



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

Bugko, April 2023

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

As in previous years, I was in Germany for a short time in December to meet my family and friends and talk about our Mabuhay clinic and the ongoing projects.

On January 8th, our first dentists arrived from Germany. They traveled from the University of Kiel, fully motivated after their exams. Pia T. and Sophie M. immediately got to work, but were dismayed that they mostly had to perform extractions, either because the condition of the teeth did not allow for anything else, or because the patient lacked the understanding that a filling could save the tooth. Unfortunately, much more educational work is needed in this area.



On January 20th, Dr. Christian N. arrived with his wife Bärbel. The experienced internist and his wife gave us a warm welcome. There is always plenty of work, and the N's quickly settled into our Mabuhay team. The many patients appreciated the calmness the new doctor exuded, and patients of all ages knew they were in the best possible hands with him. Dr. N. treated many patients with advanced tuberculosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and kidney disease. He also performed wound care and acupuncture. He also helped prepare for the International Surgical Mission (ISM), which was scheduled for February. Preliminary examinations are often necessary for this, especially for patients scheduled for thyroid surgery. Bärbel N. helped out in every way. First, she sorted ointments and medications and helped prepare the operating room for the upcoming operations. She packed the packages for the children in the nutrition program and went to the herbarium to package teas.

The three weeks they were here flew by, and we hope that Mr. and Mrs. N. will visit us again. Personally, I learned a lot from Dr. N., which I can now apply in my practice.



Dr. N. and his wife also visited the feeding program and presented the children with their certificates of completion. Afterwards, we brought a little belated Christmas cheer to the children living near the cemetery. Everyone was so happy, and we immediately decided to include the children living near the cemetery in our next feeding program. The living and nutritional conditions there are very poor, and we believe our help will be well received.



Unfortunately, the weather in January was not kind to our guests. It rained almost continuously, and on January 16, the governor declared a state of emergency because large parts of the province were suffering from flooding and landslides. The continuous rain also prevented many patients from coming to us at all, as road conditions made it impossible or concerns about their homes overshadowed them. One fisherman and his boat were swept away from Bugko to Biri Island. He survived. Others were not so fortunate and lost their lives, as they went out to sea with their boats despite warnings to catch fish, which, of course, could fetch a high price.



On February 8th, we met with Caritas Germany and COSE (Coalition of Services of the Elderly), as well as all stakeholders in Northern Samar, to discuss the progress of the senior citizens' program. Since Bugko is playing a pioneering role, our senior citizens' program was presented and discussed in detail. The senior citizens' program is becoming increasingly well-received, and many senior citizens are actively involved in cooking, baking, gardening, dancing, Zumba, bingo, singing, and much more. We hope that Caritas Germany will continue to support the program beyond December 2023. Efforts are now being made to establish the program in other cities here, but Caritas Germany and COSE need more support from the province. Therefore, we met with the governor the following day to ask for his support. Governor Edwin Ongchuan was receptive to this request and is very interested in visiting our clinic in the near future.



The new dental chair was installed on February 14, just in time before the next dentists arrived. We are very grateful to the German Dental Aid Organization and Dr. Klaus Winter for making this possible. Installation took a little longer this time due to ongoing delivery delays caused by the pandemic.



After a brief break for guests, Dr. Georg Lindner and his wife Evelyn arrived on February 18. They initially brought only two dental students with them, as the airport strike in Frankfurt meant that flights were suspended, and only Leah Marie D. from the University of Greifswald and Nikola S. from the University of Freiburg managed to arrive in time. The two other students, Helene B. and Celine P., both from the University of Mainz, arrived almost a week late. The team had many patients and, in addition to tooth extractions, fillings, and dental cleanings, also performed a lot of educational work. Dr. Lindner helped out in the cafeteria.



The prophylaxis program, supported by the German Dental Aid Organization, has been reorganized and many new children have been admitted. We hope that by reviving the fluoride prophylaxis program, we will significantly improve the children's dental health. Through regular checkups and instruction in good oral and dental hygiene by our volunteers, we will succeed in this, and the guest dentists who are now visiting regularly will also be able to treat the children directly if necessary.

During the week of February 20-25, the ISM (International Surgical Mission) team, as mentioned above, came to us from the USA. Due to the three-year pandemic hiatus, the doctors had a long list of patients who wanted surgery. The outpatient procedures were performed in our clinic, and those under general anesthesia were performed in a neighboring hospital. Each day, a different team of doctors came to operate on our patients. Our volunteers assisted, and thus, 60 patients were able to undergo outpatient surgery at our clinic. For most of the time, the surgeons operated at two tables to shorten the patient waiting time.





In mid-March, the dental students and Dr. L. were replaced by Rafaela S., formerly of the University of Ulm, and Kristina G. S. and Marlen M. from Marburg. Ms. S. graduated three years ago but was unable to travel abroad due to the pandemic. The three quickly formed a team and were able to help many patients. Many children came for treatment, who weren't afraid of the "big" dentists.



As you can see, the first half of the year was marked by visits from many young dentists. Due to the pandemic, no dental treatments were performed, not just here but throughout the entire province, and the condition of people's teeth is correspondingly poor.

We have another very exciting and busy few months behind us, and each day brings new challenges. We thank you for all your support, which helps us overcome these challenges and bring help to people here.

And so, I send you my warmest greetings and wish you a happy Easter and a blessed Easter season.

Yours,

Sabine Korth

Salamat (thank you) from Bugko!

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Mabuhay – Hilfe zum Leben e.V.
Office:
An den Eichen
53125 Bonn

www.mabuhay-ev.de

Bonn District court
VR 8364