

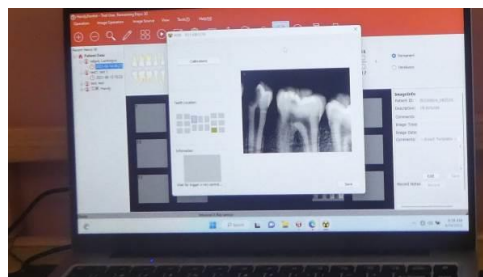
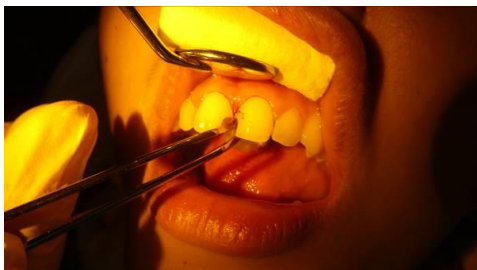


Registered association for the promotion
of medical care and social support in
Northern Samar, Philippines

Bugko, December 2023

Dear members, friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

Carl S. and Friedrich K. came to us from August 11th to September 22nd. Both had studied dentistry in Ulm and now wanted to help the patients here at the clinic with their dental problems. Having worked together before, they quickly settled in. From the first day, the dental clinic was full. During their stay, an Apex device, which is needed for root canal treatment, arrived, and we ordered the digital X-ray machine mentioned in the last letter. This was a real benefit for the young dentists and was used quickly and frequently. Because it is digital, it offers the advantages of filmless image display, and we don't need X-ray films or developing solutions for this device. The initial investment was somewhat higher, but in the long run, there are many advantages. The young dentists also performed the first root canal treatment, so the Apex device was used immediately. Like the dentists before them, they also noticed the poor condition of the patients' teeth, which motivated them to work doubly well and efficiently. They also trained the patients in good oral hygiene.



Philipp L. came to us on September 10th. He had just graduated from high school, and we were delighted when he said he would like to do a three-month internship with us. I have been friends with his family for many decades, so it was an exciting time. He helped with all the chores, drove around, and helped with the gardening. He quickly settled into the team. The heat and the mosquitoes bothered him a lot at first, but even that was overcome after a few weeks. With his cheerful nature, he quickly made friends with the other guests who came here and quickly made friends in the village. Outside of work, he learned a lot about Filipino culture. After this exciting time, we wish him all the best for his future. He will be studying political science in Mainz next year.



On October 8th, a new team of dentists arrived so that dental treatments could continue. Harun S., Alice F., Katharina G. and Anna H. They had studied dentistry at the University of Regensburg and now wanted to work full time. Unfortunately, holidays and the local elections intervened, which significantly reduced the number of patients. Alice F. had to leave after a few days because she became ill. More patients could have been treated, but for the population, their teeth were not a priority in October. Unfortunately, because the need is still great.



On October 30th, as already mentioned, local elections were held. The mayor, his council, and the youth representatives were elected. This always causes some excitement in the village, as there were several candidates, resulting in a close race. I'm always just an observer, but the local council is actually more important to us than the president or the senators, since they are much further removed from the citizens. Voter turnout is very high, but unfortunately, the votes are still being sold, which always influences the election results.



On November 5, Marina G., Leandra D., and Julie K. (University of Giessen) arrived for two weeks to gain some practical experience. They were accompanied by Mr. Jelte G.-B., who has been working as a dentist for some time. After his time in the Philippines, he plans to move to Osnabrück to learn more about surgical dentistry in a large practice. The three young dentists were happy to have him in the background when their patients required difficult treatments.



The last guest to arrive was Nina W. from Freiburg. She had also already gained experience in a dentist's office, so with her and Mr. Jelte G.-B., we had an experienced team by the end of the year. They were able to help many patients in the dental clinic. Like all dentists, our two volunteers Maria and Birgit supported them and helped with patient admissions, translations, and instrument cleaning. In addition to the dental clinic, they helped us pack relief supplies after the flood disaster—I'll report on this later—getting involved with youth work, and learning about the country and its culture. Both will travel further in the Philippines after their time with us.



In November, we moved our old dental unit to the elementary school so that the students can have regular checkups with our visiting dentists. We will also be conducting the fluoride prophylaxis program there in the future and will then schedule children who need treatment at the dental clinic. This "outpost" will bring many benefits, and we are pleased that the old dental

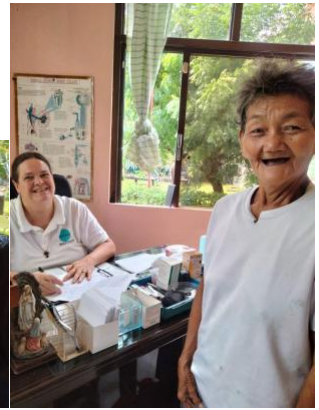
chair is still being put to such good use. We would like to thank the German Dental Aid Organization for its many years of support for our dental clinic.



In addition to the clinic, a major focus of our work remains with the children in the nutrition program. In addition to instruction in general hygiene, such as handwashing and tooth brushing, the mothers cook together, and the children eat together in small groups. Demand is high, and we currently have 100 children integrated at the various locations. The German Club in Manila continues to support us in this endeavor.



We receive support at the clinic from local visiting physicians. Dr. T. is a general practitioner, Dr. M. a pediatrician. However, I still see most of the patients myself, as they prefer the "American Doctor." Patients come from all over the province and travel long distances. Unfortunately, we often see patients with advanced illnesses, which is certainly due to the pandemic, as residents were only able to leave their villages with great difficulty and rarely sought medical treatment. Many patients come with advanced tuberculosis, high blood pressure, and unfortunately also diabetes, which is due to a lack of exercise (due to the heat) and high rice consumption. In addition, many patients come for wound care, as doctors in the city often don't even bother to open the bandages and examine the wounds. Instead of complex and lengthy wound care, they prefer amputation, which is very drastic in a country like the Philippines, as the necessary aids to make daily life easier for people with leg amputations, for example, are lacking. Over the years, state-provided healthcare has improved, and there are more doctors and specialists, but trust is lacking, and patients particularly appreciate the personal attention they don't get at local hospitals or from general practitioners. In addition to the clinic, I also make home visits, especially when patients don't want to go to the hospital, are immobile, or are dying.



We held a team-building weekend with both our volunteers and the staff to strengthen our collaboration. There was lots of conversation, sharing memories, games, and singing. After so many years of working together, it was good for everyone, and we realized it would be good to meet up outside of the clinic more often.





Shortly before my departure for Germany, another huge catastrophe struck. We hadn't had any typhoons or similar natural disasters for a long time, and November is normally the start of the rainy season here. Only it rained nonstop for days, and on November 21st, 618mm of rain fell in 24 hours, which was as much as normally rains in one day over a period of six weeks!! Even our provincial capital, Catarman, was flooded and inaccessible. It was the highest rainfall ever recorded, and the rivers rose accordingly, causing widespread flooding. Roads were impassable - even the main roads were impassable - as were many landslides, destroyed houses, and of course, no electricity because the power lines had fallen over. We set off by car, but didn't get very far. The water was simply too high. The current was so strong that you could hardly stand outside the car. A state of emergency was declared. After November 21, it still rained, but less heavily, and the water was able to slowly drain away over the following days. A total of 84,500 families were affected by the disaster. Over 1,500 homes were completely destroyed, and a large amount of farmland was also affected. We immediately packed relief packages containing food, clothing, and laundry detergent for 100 families in a nearby village. Elsewhere, aid was received through the government, the Red Cross, and other aid organizations, as well as through private initiatives. This helped alleviate the initial hardship, but the cleanup, repair, and reconstruction work will take longer. Here are the pictures.





I've written a lot about what's been going on here in the last few months, and as you've read, they've been very eventful and, at times, exciting. No two days are the same, and there have often been surprises, not always good ones.

It's time to say THANK YOU - SALAMAT - for your continued support for our project in Bugko. Your financial support helps us maintain the Mabuhay Clinic and all its programs. In addition, boxes of donated relief supplies, such as glasses, clothing, bandages, bandages, children's toys, etc., arrive several times a year. What started out as a small project has grown into a large one and continues to need your support. The poor population is growing, and the many natural disasters keep setting us back.

So, 2023 wasn't always easy, but we're looking forward to 2024 with optimism. We've already received many commitments and inquiries from dentists and doctors, and we hope that the clinic will continue to be a center where, above all, the poor population can receive medical and dental care.

We wish you a blessed and merry Christmas and all the best for 2024!

Yours gratefully,

Sabine Korth

Malipayon nga Pasko (Merry Christmas) from Bugko!



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