

# **iSERVE 2025 Leadership Seminar: A Life Changing Experience**

Alona Biares, a Grade 12 student at the Center for Positive Futures in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, relates her growth experience during the two-day leadership seminar held in Puerto Princesa City on November 8-9, 2025.

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In a world in need of leaders who combine strength with compassion, the iSERVE Leadership Seminar offered young women a rare and meaningful space to reflect on who they are—and who they are called to become. This vision lay at the heart of iSERVE: Growing into Women of Strength and Compassion.

Held on November 8–9, 2025, at the St. Ezekiel Moreno Spirituality and Development Center in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, the seminar aimed to help young female leaders deepen their self-knowledge, strengthen their ability to work as a team, and grow in social responsibility. Forty-four (44) Grade 12 students from various schools and backgrounds took part in the experience, each bringing her own dreams, questions, and untapped potential.

From the very beginning, it was clear that the seminar was more than just another school activity. It became a space where we were invited to reflect, listen, collaborate, and—most importantly—discover ourselves.

Being part of the iSERVE Leadership Seminar was truly a meaningful and eye-opening experience for me.

Day 1 focused on understanding ourselves—our strengths and weaknesses, temperaments, values, and sense of purpose. Through activities such as conceptualizing our own school and designing its flag, taking a temperament test, and crafting our personal vision and mission, we came to see that leadership begins with self-awareness. These exercises were both engaging and deeply reflective, reminding us that before we can lead others well, we must first learn to know ourselves.

With the guidance of the facilitators, we gained a deeper appreciation of the unique qualities each of us brings. One of my biggest takeaways from Day 1 was that leadership is not about being perfect; it is about knowing ourselves well enough to grow.

Day 2 challenged us to look beyond ourselves and turn our attention to the community around us. A councilor from the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) of Barangay San Pedro shared valuable insights into the real issues and needs of their barangay. Listening to these concrete realities helped us realize that leadership is not only about developing skills, but also about cultivating social awareness and the willingness to respond.

One of the seminar's key outputs was the proposal of an outreach project to be implemented over a period of

up to three months. After reviewing several possible initiatives, my group chose to focus on values formation for the children at the Friendship Home of Father Luis Amigó. We plan to carry this out over two to three months, meeting with the children once a week. This experience helped me see that even students like us can contribute to meaningful change in practical and tangible ways.

We were blessed with inspiring talks from the former Vice Mayor of Puerto Princesa City, Ms. Nancy Socrates, and from model and entrepreneur, Ms. Charina Carmen Josol. They shared essential qualities of true leadership, such as integrity, empathy, accountability, and a spirit of service. Their stories reminded us that leadership is not measured by position or power, but by how faithfully we serve others and remain true to our values. From them, I learned that while strength is

important, it is compassion that truly keeps a leader grounded.

Looking back, the iSERVE Leadership Seminar was not just another student activity—it was a turning point for me. It opened my eyes to the kind of leader I aspire to become and helped me realize that leadership is both a responsibility and a privilege. I am deeply grateful for this experience, for the mentors who guided us, and for the friendships and insights I gained along the way. As I continue my journey, I will carry these lessons with me and strive to lead with both strength and compassion.

As a 17-year-old student of the Center for Positive Futures (CPF), I value spending quiet time outside of school because it allows me to reflect and understand myself more deeply. I also make it a point to look back on my experiences and mistakes, knowing that they teach me

important lessons about who I am and who I want to become. These reflections matter to me because they align with how I learn and grow, and they matter to those around me because personal growth shapes how I treat others. When I learn from my mistakes and choose to be kinder, more understanding, and more respectful, I help create a more positive environment for my family, friends, and community.

By applying these lessons in my everyday life, I hope not only to grow as a leader, but also to inspire others and bring out the best in the people around me.

The student leaders who participated in the seminar came from the following schools:

- 1) Palawan National School
- 2) Palawan State University–Laboratory High School

3) Holy Trinity University

4) Center for Positive Futures

5) Puerto Princesa City National Science High School

*The iSERVE 2025 Leadership Seminar was organized by People Engaged in People Projects Foundation, Inc. (PEPPI), a non-governmental organization established by women members of Opus Dei, dedicated to the development of women, families, and society.*

Alona Biares

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