



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

Bugko, December 2024

Dear members, friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

To our great honor and joy, His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Andreas Pfaffernoschke and his wife, Marina, along with a delegation from Siemens Healthineers, Inc., including its President and CEO, Michael Schmermer, visited us in Bugko on August 18th. The occasion was the presentation of a new ultrasound machine from Siemens. This device will help us perform diagnostics even faster, as patients don't have to travel into town.



It was truly a major event and an honor for us that the German ambassador came, as the province had never welcomed an ambassador of his stature before. We organized everything, and it was no small feat, but we wanted to present our project and our life here as best as possible. He was greeted at the airport by a delegation of volunteers and flag-waving children from the village. Delegates from the governor also came to welcome him. It was wonderful, and everyone was overjoyed. After breakfast, we took a tour of the interior with Dr. Andreas Pfaffernoschke, his wife Marina, and Mr. Schmermer, as they also wanted to see a bit of the island. The handover of the ultrasound machine took place in the afternoon. Fortunately, the Siemens team also included a trainer for the new device, so our volunteer could be instructed immediately. She can also take online courses from Siemens to become even more familiar with the device. The first day ended with a big celebration, where representatives from the senior citizens, the elementary school, and the high school also performed dance performances.





The afternoon was the official part, with a visit to the Governor and dinner at the Governor's residence. Unfortunately, the Ambassador and the Siemens team didn't have more time, but we're sure it wasn't their last visit.



On September 1, Typhoon Enteng (international name Yagi) hit us. Our area was flooded by heavy rains, while elsewhere there were landslides, earth spills, and fallen trees. Shipping was halted, and some roads were once again impassable. Naturally, the power went out again.





On the same day, Jan M., Marie P., and Patricia M., all newly qualified dentists from the University of Mainz, arrived. Due to the heavy rain and poor visibility, the pilot had to make three landing approaches to bring the plane down. Thankfully, everything went well, and the three arrived safely. The next day, they started work.



On September 15th, Dr. Markus S., his wife Claudia S., and their children Carolin and Isabell arrived. Dr. Markus S. and Dr. Isabell S. are experienced eye surgeons from Bergisch Gladbach. Many patients were examined, and some received surgical assistance. Unfortunately, some patients became afraid of the operation and did not come. That was a shame, as it was a truly missed opportunity to see better. There is still a lot of education needed among the population about how, for example, a new lens for cataracts really can improve vision. Carolin S. is still studying medicine and was actively involved in the clinic, seeing many patients there. She also looked over the shoulders of her father and sister in the eye clinic. Claudia S. helped wherever necessary, whether as a secretary or with eye examinations. They were a fantastic team and worked well together. We hope that the S. team will be back soon, especially since we now have more equipment, as Dr. S. also brought a Phaco machine with him, which makes cataract operations much easier and safer. We on our side must work on raising awareness so that even more patients can benefit from the specialists during the next deployment.





On October 19, the local governor, Edwin Ongchuan, and his wife, Bless, paid us a somewhat unexpected visit. Initially, they wanted to see the senior citizen program they'd heard about repeatedly. The senior citizens came in large numbers and were delighted, as the governor had brought a gift for each of them. We took the opportunity to show him the hospital grounds. Honestly, I don't think he expected what he saw. He was impressed by the quality of the facilities and wondered how we manage everything. He always had his arm around Sister Veronica.





The next day, Dr. Nina D. from Frankfurt and Katharina R. from Kiel arrived, and the dental clinic was staffed again. The two hadn't known each other before the visit, but quickly became friends.



On October 23, the severe Typhoon Trami, known here as Kristine, hit, bringing with it strong winds and even more rain. Many of you have probably seen the devastation and flooding on television broadcasts in Germany. We also experienced massive amounts of water, and we could no longer drive along the main road from either side because the water was too high. So we were surrounded until the typhoon moved on. There was no damage to the house here, but considerable damage to the farm, which was painful for us, as we were in the process of properly establishing and planting the farm. Such a severe typhoon is a severe setback. The current was particularly strong, making it difficult to stand. The second picture shows it quite well. The Bicol and Batangas regions were hit hardest, with horrific destruction to buildings and well over 100 deaths.





When the cleanup was over, Super Typhoon Kong-Rey, known locally as Leon, passed by. Fortunately, it didn't bring floodwaters to Northern Samar, only strong winds, so we were safe. Other areas in the Philippines were hit hard, and what Typhoon Kristine hadn't destroyed, Typhoon Leon did. Supplies to Manila came to a standstill because roads were impassable and several bridges had collapsed.

In the following weeks, Alina M. and Jannick R. arrived from Heidelberg. This meant we had a team of four in the dental clinic again and were fully staffed. At first, not many patients came because they wanted to secure their homes after the typhoons and were busy with cleanup work afterward. By the first week of November, everything was back to normal, and the dental clinic was well attended.



On November 1st, Daniel Rossa, the director of the Welfare Committee of the German Club in Manila, and Michael Wiesner, Oceanic's training director, came for a brief visit as they planned to circumnavigate Northern Samar by motorcycle. The Welfare Committee supports our nutrition program, and Oceanic provides training for ship's cooks, catering services, and nutrition and food training. A lively exchange ensued, and Oceanic is trying to help us with our nutrition program and also conduct training for the mothers. Unfortunately, they could only stay for a few hours before returning to Manila.



No sooner had they left than Typhoon Marce came, followed by Typhoon Nika, Typhoon Ofel and Pepito. They came one after the other and all in November. Typhoon Pepito (internationally known as Man-Yi) was classified as a super typhoon because it brought wind speeds of up to 200 km/h. In Northern Samar, many precautions were taken and people in the coastal areas were evacuated. We at the clinic took in 350 people as evacuees. It was really close and everyone was worried that our area would be directly affected. Thankfully it didn't happen and it only brought a lot of strong winds and rain, but the buildings were not damaged. Our volunteers were at our side and helped us a lot because the evacuees also need to be provided with essentials. They took turns cooking and even a child with an asthma attack was treated immediately. Unfortunately, the situation was different in the area where it landed and many houses were destroyed, crops were wiped out and there were also deaths.



On November 10, Marina Pfaffernoschke, the wife of the German ambassador in Manila, returned. She wanted to actively participate in the clinic. She was so impressed during her first visit that she was eager to return and experience the base more. Here, she could experience what the simple life of Filipinos is like: what they eat, how they live, how they get around, etc. This isn't possible in the capital, Manila, and so she was grateful for the opportunity. She also brought 10 boxes of children's clothing and shoes, which we were able to distribute to the fishermen's children, as they were the ones most affected by the typhoons.





On the plane with Ms. Pfaffernoschke were Konstatin P. and Jonas B., both dentists from the University of Freiburg. They knew each other well and got along well at the dental clinic. A few days later, Stella K. from Munich joined the dental team, and for a short time we even had five dentists here. We spontaneously organized a dental mission, and many patients came.



On November 14, we flew to Manila with Ms. Pfaffernoschke, where I gave a presentation about our programs to the wives and husbands of the ambassadors. The presentation took place at the German ambassador's residence and was organized by Ms. Pfaffernoschke. They mentioned an organization called "SHOM" (Spouses of Heads of Missions), which might be able to support us.



Afterwards, I met with Mr. Christoph Ernst, who has lived in the Philippines for 30 years and owns Lukullus, a company that imports German food to the Philippines. Then I had a discussion with representatives of the GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation). It was an eventful day, but there was great interest in our work here in Northern Samar.

On December 3rd, shortly before my departure for Germany, Dr. Wolfgang M. arrived. He is an experienced internist. He comes from Mannheim and is happy to still be able to help people in his retirement. Patients, young and old, are in good hands with him. On the day of his arrival, eight Australian medical students came to look over his shoulder, and despite the long journey, he threw himself straight into his work.



Thanks to him, I can fly to Germany on December 8th with peace of mind, as the clinic is well-stocked until December 20th.

We are pleased that several doctors responded to Dr. N.'s advertisement in the German Medical Journal, so we now have more and more doctors from Germany supporting us at the clinic.

The second half of the year was truly turbulent. Lots of storms, lots of visitors, but also lots of surprises. You can tell by the length of this letter. I don't think it's ever been this long in the past 17 years.

So we can only say THANK YOU - SALAMAT - for your continued support for our project in Bugko. Your financial support helps us maintain the Mabuhay Clinic with all its programs and also try new things that will benefit the project. Time and again, people come into our lives who have new ideas and suggestions,

who initiate new things, give us financial help, and/or accompany us part of the way as volunteers in various areas.

What started out as a small project has grown into a big one and continues to need your support. The poor population is growing, and the many natural disasters keep setting us back.

We are looking forward to 2025 with optimism, as we have already received many commitments and inquiries from dentists and doctors. We hope that the clinic will continue to be a center where, above all, the poor can receive medical and dental care, and that we will be able to provide professional, yet caring support.

I wish you a blessed and merry Christmas and all the best for 2025!

Yours, grateful

Sabine Korth

Malipayon nga Pasko (Merry Christmas) from Bugko!



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