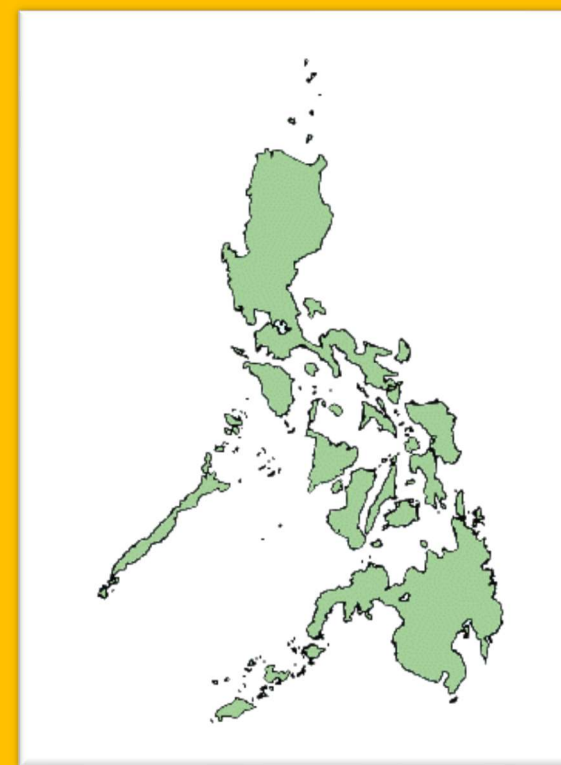




Philippines

LERNEINSATZ PHILIPPINEN 2019

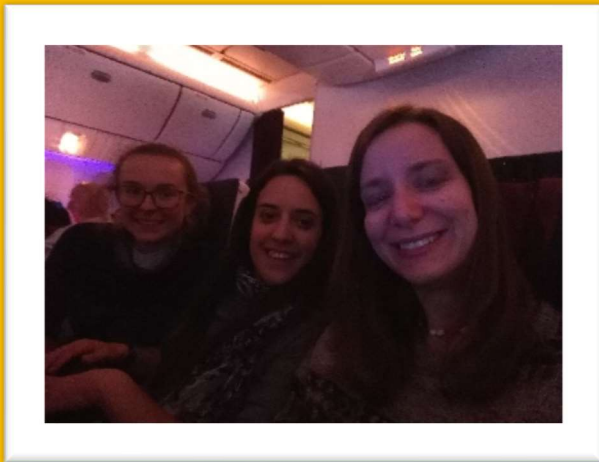


GEFÖRDERT DURCH DIE
ÖSTERREICHISCHE
ENTWICKLUNGS
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

 **Dreikönigsaktion**
Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar

JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL

Our journey full of incredible experiences, numerous impressions and various feelings already started on July 5th at Vienna International Airport. There we met each other again after a time of mental and technical preparation. On the flight via Doha we were already challenged for the first time because we had to hurry a lot to change the plane. Nevertheless, we managed it together and arrived safely after about 16 hours travelling to the other side of the world. At Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila Ate Rica already awaited us and gave us a really warm welcome in the Philippines. After the obligatory picture taking session we had our first trip with a Jeepney although it was the luxury version including an AC and a lot of space for our luggage so that we could get used to the Filipino traffic conditions slowly.



I experienced my first hours in the Philippines really intensively. I observed all the new surroundings, the climate, the foreign language, the streets, the lights and particularly the contrasts of Manila with widely opened eyes. While all the other were exhausted and fell asleep one after another I tried to soak every impression up to treasure them in my mind.

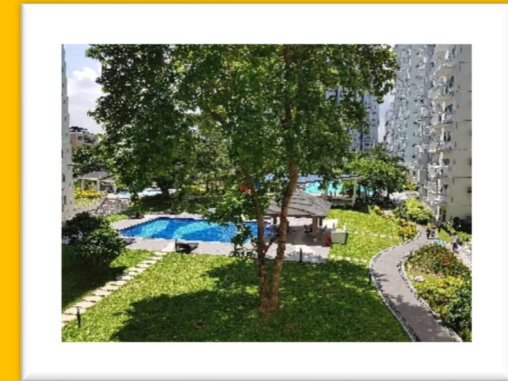


When we saw our main accommodation for the next month “Grass Residences” we were really impressed and happy to have such high standards at our “Homebase”. But of course we were too tired to explore the building that evening so we just managed who owned which bed and fall asleep immediately.



REST, ORIENTATION AND WELCOME FIESTA

It was easy to overcome the jetlag because we had enough time to arrive physically and psychologically in the Philippines. After a restful sleep we enjoyed exploring our apartment and meeting the Local Kapintigs for the first time. Spending some time together with these young Filipin@s who talked a lot with us and already showed us the closer surroundings of “Grass Residences” made it much easier to orientate in the foreign city. But not only investigating our new place to live was the programme of the day. We also got some inputs from Ate Rica and her colleague Mark from IPDI the main responsible organisation for our Lerneinsatz. They gave us a little overview of the programme for the following month and some visions and thoughts about the sense of the Kapintig-programme.



Especially the story “Frog in a Well” touched me. Being a frog who is unbiased enough to change his view of the world with each step he makes is for me the key message of being part of such a journey of learning. He was kind of my first role model during my time on the Philippines. Because the frog always tried to see more of the world outside the well and after his efforts he was richer in experiences, impressions and also made a new friend away from his well-known place.



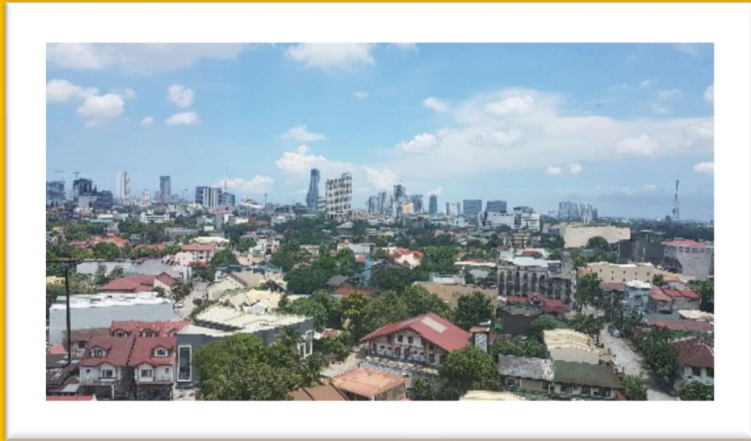
The day was closed by a fantastic welcome fiesta full of happiness, warm welcomes and community. We got to know people, who we met again later on. We sang some songs, which followed us the whole trip around the Philippines. We received presents, which still decorate our homes. And of course we had a delicious dinner and a lot of fun under the slogan “Kamusta ang puso mo? – Pumipintig, Buhay na buhay!”.

AUSTRIAN/FILIPINO CULTURE AND MANILA ON FOOT 1

Sterten Place was the place where we got some theoretical inputs, prepared for the further experiences and later reflected about the situations we had to cope with. But at first we went there to get to know each other a bit better. After all of us – Austrian and Filipino Kapintig participants – introduced oneself we played a quiz with some hard and funny facts about our countries. Although we got some information due to this game we didn't even see the places next to us. That's why the local Kapintigs organized a scavenger hunt through Quezon City – the part of Metro Manila we were living in – which was again connected with getting more details about the country, its population and the habits of Filipin@s. Moreover, it was our task to learn some Tagalog phrases and to use them in real life situations like paying the Jeepney or buying some street food.



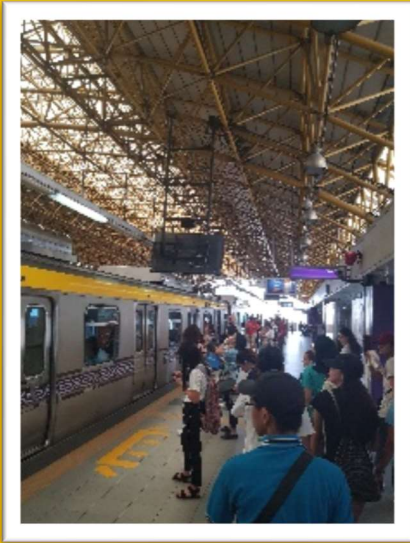
At the end of the day I nearly felt professional in saying “Bayad po” to pay in the Jeepney and “Para po” to get off the vehicle. Although I didn't manage it to count to ten I really enjoyed talking Tagalog. It was the first time to get in touch with people who are not from an organisation and it gave me the feeling of being a little part of the Filipin@s.



The first part of the “Manila on Foot” experience ended at Quezon City Circle one of the really less green areas in Manila. There we drank some coconut water and played a traditional street game which was in the same way simple but super funny. Together with the local Kapintigs we spent our evening at a typical gambling hall at the mall. We tried some slot machines, listened to Karaoke performances and even enjoyed a private Videoke concert of the local Kapintigs. But “Manila on Foot” still was to be continued...

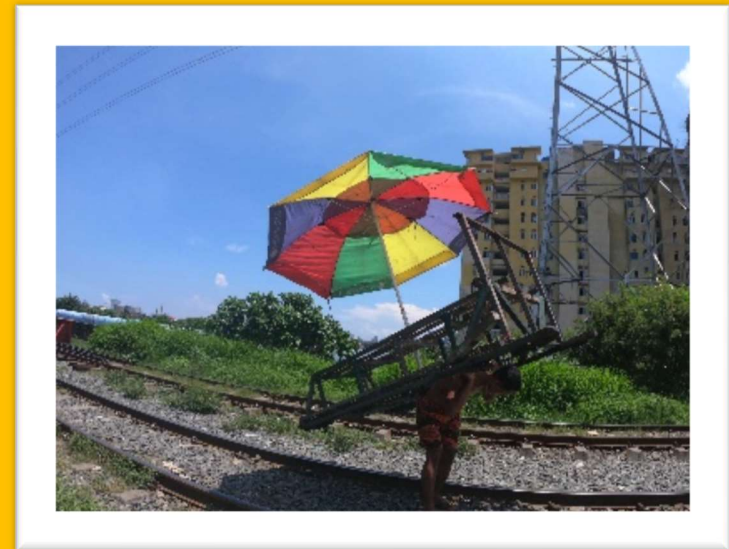


MANILA ON FOOT 2



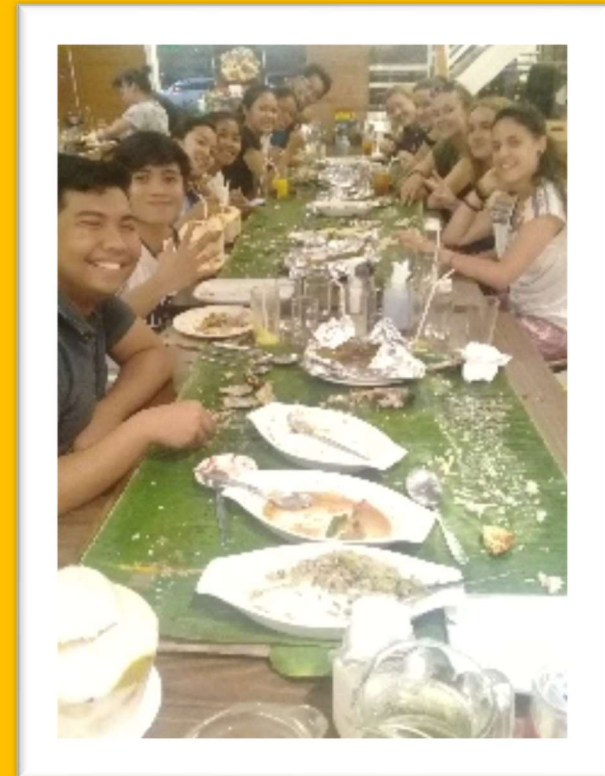
The challenge Mark and Rica gave us on this day was to cope with the official minimum wage of 500 pesos. Much harder than getting along with little money was to face all the contrasts Metro Manila shows – in the style of buildings, in the conditions of streets, in the type of vehicles and foremost in the way people have to live. We were a living part of this contrasts not only because of our foreign origin but also because we took every kind of public transportation – for example the modern LRT, the really common Pedicar or even the Trolley which also people with little income can afford.

Going with the Trolley was one of the most striking experiences for me. Sitting on such a strange looking construction is the one thing. But looking in the face of a 17-years old boy who is definitely struggling with the enormous heat and the hard physical efforts he has to make to move the construction was so confusing and made me really sad in a way a hadn't ever experienced before. When I thought these emotions couldn't be topped we had to get off because a train was coming and I suddenly stood in a "living room" of someone who had to live next to the tracks under really severe conditions. That was the moment when I wasn't able to get my thoughts in order and I really felt physical impacts.





The contrasts continued while our trip through Manila. We saw a lot of churches different to the ones in Austria, we took a Kalesa at Intramuros and experienced some touristic moments in contrast to our actual Kapintig programme and we went to the bay of Manila and saw the wonderful sunset next to a lot of waste and traffic. To complete our day of contrasts we even had our food at really different places – lunch at the organisation ASI who offers meals for little money and dinner at a traditional expensive looking restaurant. “Manila on Foot” not only showed us the contrasts it also gave us a first insight in the really life and the real problems Filipin@s have to face every day.



NEGROS EXPERIENCE

After our first week in Manila we went to the island Negros by plane to experience life in rural and urban philippinean communities. Negros is located in the region of Western Visayas in the Philippines and is 55 minutes from Manila by plane. Negros is parted in two areas: Negros Occidental, in the northwestern half, and Negros Oriental, which comprises the southeastern half. Negros Occidental is known as the “Sugarbowl of the Philippines”, because more than half of the nation’s sugar output is produced there.

Already during the landing on Negros we were very enthusiastic about the green landscape. After our pick up at the airport by the organization Cajden, we were allowed to experience the beauty of the island even more intense. Cajden developed from the basic christian communities in the diocese of Bacolod. It is a faith-based non-government organization (NGO) founded in 2006 and it’s members are composed of women, men and clergy who aim for social justice and development endeavors in Negros. Since 2011 DKA has been supporting the elimination of child labor and children protection project of Cajden. We got to know the employees of Cajden as very strong personalities who fight for positive changes in society. Their focus is fighting against child labor and unfair working conditions for farmers.

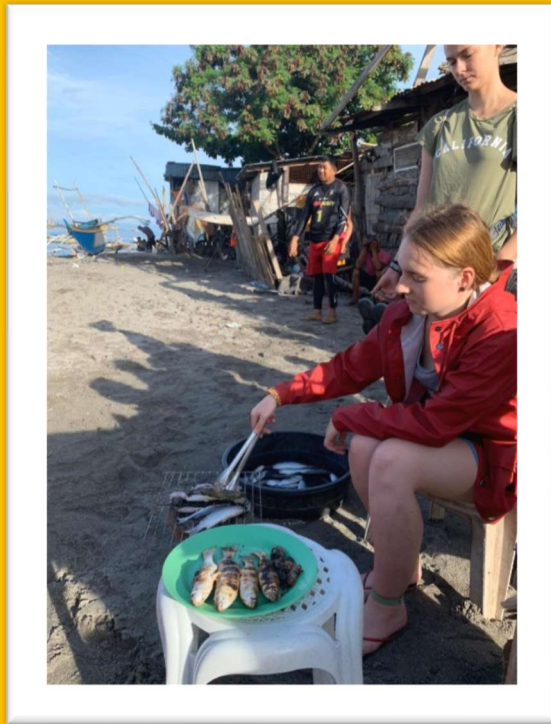




One of the communities they are supporting is called Lantong, which is located in an urban area of Negros. We were allowed to visit this place for two days and one night. The locals welcomed open-hearted. In the beginning it was very hard for some of our group to cope with the very different area, but we received a lot of positive vibes from the members of the community. The main difficulty for us, was the cramped living situation in the accommodation and the piles of rubbish and dirt all around. We wondered why the people in the community don't care about a clean environment, until we realized after some time, that for the local people other problems have a much higher priority in their daily lives.

A highlight of our time in Lantong was the visit of a fish cage. Although getting up at 4am in the morning was very difficult for us, it was very exciting to see how the local fishermen took care of their families on a daily basis and are trying to catch as many fish as possible, which they only use for their own needs. After we were back on land with our fishing boats, we reflected our experiences during a delicious coffee and Pandesal (a typical philipinean bread). We were also allowed to grill the caught fish by ourselves and eat it





afterwards. It was a very special start into the day. After that, we got a closer look of the daily life activities of the residents and also had the opportunity to try out many things, for example: bottling ginger, rice and oil.



The next stop on our trip through Negros was Kamabaku, a community in a more rural area. After a long and rainy bus ride we were welcomed by our new host families. Some young men played their typical philippinean drums to celebrate our arrival, which made us feel motivated again, after the long and exhausting bus ride. Another surprise were the homemade hats and flower chains they gave us as welcome presents. After a first dinner together with the whole community we were divided among our new host families, where we spent three days and two nights. During this time, we learned a lot about planting rice and working at sugarcane fields, because of our very interesting visit on a farm, were we also had the opportunity to talk to the owner of the fields. During this interview we realized how hard the working conditions of the field workers are.

On the one hand they are exposed to enormous psychological stress, on the other hand they have to cope with several physical problems, like back pain. A major problem of the farm workers are their low wages, because of that they are hardly able to feed their families. In addition, they are constantly exposed to various weather conditions. During extreme conditions like rain or heat, they have to work in the fields all of the time. Our host father always said: "Rain or shine, money has to be mine." We especially remember the volunteering in the rice field as a positive experience. Although we had to walk through mud in the pouring rain to reach the rice fields, we were happy to be able to experience for ourselves what difficult situations those farm workers have to deal with. Even Hanna, who is in need of a wheelchair, was able to participate in this activity with the assistance of the local people.

In Kamabaku we had the opportunity to introduce ourselves in a school class and to talk to the young people about the difference in Austrian and Philippine school systems. It was also very nice to see how much the students enjoy their lessons and how much they enjoy going to school. They know that it is a privilege for them and how important a proper education is for their further life, that's why they appreciate it even more. Our host parents were very proud of the school successes of our host brothers and sisters. The time in Kamabaku was memorable, because of the delicious homemade food, the social interactions with our host families, the special jeepney rides, where we sat on the top of the jeepneys, and the emerald green of the untouched beautiful landscape.

A place even more beautiful than Kamabaku is Lloyd's farm. It is the most wonderful place we experienced during our time on Negros. We had the pleasure to stay there for four nights and to get in touch with nice people. We were accommodated in a bamboo hut, which was equipped with bunk beds and offered place for ten people. The first challenge was to fix our mosquito nets over our beds so that we could sleep well and undisturbed at night. It was very exciting to observe, that only Hanna and Klara were stung by mosquitoes at any time and Johanna, Nina and Sabine remained almost unstung. Another difficult issue we had to cope with, were the many different animals we came into contact with. From mosquitoes, grasshoppers and cockroaches to lizards and geckos everything was there. The geckos made life difficult especially for Johanna, as they lingered directly above her bed. From time to time the geckos even jumped on her mosquito net and frightened her very much. For the others of our group it was funny to watch, but secretly we were all happy not to sleep in Johanna's bed.



Despite animal visitors, we felt very comfortable on Lloyd's Farm and enjoyed the days we spent there. It is hard to put into words how paradisiacal it was on the area where we lived. It was very green, with many palm trees and other trees, some of them also bore fruits. We were

also allowed to harvest fruits by ourselves, which we ate afterwards, for example pineapples, papayas, jackfruits and lychees. Nina had a cold when we were at Lloyds farm and so the hosts gave her grapes and other fruits with lots of vitamin C, because they believed that she would recover faster. Beside the fruit trees a lot of beautiful flowers grew in that place, in different colors, shapes and sizes, that made the area even more special and stunning.

The nature tour that Cajden had planned for us was also a great experience. We crossed a jungle-like mountain range and some bamboo bridges before we arrived at a beautiful waterfall. After cooling our feet in the refreshing water, we went back to the jeep and afterwards we visited the spring falls and finally relaxed in a cold swimming pool next to the springs.

When we had a few free hours, we spent them with our laundry. After two weeks on the road we had almost no clean clothes left. Unfortunately there were no washing machines in the natural paradise, so we were able to practice washing our clothes by hand. We had washing powder in the tube and washed our laundry in buckets. Afterwards we hung up our clothes under the roof, because we could not risk to hang up our laundry under the open sky during the rainy season.

A highlight on Lloyd's farm was definitely the solidarity night that young people had organized for us. They sang and danced for us and even taught us their dances. They had also prepared a touching roleplay about child labor. We were moved to tears. But our tears were quickly dried again when there were even more welcome dances. The lovely evening was rounded off by a delicious meal prepared by Lloyd's staff. Another very special happening was the final evening at Lloyds farm, where we (as always) ate delicious food, drank tasty wine and beer and sang karaoke with the staff of Cajden until late in the evening.

The spirit of the Church of the Poor could be felt in all the activities we experienced on Negros. The Expression "Church of the Poor", used by Pope John Paul II, means that the church should include everyone, no matter which kind of economic class and race he or she belongs to. In other

words: It is not an exclusive or excluding love in such a way that there is no room in a Christian's heart for those who are not poor. It will collaborate with the poor themselves and with others to lift up the poor from their poverty. The religiosity of the people and especially of the youth, we noticed mainly in the fact that almost every situation was preceded by a prayer.

Our negros experience ended with a day in Bacolod City where we got the chance to buy some souvenirs and visit a cake house. We also decided to make a last trip to the sea before returning to Manila. So, we spent a night and a day in a beach resort. The bus ride to the coast took about four hours, which we mainly spent sleeping, listening to music or laughing together. Shortly before arriving at our destination, our driver stopped at a viewing point where we had a direct glance at the

deep blue sea. As the sun was about to set, we all looked for a suitable place to watch this spectacle in peace. Nevertheless, a small snapshot of us as a group could not be missing in this situation. Then we continued the rest of our journey and moved into our quarters for the night. We got a big apartment where we made ourselves comfortable on several mattresses next to each other. This was great fun and reminded us of past excursions during school times. At the dinner in the restaurant of the resort we were able to reflect the time so far and make plans for the next day. We planned a boat trip early in the morning, so that we were able to swim and snorkel in the sea.





While we got out of bed early morning to watch the sunrise, we got permission for the boat trip. It was breathtaking to sit on the boat and enjoy the awesome view, sea and the sun, while we were chatting and taking pictures. After some time, the boat stopped, and we were able to climb over a stairway into the open water to swim and snorkel. In this moment we forgot everything around us and enjoyed the cool sea, the sun on our faces and everyone was happy to share such an experience with the others. The highlight for Helen (the local kapintig member who joint us) was to swim alone in the sea for the first time in her life.

After everyone felt cold and got out of the water again, we decided to head to a small bay where we wanted to spend the rest of the time until the final departure back to the resort. Once there, we enjoyed the clear water and started collecting shells and taking pictures. After a while Klara had the great idea to buy coffee at the bar next to the bay. Finally, while sitting on the sandy beach with the best instant coffee in our hands, and the most impressive view in our eyes, we had to realize that we couldn't

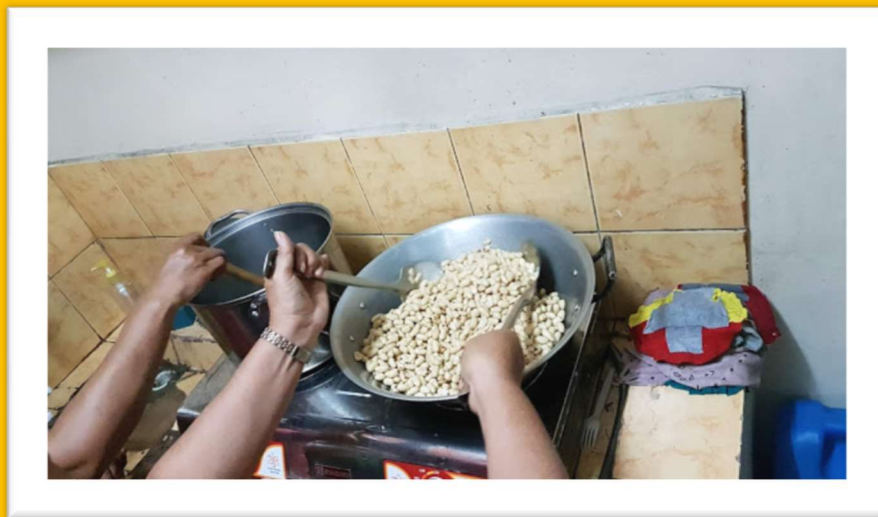
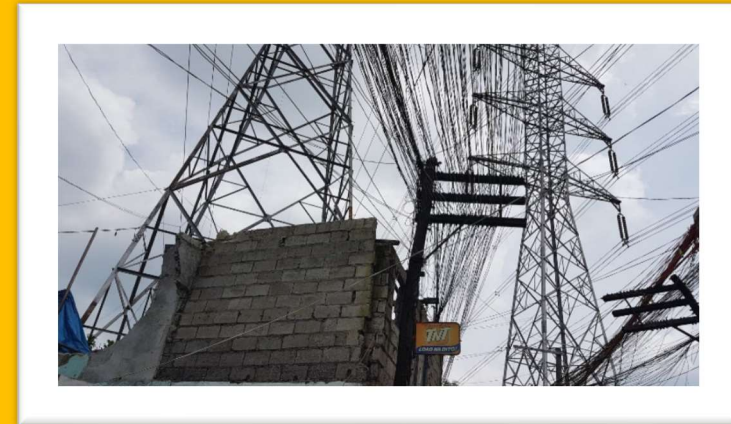
imagine anything better. Even such memorable moments come to an end, and we returned back home to the resort, where the bus and its driver were already waiting for us. As we were sitting on the boat ready for the return, suddenly Nina puked into the water. Although it didn't sound that funny, even Nina could laugh about it after a short period of time and everyone came back safely. All except my pair of shoes, which I have lost on the beach at the resort. Nevertheless, this day was a wonderful conclusion to our well spent time on Negros.



AKKMA

Our Urban Experience continued in Valenzuela City which is part of the Metropol Manila. We travelled to the Living area C.F. Natividad in the Barangay(=District) Mapulang Lupa. There we spend four days and three nights in the community.

AKKMA, which is an Organization in the community C.F. Natividad accompanied us during our stay. AKKMA stands for Aktibong Kababaihan ng Komunidad sa Mapulang Lupa, ktibong Kababaihan ng Komunidad translated means active Women in the community Mapulang Lupa. Mapulang Lupa got the name from the red stones that were there before they build the community.

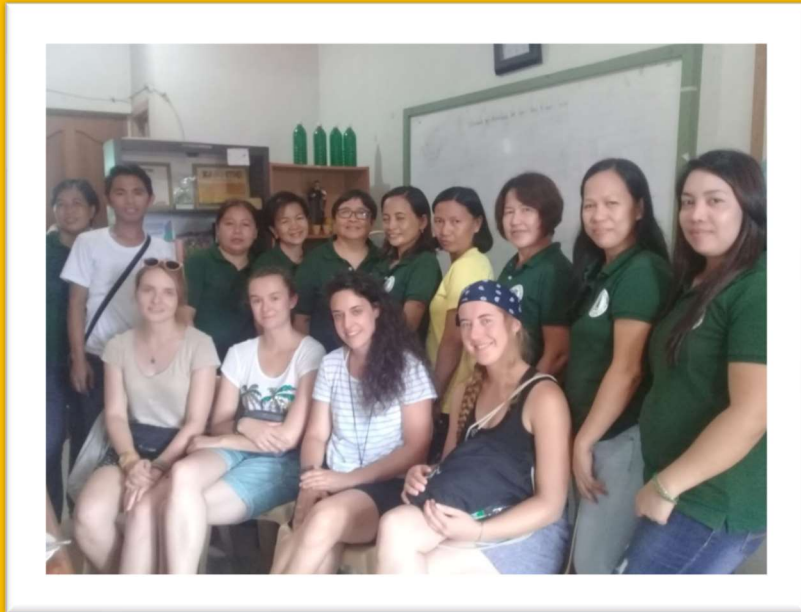


In the Community of C.F. Navitad live 1000 families and lot of the population is unemployed or with only contract workers and don't have a secured income. People who lives in these community are called working poor: Men are usually working 12 hour shifts in factories, women are always between small jobs to getsome extra money for their families. But also both parents are working it is not enough for the living of the family.

They also have problems with "spaghetti wires", these means that in the hanging wires around the community, which could be dangerous if there is taifun or lot of wind. The community is declared a "danger zone" because of the wires and also the big factories around.

AKKMA established livelihood projects to support women in the community to have a more secured income. For example they have a day care center for children, so the mothers have the chance to go to work but also teach the children and also the parents about healthy nutrition. We help women to lead a better and frir life – for example, AKKMA provided a day care center for infants, so the mothers have some free time or could go to work, but also to teach the children and their parents about healthy nutrition. We could join the nutrition parade through the community to arise the awareness for healthy nutrition.

AKKMA also have projects for livelihood like to maker peanut butter, cough medicine (is named lagundi syrup), make soap, and also print T-Shirts.AKKMA has more projects but this were the one we also could attend.



To live with the women of AKKMA war a rally good experience we could make because we had the chance to help in the housework and also could experience the urban life.

It was also really good to see so empowered women, which really try to make a difference in their own lives but also in the lives of other women.

ECPAT EXPERIENCE

In our Urban Poor Experience in Manila we visit a shelter for girls from the worldwide organisation ECPAT.

ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. In the world there are 88 ECPAT Organisation in 90 different states. The home in the manila is for girls from 12 to 18 years and beyond. The problems of the children is child abuse, prostitution, pornography trafficking. So ECPAT is against commercial, sexual exploitation of children.

Our experience in the home was really good. In the beginning the social worker of the home explained the purposes of the shelter and after that we met the girls, who live there.

We get to get the girls a little better and played some games together. They also made a dance performance for us. After the interacting in Games we ate dinner together. The Staff of IPDI made some “Kaiserschmarren” and also ordered Pizza. The Dinner we talked about our dreams and also learned some more Tagalog from the girls.

It was a good experience to see the girls, who experience such terrible things to see them so full of energy and also they have a good place where the staff of ECPAT take good care of them.



KARITON EXPERIENCE



Our last stop in our urban experience was the Kariton Center. The Kariton Center is a non-government organization (NGO) named after a wooden cart that street families push around by day to gather recyclable waste and by night to serve as a shelter.

Kariton Center aims at the rehabilitation and empowerment of the street families by helping them to organize into a self-help group and facilitate livelihood projects.

At around six o'clock in the morning we travelled to the junk shop of Kariton. There we met Sheba, the and the street families. After we divided into small groups we went out to collect trash together with the street families. It was an impressive and also challenging experience for all of us. Some of us could see the really small places where some of the street families live. It was really touching to that they

have so less but still keep on going to make a better life for their families.

We really felt comfortable with the families and also helped to separate the trash we collect and to sell it to Kariton. They will sell it to big recycling factories.

After this really touching morning, we had our processing at Sterten Place. WE really had to discuss a lot of issues of the urban poor. It became a really interesting discussion about the social situation in the Philippines and also in Austria. We really learned a lot in this experience.



INDIGENOUS CULTUR EXPERIENCE

On the last stop of our journey we travelled to Cordillera, a mountain region in the Northern part of the Philippines.

On July 25th, after having a day for settling ourselves (and doing our laundry of course) our bus from Manila to Tabuk City left in the evening. It was an 8 hour drive but luckily the bus was a very comfortable one so nearly everyone spent the trip sleeping. We arrived at a hotel in the small city of Tabuk at 5 a.m. and after a short but warm Welcoming by Jimmy, the head of our host partner organization CorDis RDS- The Cordillera Disaster Response and Development Services, we got some more hours of rest in the hotel. Afterwards we had our orientation. The program for the next few days as well as an introduction to the Indigenous Peoples, their problems and life was presented to us by Jimmy and some people of his team of CorDis. The Cordillera Disaster Response and Development Services supports the Cordillera people's effort to address the problem of disaster vulnerability and to increase self-reliance and self-determination. Through citizen based, development-oriented disaster response the organization of CorDis helps the inhabitants of the Cordillera region to address the problem of disaster vulnerability and assists them in the fields of disaster preparedness, response and mitigation. Jimmy also told us that currently 21 people are working at CorDis and that it is an hosting organization since 1997.

After having lunch together, we started our Jeepney ride to the Barangay Balbalan Proper in the province of Kalinga, where we were supposed to spend the next three days and four nights. It was a 2 hour drive up the hilly region, but we



really enjoyed the view out of the window: all green and pure nature. Breathing in the fresh air was like heaven to me.

Our arrival in the community was a cozy one. We all met at the house of one of the host families and while having coffee (real, freshly brewed coffee, not the instant one!!) and snacks we got introduced to our host families and spent some time chatting and exchanging stories with them and the people of CorDis. Because of some language barriers (not all the people in the Barangay could speak English) our companions from CorDis



kindly helped with translating. In the evening we split up and went home with our host families by two. Also the people of CorDis split up and stayed with every group at one of the families for helping with the communication.

The program of the next day was harvesting rice. In the morning we met with the others and started a short hike to the rice field where many people of the Barangay were already working. With a special knife-tool the rice was harvested manually, grain per grain, then bundles were formed and afterwards the bundles were lain down on the ground for drying. We experienced that harvesting rice includes a lot of manual work, it was interesting to see and do this work oneself. Even though the temperature in the Cordillera and especially in the night was very cool, it was a hot day for harvesting.

After about one hour of harvesting we all had early lunch near the fields. We were told that all people of the neighborhood helped each other with harvesting and every day they were harvesting at another families' field. The lunch of the day is then always provided by the family who owns the field which was currently harvested.

In the afternoon we packed our things for another night and headed down to the neighboring Barangay where we were meant to spend one night at different host families of this Barangay. We, again, met all together at one of the houses where we experienced coffee roasting and grinding, drank some fresh coconut water and enjoyed the rest of the warm afternoon by playing some volleyball together with some boys of the Barangay and our companions from CorDis. In the evening we got in pairs to our new host families for this one night where we had our dinner. Even though our host family couldn't understand English they were very kind and we talked a lot with the help of the two guys of CorDis who also stayed with us. The father of our family worked as a miner and so we could ask him questions and learned some aspects about mining in the Cordillera and about the work as a miner.

The next morning was very laid-back. We got up not too early and had our breakfast with our two companions from CorDis. The highlight of this meal was a fresh juicy pineapple from the garden- delicious! After getting ready and saying goodbye to our host family (taking pictures included of course) we met the other girls from our group and headed back to our old/main/first Barangay. In the noon we drove to church where we attended a mass. Although the priest seemed very young and dynamic, we couldn't understand a word he was saying because he held the mass in the regional dialect of the community. Afterwards we had our lunch nearby in a family's house before we headed back to our hosts.

In the afternoon we saw how the dried bundles of rice were threshed manually by a big wooden plug called 'husband and wife'. The rest of the day went by very calmly only in the evening some of us met spontaneously at one of the host-families' houses to help with the preparation of 'rice cake' which was meant to be served at our next days' Solidarity night. For this, sticky rice was cooked in milk and sugar and then we folded small



portions into some kind of banana-leaves before they were again cooked. Along our Philippines-trip we got this sweet snack very often and I really adored it!

The next day we went hiking! We started in the morning and visited a cave which was an entrance to an underground river. Because of the rainy season the water of the river was higher than normal so we couldn't get into the cave too far, but still, it was amazing! All of us – except Hanna and Klara who stayed at home – really enjoyed the hike through the beautiful nature of the Cordillera. We got back at around noon exhausted but also contented because of the beauty of the nature we experienced. After having lunch and a shower we made our way to the primary school nearby. There our group had an interaction with the kids and taught them some German words, showed some pictures of Austria and we also played a game and sang some songs.

In the evening the Solidarity night took place. It was the longest and I also think the most intense one of our whole trip! The indigenous people really love dancing their traditional dance and playing the Gongs (a drum-like plate played with a wooden stick). The dance should imitate the traditional birds' mating dance, so there were always a woman and a man dancing to the sound of the Gongs.

Our next day was a travelling day. We left our Barangay and the host families after a long and sentimental farewell and drove back to Tabuk city. We could sit on the top of the Jeepney nearly the whole ride, which was one of the coolest experiences ever! From Tabuk we drove to Baguio city where we arrived in the late evening at a very comfortable hostel.

The next day was all about seeing Baguio city. It's a far smaller city than Manila, but also very busy with traffic. However, I liked it. The temperature was cooler and together with the hilly and green surrounding area it reminded me somehow of Graz (the city I'm living in 😊). The Baguio city tour consisted of a visit at the big market, where we could buy some indigenous coffee and many other things, seeing the Cathedral, the park and the city hall. In the evening we had dinner at the CorDis office. We were amazed of this place and it seemed very homely. The special evening program was a small jam-session with the people from CorDis. It was such a nice ambience with someone playing the guitar and all of us singing along some common songs.



The processing of our Cordillera experience took place the next day at the CorDis office. Like all of the processings before this one was also very interesting, and we learned again a lot about the indigenous peoples' culture and way of living.



On the last day we had our final processing of the whole Kapintig experience with Mark and Rica. It was a great opportunity for us to deliberate about the things we have seen, the people we have met, the problems we got confronted with and the memorizing moments we had together.

After that it was time to say goodbye to our friends of CorDis and the Cordillera itself. I was really sad about having to leave because the region became one of my favorite places in the Cordillera and we spent some great days in this beautiful natural mountain region.

SOLIDARITY NIGHT AND TRAVELLING HOME

At solidarity night we had the chance to see many people we met during our stay again and to enjoy a fantastic and memorable evening with them. There was a lot of dancing and singing together. We watched a short theatre prepared for this evening. Having dinner together with our former host families was just another part of the pleasurable solidarity night. The time was full of mutual appreciation and it was awesome to see that all the organisations and people who were involved in the success of our stay got honours and a certification as thank.



That last night in the Philippines was so emotional for me. I was grateful for all the experiences. I was surprised by a message from my family. I was touched because of the performances from the organisations. I was exhausted from this time travelling around and learning so much new things. And I was already missing all the people I got to know and all the places I visited. Full of emotions I couldn't stop crying but I cried tears of happiness because I looked back to a wonderful time which I won't miss anymore!

The chance to say goodbye to so many people at solidarity night made the farewell easier for us. So that we could look forward to come back to Austria. After the last night at our “Homebase” Rica accompanied us to the airport and we took another 16-hours flight and arrived safely in Vienna. We treasured all impressions, still keep the memories in our minds and will always revive it in our hearts!

