

# REEL TIME: “SALAT” (BONE DRY) GMA News TV (GMA Network, Inc. – Philippines)

## INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCERS

Q: What inspired you to make this film – how did you find this girl and her family?

*Looking for a compelling subject that will epitomize any social issue is always the greatest challenge for us documentary makers at Reel Time, GMA News TV. For July last year, which is National Nutrition Month in the Philippines, we thought of doing a story about malnutrition among children in the country. We found out that a child dies every 15 seconds due to hunger-related problems. And to make matters worse, according to the National Nutrition Council of the Philippines, one of the main reasons of malnutrition is not the lack of food, but the negligence of parents when it comes to providing adequate care for their children.*

*Our journey began in Tondo, Manila, one of the most poverty-stricken areas in the country, where we found 10-year old Mary Rose. Her mother Vina is a widow who has to single-handedly provide for her six children. On good days, Vina scrapes a living peeling garlic, earning only 20 pesos (\$0.46 USD) for a full day’s work. Though this is hardly enough to feed six growing children, it is still a good day when she’s able to bring home a single pack of instant noodles for dinner. At least for a night, Mary Rose and her siblings won’t have to sleep off their hunger.*

*Filming the family’s daily routine was heartbreaking for all of us. It was never easy to document how Mary Rose and her younger siblings eat only once a day and yet the mother, already calloused from the daily hardships that they face, seemed unworried about the situation. At such an early age, Mary Rose already thinks like an adult and she has a deep compassion for her siblings that will profoundly inspire anyone.*

Q: How did you develop the idea?

*There are hundreds of other documentaries in the world that deal with malnutrition. For such a familiar topic, our challenge was to develop the narrative that would also poetically reflect our subject’s plight as a daughter and as a student.*

*We showed how she cries in the morning, dreading the idea that she may have to attend school yet again without bathing. Her mother remains adamant that she would rather spend money on food than on bath soap. Mary Rose’s tears continue to stream down her cheeks, knowing full well that her only way out of the slums she describes as ‘dirty and chaotic’ is through an education. And that there is always a chance she will have to go to school with an empty stomach and without a bath.*

Q: What other difficulties did you encounter in filming this story?

*No major difficulties were encountered during the filming of the documentary. The hardest part was finishing the documentary in a limited time. There were elements of the documentary that were not initially available within the working time frame, like the feeding program in the family's locality, which was not originally scheduled during the week of the filming.*

Q: What has been the reaction from audiences after watching the programme? Have there been any changes after it was shown?

*After showing the documentary, many viewers were touched by Mary Rose's story. Reel Time's Facebook page was flooded with comments of disbelief, sympathy, and compassion for Mary Rose. A number of people coordinated with us to help Mary Rose and her family.*

*After a couple of days, some of our viewers took Mary Rose and her family out for a meal and went to grocery stores to get food, medicines, and clothing for the whole family.*

*Now an American couple is sponsoring Mary Rose and her family. This couple took them out of the slums, provided them with a decent home, and sent all the kids to school. The mother Vina is no longer peeling garlic. She has also stopped asking for money from her brother. Learning to take good care of her kids is her focus right now and she will be assisted to undergo livelihood training in order for her to further sustain her family.*

Q: What are your plans in the future to promote children's rights?

*As documentary makers, we want to present more honest and unpretentious stories of the plight of children, not only in our country but in the whole world. This is our way of making sure that these small voices will always be heard.*