



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

Bugko, April 2008

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

THANK YOU, SALAMAT, THANK YOU, MERCY, GRACIE, GRACIAS...you can say thank you in many languages, and I would like to start the new year 2008 with that. Thank you for all the help and support in so many ways over the past year. As our logo shows, many hands contributed to a successful start in Bugko, and we were able to help so many people there.

The last newsletter had already been sent out when we received the first visitor from Germany in Bugko. Father H. Langendörfer SJ, the Secretary of the German Bishops' Conference, and Ms. Icking from Missio Aachen visited us for a day in Bugko and toured our outpatient clinic and gained insight into our nutrition program. They were amazed at everything that had been built in just one year and how effective our facility is. Ms. Icking remarked that the location was well chosen, as there are many poor people here and very few aid programs. We also visited the school where I work. It was a happy reunion after a year and we received a lot of new inspiration for our work.



I was in Germany from December 16th to January 23rd and was happy to see so many of you again. They were busy days, but I was delighted by the level of interest in my work and our project here in Bugko. The highlight of my stay was our annual general meeting, which was attended by numerous guests. I was delighted to see so many friends, acquaintances, and new faces. I was able to report firsthand on the past year and show many photos of my work and the outpatient clinic. There was a lively exchange, and we all got to know each other.



On January 23rd, I flew back to the Philippines. The welcome was warm, and the very next day I was back to caring for patients. While the clinic continued to operate in my absence, acute problems couldn't be addressed. At the beginning of February, I spent the final afternoon with the children who had participated in the nutrition program. All of the children had gained weight and were more active during the program. Some even gained 5 kg! And four children improved their nutritional status from severely malnourished to normal. This significant success is thanks to the cooperation of the mothers and the daily monitoring by our volunteers. At the end, all of the children proudly held a certificate of their participation.



On February 4th, Dr. Samuel M., a surgeon, came to us from the USA for three days. He was here in Northern Samar with a team of doctors, and they performed many outpatient surgeries free of charge. Dr. Samuel M. extended his stay so he could also examine and operate on patients here. This was an unexpected blessing for our patients here, who were happy to consult a foreign doctor and who would never have been able to afford surgery in the hospital. On the very first day, a long line formed, and Dr. M. worked until late in the evening. Over the three days, Dr. M. performed a total of 11 minor surgeries (cysts, lipomas, granulomas, etc.) and examined well over 100 patients. We were reluctant to let him go, but he promised to return soon to support us in our work.



During the three days, our volunteers were also constantly on duty. They registered patients, cleaned instruments, etc.



The very next day, Dr. Shan, a consultant from Sydney, Australia, visited our station. He came at the request of our governor. His company wants to support the Northern Samar region, and one of its goals is to improve the health of the people. A particular focus is disease prevention. He toured our station and asked us about our program, our motivation, and that of our staff and volunteers. He was so impressed that he wants to set up two more stations here in the region based on our exact model.



At the end of February, Bugko was hit by a typhoon-like storm for days. The heavy rains caused the Banika River to overflow its banks again, as it had in late 2006. Many houses were flooded, and residents found themselves waist-deep in water as they made their way through the water to their homes. Even the main road was temporarily flooded and impassable, even by car. The greatest misfortune was that this environmental disaster coincided with the rice-planting season, and so much newly planted rice was simply washed away.



Some paths were simply washed away and it looked like a new riverbed.

While we initially believed it was simply a storm or typhoon bringing us all the rain, we were proven wrong over the next few weeks. The rains continued. The locals call it La Nina, meaning persistent, exceptional rainfall. The situation escalated over the weeks, and it sometimes even became difficult for people here to buy rice, their staple food. Firstly, because it was hard to come by, as there was no supply, and secondly, because the price naturally rose, making it almost a luxury for ordinary fishermen and farmers. The roads and paths became impassable, which we also noticed in the clinic. Patients came to us only slowly or, when the sun came out, in droves.

But La Nina wasn't enough. On the night of March 3, our region of Northern Samar was shaken by a severe undersea earthquake that reached a magnitude of 6.5 and whose epicenter was only about 30 km from us. Fortunately, despite the strength and length of the earthquake, we escaped without damage. Right from the beginning of the year, we were constantly dealing with unpredictable natural forces that brought great hardship to the people here. Due to the terrible weather conditions, we were only able to resume our nutrition program in March with a new group of 30 undernourished and malnourished children. Unfortunately, we had to cancel many previous appointments due to the weather. However, due to the difficult economic situation of many families (not only the farmers had problems, but the fishermen also had to contend with the heavy rains and were often unable to go fishing for days, thus leaving them without income), the families were happy that we were taking care of their children. We started again with an orientation day, where we informed the mothers, in particular, about the program. Afterwards, we weighed the children and assessed their nutritional status. Afterward, the children over the age of 2 were dewormed for three days. We continued with the experience with the first group and put together a menu plan from Monday to Saturday. The three-month time frame also proved successful and was adopted. We divided the participants into four "cooking groups" and each group is accompanied daily by our volunteers and taught about healthy eating, food science and hygiene.



In mid-March, we received visitors from Germany: Kristina Hilger-Schoofs, Brigitte Meckelholt, and Sabine Leppkes. Some of you know Tina from the last general meeting. She is our re-elected auditor and wanted to see the project in person. They stayed for two weeks, and we informed them about our work here, about the ongoing programs, introduced them to Filipino customs and living conditions, and showed them our local area. In the next letter, they will tell us about their own experiences here.



Meckelholt und ich – (from left)

Sr. Veronica, Sabine Leppkes, Kristina Hilger-Schoofs, Brigitte

So I greet you warmly from Bugko

Sabine Korth



Salamat_(Thank you) **from Bugko!**

Spendenkonto:
Sparda Bank West eG
BLZ 370 60590
Konto-Nr. 3651274
IBAN : 20 3706 0590 0003 6512 74
BIC : GENODED 1SPK

Mabuhay – Hilfe zum Leben e.V.
Geschäftsstelle:
Kaiserstrasse 11
53332 Bornheim
www.mabuhay-ev.de

Amtsgericht Bonn
VR 8364