



Registered association for the promotion
of medical care and social support in
Northern Samar, Philippines

Bugko, April 2022

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

In December 2021, I traveled to Germany, despite the tense coronavirus situation. It was good to see some friends and family again. Unfortunately, the incidence rates did not allow for a gathering like the ones we had in previous years, and I was able to report on them in detail. That's a real shame, but everyone's safety is more important!

During my time in Germany, Super Typhoon Odette (international name Rai) hit the Philippines on December 16, 2021. With wind speeds of almost 200 km/h and heavy rain, it left a trail of destruction in southern Leyte, Cebu, and Bohol. Over two million people lost everything and were left without a roof over their heads, without water, and without food, and experienced a terrible Christmas. In addition to houses, shops, gas stations, and churches were destroyed. Even ships, cars, cargo containers, and smaller aircraft were tossed through the air by the force of the typhoon. The typhoon was as strong as Haiyan in Tacloban in 2013, and many of you will still remember the images on television. Thankfully, there was no storm surge this time, so there weren't as many deaths as then, but almost 400 still lost their lives. For four weeks afterward, there was still no electricity in the affected areas, and what was almost worse, there was only limited drinking water. National and international aid immediately arrived, so it seemed as if people had learned from the past. The pictures are from the internet, as I was already in Germany at the time.





I received many inquiries about the situation in Bugko. Fortunately, or thank God, we were spared there, and apart from four days of no electricity, there was only strong wind and even more rain, and no major damage. There were also some floods in Northern Samar, but there was no major catastrophe in our region.



Upon my return to the Philippines, I had to quarantine again, but this time only for five days. Since I knew what to expect, it wasn't quite as bad.

On January 20th, we held a belated Christmas party for our children in the nutrition program. Siemens employees had collected books, toys, coloring books, stuffed animals, etc., and wanted to give them to our children for Christmas. Due to transport delays, it was January, but the children's joy was just as great. Sister Veronica did the same thing in December for the children in Bugko who live near the cemetery, using the toys you always send. This way, we can also give the children here some Christmas joy.



We just barely made it, because on January 21, Northern Samar was placed under Alert Level 4 until January 31 due to rapidly rising coronavirus cases. This brought with it more curfews, restrictions, etc. We thought the situation

would improve with the large-scale vaccination campaigns, but that wasn't the case at first. There is still a lot of uncertainty among the population regarding the coronavirus vaccination. At the provincial hospital, eight doctors tested positive for COVID-19, which resulted in the hospital's outpatient clinic being closed. This meant that even more patients came to us for help. Our doctors at the clinic had their hands full. A lot of educational work was also done to motivate patients to get vaccinated.

As mentioned in the last letter, we were in contact with the DOH (National Health Authority) at the end of 2021. In order to comply with the DOH's guidelines, we had to make further structural changes to our diagnostics building. We added a restroom and a changing room, which fortunately went smoothly.

Before:



After:



And also a room for waste separation and cleaning supplies.



At the end of January, the good news came that the strict entry restrictions for foreigners would be relaxed starting February 11. The quarantine was eliminated, and vaccinated travelers only had to provide proof of a negative PCR test shortly before their flight. At the same time, the alert level also changed again.

We were deeply affected by the war between Russia and Ukraine. These countries have been fighting each other since February 26th, and even here, far away, we can follow it on television. The outpouring of support for Ukraine from all over the world is impressive, and you can see that when it comes to it,

the leaders of the states stick together. We are also feeling the effects of the war here in the rising prices. Not only has fuel become much more expensive, but also consumables, since everything has to be transported. At the same time, the number of patients has declined, as transport to here from the various villages has also become more expensive.

Another piece of good news is that since March 17, the infection rate in Northern Samar has reached zero. The DOH reports 0.00% in our province, and that gives us hope. Whether this is true is unknown, as elections are scheduled for May, and the candidates want to visit their voters.

Since it was now possible, we first invited our children from the fluoride prophylaxis program. We started this program years ago with the support of the German Dental Aid Organization and have continued it consistently. Only the coronavirus restrictions brought it to a halt. Fortunately, we were able to start again.



Unfortunately, there's still no dentist in sight who can provide urgently needed dental treatment. Demand is huge, and it's a little painful that our excellent dental clinic is so deserted.

The doctor who performs outpatient surgeries now comes every Friday. She operates on cysts, lipomas, breast fibroadenomas, etc. There's a long waiting list because we haven't been able to offer outpatient surgeries for almost two years due to the coronavirus restrictions.



We now have 100 children in the nutrition program, as it is currently very difficult for families to ensure a balanced diet for their children due to increased prices. We are pleased that the German Club in Manila continues to support us in this endeavor.



The senior citizens' program, in cooperation with Caritas Germany and COSE (a senior citizens' organization in Manila), was officially opened on March 16th. Representatives from Caritas Germany, COSE, the province, and the city were also in attendance. The senior citizens had put together a small program. Every day, events such as Zumba, group cooking, games, lectures, and even gardening take place at the senior citizens' day center. The senior citizens can contribute according to their own interests and abilities. We were able to recruit Michelle Moreno, the daughter of one of our volunteers, to organize and coordinate the program. With a small team under the guidance of COSE, she has begun to transform the senior citizens' day center into a contact point for our senior citizens in the village. More programs for senior citizens will be added in the future, but we have decided to do it in smaller steps, as this program is unique in Northern Samar so far, and we are still working on what else would be best for the senior citizens to keep them active for as long as possible. Once a week, two nurses come to the center to measure blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and to record the seniors' complaints and, if necessary, send them to the clinic for further examination.





On March 21, we celebrated our 15th anniversary at the clinic. With our pioneering volunteers, six of whom have been with us since the beginning, and our loyal doctor, Dr. Quilatan, who, at 82 years old, still comes once a week to see patients.



Dr. Amalia T. came to us on March 28. She previously worked as a general practitioner in Catbalogan and will now be visiting us for three clinic days.



We've had some exciting months, as you can see from the length of this report, and so I thank you for your many years of help and for remembering us here.

And now, one final request: It would be great if some of you who receive my newsletter by mail now have an email address. Please send it to a-korth@gmx.de. It saves a lot of work, paper, and postage if we can send the newsletter by email. Thank you in advance to everyone who can support us in this endeavor. Everyone else will, of course, continue to receive it.

And so, I send you my warmest greetings and wish you all a blessed Lent and a happy Easter despite the coronavirus and the war in Ukraine.

Yours,

Sabine Korth

Salamat (thank you) from Bugko!

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