



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

Bugko, April 2024

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

It was a pleasure to be back in Germany in December to meet my family and friends and talk about our Mabuhay clinic and ongoing projects. The year 2023 was characterized by a large number of visitors. The room at Haus Elisabeth was full, demonstrating the great interest in our work in Bugko.



In December, we launched a new project with the East Asian Association Bremen (OAV). The goal is to further develop our farm and make it more productive. This will help us become less dependent on commercially available food, and the proceeds will also be used to fund the children's nutrition program. We immediately set about creating the necessary conditions, as much of our farm's land was simply lying fallow. Coconut palms were removed, water pipes were laid, pumps were installed, and the land was plowed with a tractor. Climbing poles for the vegetables were built, a storage room for the equipment was constructed, and a compost heap is also being planned. Training sessions were held for our workers on the farm to explain the project to them and improve their agricultural skills. By the time you receive this letter, the construction of a greenhouse with a hydroponic system will still be underway. We will grow various lettuce varieties, peppers, and tomatoes there in the

future. Since the project is long-term, I will report on the progress more often. Here are a few pictures:



I was still in Germany when the first dentists came to Bugko. Helge S. and Heinrich H. had studied in Marburg, and Alicia B. and Johanna H. had studied in Giessen. They quickly formed a good team and had many patients. The dental clinic, very well equipped by the Dentists' Aid Organization, helped them with their dental treatments, and our volunteers Maria and Begit were on hand wherever needed. Selina Acht came with them. She didn't have a background in dentistry but immediately became involved in the clinic's various activities.



From January 19 to 21, Margret B. from Niederwerth and her son Martin, who lives in Manila, visited us. They wanted to learn more about our work here and see how we operate firsthand. We both enjoyed the exchange and the discussions. Unfortunately, the time was very short.

On January 28th, the ISM (International Surgical Mission) team from the USA arrived. A little earlier than usual and with a small team of 22 people, consisting of doctors, anesthesiologists, nurses, and volunteers. I greeted them at the airport. Dr. D., a plastic surgeon from Manila, and Dr. R. How from Kansas in the USA tirelessly performed outpatient operations here at our clinic. Dr. H. managed to operate for 14 hours in one day just to see all patients. They were supported by nursing students from Catarman and our volunteers. Of our listed patients, 62 were operated on as outpatients (i.e., here at our clinic) and 40 as inpatients. A total of 335 patients were treated (121 inpatient surgeries, 49 endoscopies, 165 outpatient surgeries), so we were pleased to provide one-third of the patients. The inpatients were operated on in a neighboring hospital, as was the case last year. Unfortunately, there were many tumor patients this time, which is certainly due to the pandemic, as the patients were more or less confined to their villages. With their diagnoses, follow-up treatment is difficult in our province, as the healthcare system, although improving, does not yet offer such tumor follow-up treatment. This means that the patients have to go either to Tacloban or to better hospitals in Manila. Both options are difficult for the patients, as transportation here is still very difficult and some of the roads are disastrous and consist only of potholes.





On February 4th, Anna-Lena G. and Dr. Julia W. from Mainz arrived. The two made a wonderful team, working hand in hand and having a lot of fun together, even in their free time. Patients came with a wide variety of dental and oral problems and happily awaited their treatment. The patients knew they were in experienced hands and appreciated this. The well-equipped dental clinic run by the German Dentists' Aid Organization was a great help during treatments. Anna-Lena G. even helped out in the operating room and was happy to assist with a cleft lip operation. The man's facial expression changed completely and he was overjoyed. You don't see that often in Germany. Dr. D., a plastic surgeon from Manila, founded the "Smile Forever Program" years ago and regularly performs cleft lip and palate surgery here. Unfortunately, G. and Dr. W. were only with us for two weeks, but they are trying to plan a longer stay here again.



On February 14th, Dr. Marie A. came to us. She works as a doctor at the Munich University Hospital and studied dentistry for seven semesters before starting medical school. We were happy to finally have a doctor of human medicine with us after a long time. She quickly got used to the routine and was a blessing for patients with a wide variety of illnesses. The queues were often long, but patients are happy to wait longer because they know they will be given the time they need and will be examined thoroughly. Since she arrived immediately after the American team, she performed all the follow-up examinations on the operated patients. Both young and old were in good hands in her hands, and we very much hope that she will find time to work in Bugko again.



Almost at the same time, Dr. Georg L. and his wife Evelyn arrived on February 16th. They were followed on February 18th by four dental students: Evelyn S. from Regensburg, Sophia L. and Hannah J. from Halle, and Merete K. from Hamburg. In addition to dental treatments, prophylaxis education is always on the agenda, from which younger patients in particular benefit. Dr. L. has been accompanying students with us for 9 years now, and everyone benefits from his years of experience. He speaks with all students and dentists before their placement in the clinic and answers their questions, so they are well prepared once they begin their placement here. In the meantime, Mrs. L. helps out in the cafeteria and packs packages for the nutrition program.

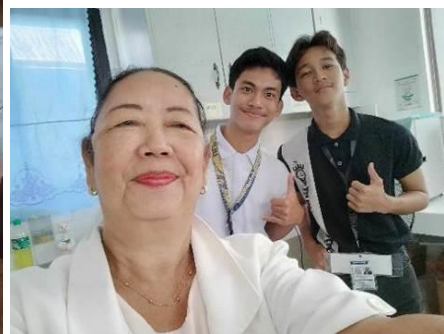
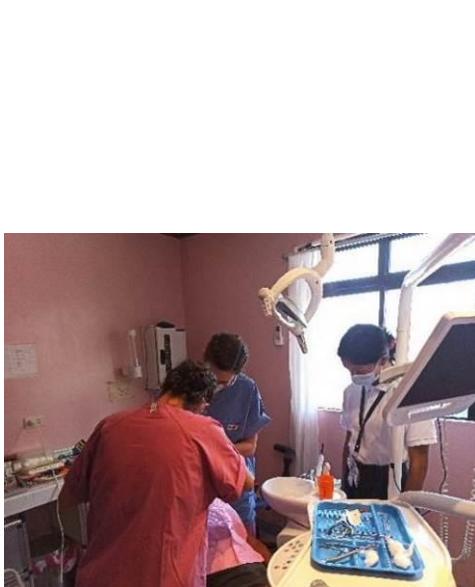


Representatives from Caritas Germany and COSE in Manila, with whom we are jointly developing the senior citizens' program, arrived on February 21st. A meeting was held with the senior citizens, and ideas and suggestions were exchanged. It's difficult for Caritas Germany to understand that various German ideas are impossible or very difficult to implement in the Philippines. The framework and structures are simply too different, and it's also difficult to find the necessary specialist staff. We are grateful to have very competent management in the senior citizens' program.



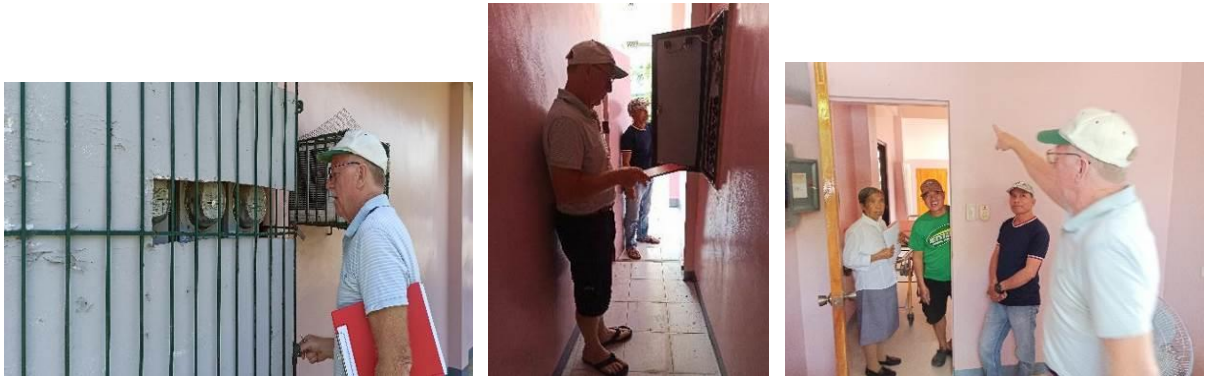
On February 30, Marion S. from Koblenz came to us to organize our hospital supply room. Bandages, syringes, needles, gauze, and medical supplies are stored there and now reorganized, making them very easy to find. We were very grateful for this spontaneous help, as it makes everyday life so much easier. We sometimes don't have the time to go through and sort through all of our inventory in the warehouse.

This year, we once again had high school students do an internship at the clinic. Although they don't stay very long, they can still gain insight into the clinic's operations and work in various areas. This time, they'll be working in the dental clinic, patient reception, and laboratory.



Fritz Bandelow. and his wife Efsie came to us from Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, on March 16th for a few days to discuss the possibility of installing a solar system for the clinic and to explore the clinic in order to present it to a specialist for a cost estimate. Electricity costs at the clinic are staggeringly high, and we are looking for a way to reduce these costs. Solar energy offers a promising alternative in this country. Whether it will be implemented is still an open question, as we have no cost estimate. We have

space for solar panels, and we only need a limited amount of batteries, as we have a large generator from the German Dental Aid Organization at our disposal.



Sandra H., Nikol P., and Vanessa Mae S. came to us from Aachen from March 17th to April 12th. They had just graduated in dentistry and wanted to gain more practical experience here. They were quickly thrown in at the deep end, as we set off on a medical/dental mission immediately after arriving. This time, our involvement involved helping out at the dental station. In these dental missions, teeth are extracted under the most basic conditions, and patients line up to have their teeth extracted. They sit in a chair, open their mouths, and then it begins. Without a lamp and adjustable dental chair, it's not always easy. I think the three of them had a positive experience and had more teeth extracted than ever before. In addition to the dental station, there were also medical examinations, simple eye tests, massages, and a pharmacy. It's a blessing for the patients, as everything is completely free of charge, which is why the waiting lines are very long. On this day, 450 patients were cared for in the various wards. (The first two pictures during the mission, the last picture in our dental station.)



As you can see, the first quarter at the clinic was very eventful, with many helpful and interested guests and, once again, visits from many young dentists, many of whom are taking their first independent steps here.

We thank all our friends and supporters from Germany whose donations help us manage these many tasks and programs and thus bring help to the people in need around us. It sounds like a simple "THANK YOU," but it comes from the bottom of our hearts, because the project has grown steadily over the past 17 years, driven by the need in various areas, and requires a lot of work, but also a lot of financial support, so that it can continue as planned. Every bit of help gets to where it's needed.

And so, I send you my warmest regards.

Yours,

Sabine Korth

Salamat (thank you) from Bugko!

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