

Start-up capital

Each vendor is given a "start-

up capital" consisting of 10 magazines to sell. Each copy sells for P100, which is split equally between the vendor and the magazine, whose share covers the cost of production and training.

Once they sell off their initial 10 copies of the magazine, the vendor has the option to buy the next 10 copies for half the cover price, or P50.

The goal is to sell 10 magazines a day which, if reached, will enable the vendor to earn an income exceeding the minimum wage by 40 percent, said Shaw.

Target audience

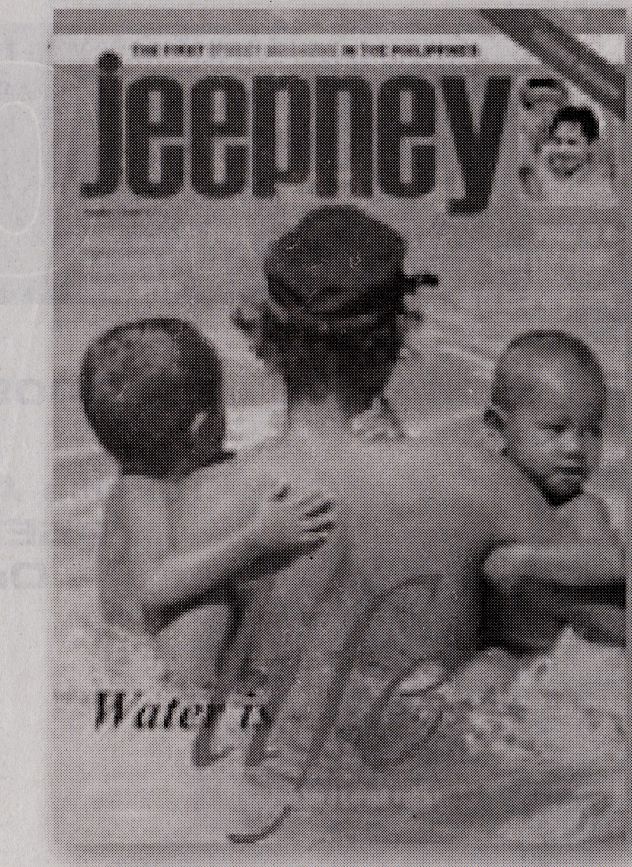
According to Shaw, the magazine is currently selling 3,000 copies every two issues, with a staff of five full-time vendors.

In the Eastwood City alone, vendors sold 500 magazines in 10 days, which meant that each had an income of P1,200 a day.

The magazine's target audience are people who desire to help improve the lives of the poor and can do so by buying a street paper or magazine.

"Once people understand that the magazine is a social enterprise for the poor, it sells itself. Although some buy it because they like the magazine, a majority buy it when they understand that doing so provides a job," said Shaw.

"Buying a street paper does much more than contribute to the vendor's chance of escaping poverty. You are helping finance a support system for many more excluded people, something



GLOSSY comes out six times a year, each issue centers on a theme. It is sold through a network of vendors around shopping malls and campuses in Metro Manila.

that giving spare change to a beggar simply does not do," according to the International Network of Street Papers (IN-SP) website.

Each issue of Jeepney centers around a theme. Its first five issues focused on topics like wa-

ter, shelter, jobs, the Homeless World Cup and the dreams of the poor.

Lifestyle section

It covers lifestyle concerns just like a regular magazine, with sections like the Celebrity

Interview, Arts, Musings and Meditation, Travel and Food. But there is a twist to the way it treats these topics.

For instance, in the most recent issue, a fashion piece called "Changing Outlooks" features street models wearing "ukay-ukay" (secondhand clothes).

In the "Backword" section, a homeless man shares his life story, and "How You Can Help" highlights an organization or individual who is making a difference.

The magazine is produced by a mix of volunteer and paid professional staff.

Best interview award

Jeepney Magazine was selected earlier this month as one of five finalists during the IN-SP's 14th annual conference in Bergen, Norway. Jeepney was nominated in the Best Interview and Best Design awards.

Jeepney is currently being sold in malls like Glorietta 3, Galleria and Eastwood and in school campuses in Intramuros and the University of the Philippines in Quezon City—institutions that have partnered with Jeepney to support its internationally recognized poverty-reduction solution.

The challenges of selling street magazines are different in each country. Whereas in Europe, it's hard to find homeless people desperate enough to sell on the street, in the Philippines it has been difficult to find legal and safe locations where their

target market is.

Ideal location

"Our ideal locations are areas where there are socially conscious individuals who can spare P100 every two months," said Shaw.

He said the foundation had to turn away vendors because there were not enough places for them to sell.

But he remains confident that through "word of mouth" and the magazine's track record, they will be able to build the right relationships with businesses and the government agencies that will provide more selling locations.

The magazine also offers training for vendors to learn the basic skills of entrepreneurship. They are taught to develop the confidence to approach people, to communicate simply and clearly, to set sales goals and to understand the content of the magazine. They also learn the importance of body language, how to handle feelings of rejection, and are taught that "no" is not a personal attack.

Beauty of Filipinos

A full-time social worker is so around to help them work through any personal or job issues that come up.

"The beauty of the Filipino people is everyone is socially conscious. Everyone is willing to share once they understand what a street paper is—that provides solutions for those who have none," said Shaw.