

Kapintig

The Travel Goals of People are People

In April 2015 seven people went on a journey. Our first goal was meeting the other people in our group, the people we would spend a whole month in a foreign country with. Seven very different people, who were ready to embark on a long journey towards each other and towards other people we were still to meet.

With all our different perspectives, from education to job, hobbies and views of life, we soon discovered one wish that we all shared: We wanted to learn a lot on this journey, and we were all determined to be honest with each other, listen carefully and openly communicate our feelings so as to give each other opportunities for rewarding experiences.

In the Philippines we met even more different people who showed us even more different perspectives on this world and on life. During our whole journey, the „motto“ of DKA-Lerneinsatz-journeys, *„Die Reiseziele von Menschen sind Menschen“*, came true in so many ways. We had travelled far, in order to learn from others. We had the chance to enrich our own view of life through shared experience and exchange with many different people. We learned that strong, honest relationships can also grow without a lot of time or shared language: When people are ready to really get involved with each other, and cultivate a loving and learning view on differences and similarities.



Kapintig

Travellers from Austria

Andeng – Andrea Hochenegger

age: 29 | from Albersdorf bei Gleisdorf, Styria | student of anthropology, used to work in homes for elderly people

Andeng wears an everlasting smile on her face, and has a mind-boggling ability to connect to strangers and children. She is also writing her bachelor paper on the Kapintig experience.

Enteng – Valentin Kirchweger

from Wels, Upper Austria

Enteng is the world's biggest lover of Filipino mangoes, who dives headfirst into new experiences and often helped us to worry a little less and enjoy a little more.

Ikay – Monika Gamillscheg

age: 27 | from Vienna | anthropologist, graphic designer & student of ethics, works at the Vienna office of DKA and Katholische Jungschar

As our expert on indigenous peoples, Ikay enriched our understanding of life in the Cordillera, and her love and talent for making things beautiful influenced not only this report.

Nena – Anne Schütz

age: 25 | from Haslach, Upper Austria | student of sociology, is the second chair of Katholische Jungschar Österreich

Being our master in analytic thinking, Nena motivated us to look beyond the obvious, and often shared her rich repertoire of group games with us.

Ningning – Nani Gottschamel

age: 24 | from Vienna | just finished her university degree in English and American studies, works at the Vienna office of DKA and Katholische Jungschar

Ningning was the leader of Kapintig Austria 2015 – „the sleepy patch“. She represented us in a very inspiring and refreshing way. Ningning's charming and wise thoughts enriched the Lerneinsatz for everyone.

Sabel – Sabrina Tromayer

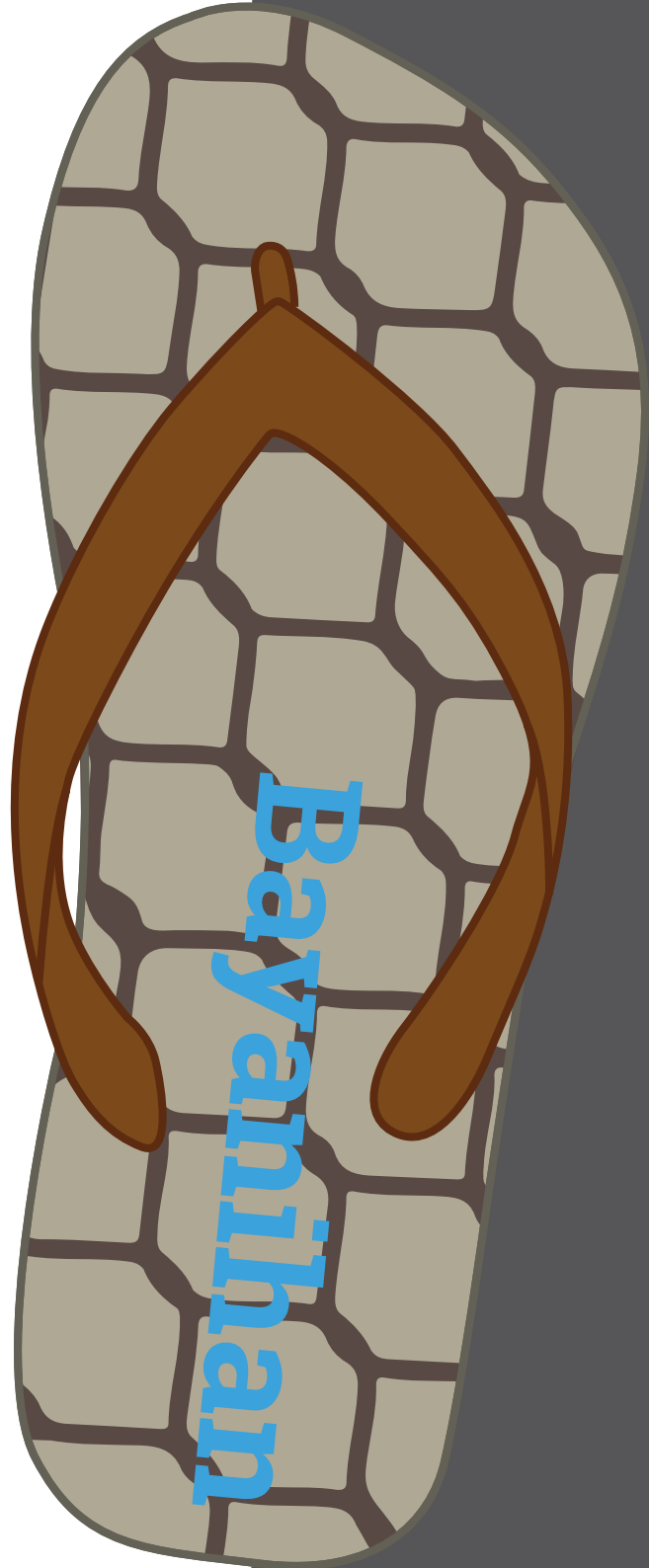
age: 25 | from Mödling, Lower Austria | works as a kindergarten teacher

Sabel's genuine air of a kindergarten teacher and her readiness to really get involved with people and situations, and her ability to put our feelings into very simple words, all enriched our experiences on this journey.

Tinay – Martina Lamprecht

age: 25 | from St. Margarethen an der Raab, Styria | just finished her studies in agricultural and environmental sciences

Tinay was always ready to share her expert knowledge on root crops and other agrarian topics. We also greatly appreciated her aptness at making „small talk“ into „big talk“, and having very deep and meaningful conversations with the people she meets.



Bayanihan

Weaving a Social Safety Net – The Pinoy Way

On the Philippines the word Bayanihan is used when...

... the magnificent church in Boac was built entirely by the local people of the diocese using their skills and local materials.

... the people of Marinduque gather in a village to read an episode of the bible and share their sorrows in life but also their laughter

... a whole village joins in financing the education of one girl.

... the people of Chapyusen gather to work on their rice fields.

... a whole village, including Nani, Valentin and Martina during their visit, builds a brand-new house made out of bamboo and palm tree for a man called Moses, who is in his 60s.

... the surplus of a harvest is shared within the community.

Bayanihan was the theme of our journey, it is a Filipino word derived from the word bayan which means town, nation, or community in general. "Bayanihan" literally translates to "being a bayan" and is thus used to refer to a spirit of communal unity and cooperation. It can manifest itself in many forms and we felt very lucky to not just watch it in many places but to even take part in enacting and celebrating bayanihan!

The spirit of helping each other and working together towards a common goal, realizing that empowerment so often derives from a feeling of community. We saw this in Valenzuela as women empowered themselves in establishing AKKMA and for example started to produce their own medicine. All this left powerful impressions on me. It was especially interesting to see how people and skills were coordinated and how resources were used, always including a celebration in the end.

I was part of the group with Nani and Valentin to build a house for Moses on Marinduque and remember very clearly how thankful and happy he was. Truly happy to have a new home but also truly happy to see how the community effort was directed towards supporting and celebrating him and his new home with some great Emperador Brandy!

Through our experiences our group also identified Bayanihan as an approach of communities to build their own safety nets in the absence of the state. We experienced that when the whole village joined in financing the education of one girl, the funeral of a friend or the surgery of a neighbor, but also when people build houses for the one's in need or simply share their stories and laughter. It was a truly rich experience to focus on Bayanihan throughout our journey as there is so much to learn for us in Austria as well.

Jean Ziegler once said that the biggest victory of capitalism is the dissolution of solidarity among humans. In the face of so many crises surrounding us, bayanihan is more than needed in Austria and I hope that our group can be a tiny part in spreading it!





Marinduque

A Memorable Day with MACEC Youth

The first full day in Marinduque we got up at six o'clock and drove with two jeepneys, a van and many young people from MACEC to our first stop of the day, mangrove planting.

Despite fatigue, the atmosphere was excellent and we were allowed to ride on top of the jeepney part of the way. That was adventurous and connected with an excellent view around the landscape.

When we arrived at the place where the mangroves are planted annually by Kapintigs, we got wooden sticks, young mangrove plants and leaves to fix the plant on it and stick together after planting. Some of us were really ambitious and stood up to the hips in the water.

After the hard work, we got young coconuts to eat and drink.

The second stop of the day was a disused mining area. At first glance, the effects of degradation are not recognizable. The consequences are often only years later recognizable. MACEC advocates, for example, the correct handling of court cases against multinational corporations.

After a short refreshment break in the Pastoral Center in Boac we drove into the diocesan bathhouse near the sea, where we had lunch. There we were able to make one of our first Bayanihan experience and help catch the fish net or watching how the other do it.

In the afternoon we won insight into various activities and projects on Marinduque. For example how to dry fish, how turtles rehabilitation and a butterfly farm works.

For the evening we drove to Gazah, where the preparations a huge festival with young people were made. We were warmly received there with music and took part in a service. We tried to sing the songs in Tagalog and participate in the service.

Then a large common meal took place, in which we ate for the second time of banana tree leaves with your fingers.

Following we were brought closer to the traditions of Marinduque through performances, games, dances and songs. Also we were able to participate actively with a song and game in this „Cultural Night“. Especially the song „We are the World“, during which we all formed a circle and hold each other's hands, was very touching and connecting for all of us.

At the end of the cultural night, we danced and celebrated together with the young people and we were available for all kinds of group pictures, selfies and autographs.

The young people were very impressive for us, full of commitment and motivation. It was great to see that we gave a small energy boost to them and their work.



Very much alive!

Life in Marinduqueno fishing communities

The first immersion leg of our journey was to take place in three different basic christian communities (BCCs) around the island of Marinduque. Together with five local Kapintig participants, all of us were welcomed unbelievably warmly in the villages and families where we had the privilege to feel like honored community members, even though we could only stay for a few days.

During the few days we lived with our families, each of us could experience many activities we had not done before: Cooking Coconut Candy (made from sugar, coconut and jackfruit), playing seaside-volleyball with thirty children on the field, holding starfish, octopusses and blowfish, building a house or road in the bayanihan spirit with the whole village, among many others.

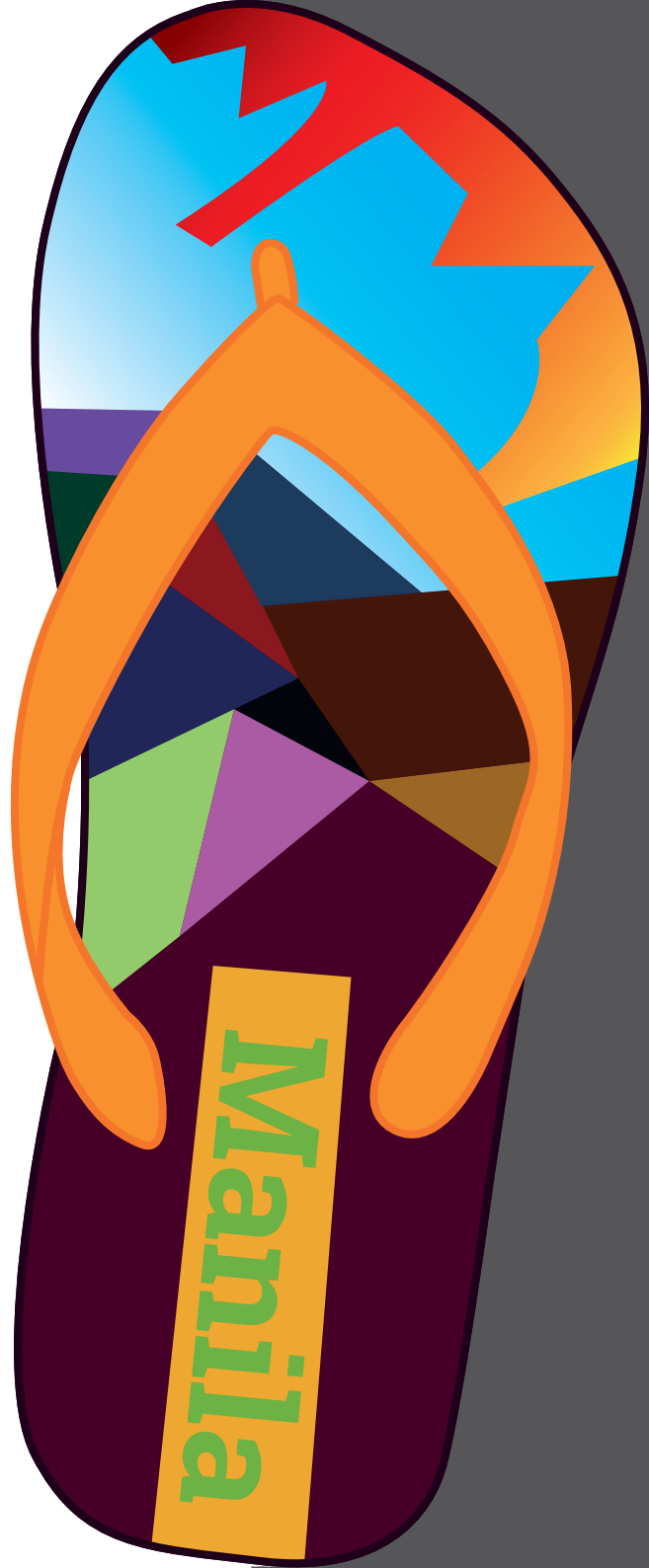
One very impressive activity we could all take part in in our respective villages was the community bible sharing. We met many members of the village community in the house of one of the BCC-organizers, to listen to a short text from the bible. Afterwards, everyone was invited to talk about how this text relates to their personal life.

We were amazed at how freely everyone shared their problems and concerns, and how deeply rooted everyone's hope was even under the harshest conditions. In this way, the communities not only regularly share their views on passages from the bible, but they also share their everyday problems, and have the opportunity to support each other and find solutions together.

We all witnessed and were amazingly inspired by how faith can carry whole lives and communities and give them strength and motivation to better living conditions for their children and the whole community. Their strong faith in the possibility of a better world gives the people of our Marinduque villages a kind of hope that goes far beyond „It's going to be fine in the end.“ Their hope is active and outgoing as it helps them believe that they themselves can be part of the change towards a better world.

Here, in the Marinduqueno fishing communities, the spirit of this year's Kapintig motto became almost unbelievably alive to all of us: „Kumusta ang puso mo?“ – „Pumipintig, buhay na buhay!“ (= „How is your heart doing?“ – „Still beating, it's very much alive!“ On returning to Boac and meeting the others, each of us was alive and brimming with the experience, and so grateful that we had the privilege to be invited into the homes of these inspiring people.





Contrast Tour

Exploring Manila

On 15th July 2015 we got the chance to explore Manila with the Kapintig Locals. Our main challenges were to get to know different kinds of transportation systems, experience the different sights of the city and taste the street food. Everyone got 429 Pesos (minimum wage per day in the Philippines), because we should experience to live with this small amount of money for one day. Is it possible to survive with this money? For this challenge we were divided into three groups (two to three Austrians and two Locals). At 8 o'clock we went to the IPDI office and met our Kapintig Locals for breakfast. Afterwards our team said to the other groups: "Good bye and we hope to see each other again ;-)". We Austrians followed the Locals in each group. The route was planned by them.

Transportations

Today was a sunny hot and sweaty day and the transportation we took were tricycles, LRT (Light Rail Transit), Jeepney, Jeep, kalesa (like "Fiaker" in Vienna) and trolleys. During our journey with different kinds of transportations we got the feeling that Manila will never end, normally it lasts an half an hour without any traffic. In fact less traffic is only during the night. We spent quite a few hours in jeepneys traffic jams – trying to sleep like the Filipinas and Filipinos do. This means that your arm is holding a bar which is fixed on the roof and you try to rest your head on your arm. Another experience we had was during our journey with an air-conditioned bus. Sometimes we felt that instead of using the bus we went by "driving fridge".

Street Food

The Locals brought us to a street with lots of different food stands. We walked through the street and it was hard to choose. Finally we decided to eat eggs (coloured egg goodies) and fish balls. Embarrassingly, I have to say that we went to the Chinese Junk food restaurant "Chow King" for lunch but I admit it was delicious too. The other groups tried much more street food like dirty ice-cream, halo-halo, etc. After this culinary adventure we had a bit of an idea on how different Filipino food is from what we are used to eating in Austria.

One City – Many Contrasts

Manila is a city which could be famous for its contrasts. In only a few minutes you can walk or drive skyscrapers besides slums followed by condominiums, which are mostly owned by rich people and then extremely big shopping malls. The shopping malls are very popular places, where the Filipinas and Filipinos spend their spare time. Rich people are going shopping and the poor ones are doing window shopping.

Our contrast tour ended at the Mall of Asia, one of the biggest shopping malls in Asia. Our condition was happy, healthy but tired and almost broke after this day. We thanked our Locals for the nice day with: "Salamat po (thank you)".

Kariton

Pinoy Waste Management

On 30th July 2015 street families were accompanied by us. We were really excited and so we were waiting at 6 o'clock in the morning in front of the junk shop "Kariton center". Kariton is the name of the carts for transporting recyclable waste, which are pushed by the street families. Since 2015, everyone who wants to use a Kariton has to apply for a permit, which is hard to get. Those Karitons used without a permit have been confiscated, which made life much more difficult for many families. A social worker came and introduced us to a woman with a child and a man, who are living on the street. We were divided into two groups and one followed the woman and child and the other one shadowed the man. Our challenge was to collect papers, cartons, glasses and electronic devices. We experienced the working conditions which street families have to deal with in their everyday life. Some of the factors that make work very hard are heat, air-pollution, (especially close to the highways) noise and finding recyclable waste. It was very exhausting.

After three hours we went back to the junk shop. There we separated our waste and then the recyclables were put on a scale. How much money people get for their recyclables depends on two factors – 1. kind of material and 2. weight. Afterwards we had lunch with the street families. A social worker explained what this junk shop does. The Kariton center (where we brought our recyclable waste) guarantees street families fair prices and helps them in organizing self-help groups.

ECPAT

(Extra)ordinary Girls

In the afternoon of the same day we went to ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) and got a short introduction about the history of the organisation and their main issues. After that we went to the shelter, where ECPAT houses survivors of child prostitution and pornography. We entered the door and the girls gave us a warm welcome.

That evening we cooked "Palatschinken" together with the girls and we played some games with them. There was so much laughter and excitement in the air. Everyone tried the Palatschinken and filled them with, for us, weird stuff (for example ham with jam), but in the end everybody liked that dish. Later we danced together and had a lot of fun.

In the end our group sang the traditional carol singer song "Stern über Betlehem" and put the sticker with the "C+M+B" blessing on the door frame. The time went by so fast and unfortunately we had to say good bye after this hilarious evening.



Urban Poor Community Experience

Christmas Decorations as Guides to the Understanding of Global Issues

August 2015, Sarleinsbach, a tiny village in upper Austria: „Minilager“, a Viennese parish’s summer camp for children. 47 kids and 15 young adults aged 8 to 31 are standing in the evening sun and wrapping cardboard rings with glittery gift wrapping paper. After quite a time they have produced 50 rings and hand them over to me. Only then I tell them what these rings are for. They are parts of Filipino Christmas Decorations. You add a star and a tassel and hang it on the christmas tree. It looks quite pretty. In the informal settlement of Malabon, where I spent three days in July, children produce such things after school to earn a little money. It takes about one to two hours to produce a hundred rings. I asked the kids to guess what their 50 rings might be worth. There was a bit of shouting: „5€“, „10 €“, „7€“, „No, I bet, it’s quite little: 2€. No, maybe 1€!“ One hundred rings are worth 20 Peso (= 0,40€), so I gave 0,20€ in 1 Cent coins to the kids. The effect this demonstration had on the kids was quite similar to the one I experienced a few weeks earlier: They fell silent.

I studied anthropology. Because of that and due to personal interest I read a lot about global issues, poverty, development cooperation and about problems in countries of the global south in general. I felt quite educated in these topics. I also knew what an informal settlement is, I got to know the numbers of people living on under 2€ per day in the Philippines before going there. But knowing things with your brain is not like knowing it with your body, heart and soul. Intellectual knowledge is nothing compared to personal experience.

Coming to Malabon and living there was to be an adventure and we knew it would probably be the most challenging part of our journey. But it took us some time to really get it. We arrived there in the evening and at first everything was quite normal or at least very much what we had expected: We were again overwhelmed with the hospitality and friendliness of the people, by the love our host family showed to us strangers. The neighborhood was extremely poor, the river a stinking trash dump and „our“ house really small – two rooms above each other of about 15m² each for a family of seven – and made of different parts of wood, cardboard and corrugated metal sheets. We learned to step where the screws were, that seemed more secure to us. To make space for the two Austrian guests, the two oldest kids slept with their friends, the parents and the two younger sons slept on the ground floor and we shared the upper room with our host sister and a friend of hers. I was quite surprised, that I really got along alright with the more challenging part: there was no toilet in the house. We had to visit the home of a local Kapintig for that (a few hundred meters along the road, in the evening in nearly total darkness, passing huge puddles where the road was flooded by the river and finally trying to be brave when facing the madly barking dog that guarded the way to the toilet). Also our new animal friends (the rats in the kitchen, the cockroaches in the toilet, the nondescript tiny creatures in the filthy river), brushing our teeth over a bucket on the street, no possibility to take a shower and sleeping without aircondition on the floor posed no dire problem for me. But it did not because I knew there was a shower waiting for me a few days

ahead. I knew that I would be able to escape from all this. For me it could just be an adventure. But it wasn’t. Due to living with the people, sharing their everyday live, getting to know them I could not keep my distance. And this was the one evening in four weeks when desperation overcame me. The problems seemed so manifold and for the people living in Malabon and in the many other informal settlements there is no such emergency exit. This exit only exists for us, not for them. Realizing that the possibility of escaping from these conditions of living were near to null for the people living there – even if they achieved a good education despite everything and graduating from college – was the biggest challenge I faced on this journey. I was lost in total helplessness, everything that can be done seemed like a drop in the ocean.

On the next day I learned my lesson number two in really understanding global issues – by Christmas Decorations. Together with our host sister and the local Kapintig we spent a few hours wrapping cardboard rings in even more glittery gift wrap. For me it was fun: It was nice to sit there and chat with the girls and just to do something (because time seemed to stand still in Malabon quite often). During talking and wrapping it was casually mentioned who usually makes these decorations – kids – and what they are earning – 10 Peso for hundred pieces. Again the experience kicked everything I thought I knew about unfair trade, poverty and child labour out of my head and buried itself in a new way deep into my body, heart and head. I am rather sure I learned more about how our world really works from these few days, from these Christmas decorations, from the local Kapintig, my host family and from long sleepless talks under the mosquito net, than I did in four and a half years at university and thousands of pages in books. I am a book-worm and quite top-heavy, I like thinking and intellectual discussions. But in Malabon I learned a lesson: You have to experience some issues in order to understand them. You have to touch things to get touched.

But my experience in Malabon didn’t end at this point. I did not leave right there absorbed in my helplessness. Like the people there do every-day, we had to get along with the situation. And because we had the

possibility to do so, because we really lived there for a few days and not just visited and left, I was able to see other things too: Our twelve year old host sister committed in an NGO, the local Kapintig – younger than myself – dedicating her time and energy to securing children’s rights in Malabon, lots of children crowding the tiny room and making jumping paper frogs with me and having fun like every other child in the world sweeping all barriers of culture and language away, youngsters dancing and singing “Harambe” (=Bayanihan) by Bob Marley, women making and selling peanut butter and having fun because the Austrians liked it so much and my host family with one simple wish: all family members should stay healthy and well – unbelievably tight family bounds despite the crowded conditions of living.

People in Malabon don’t dream about big things, they want their family around and well, they dream of a secure job and a nicer house. And they want a better life not just for them. When asked, the second thing they always mentioned after their family was their community. They don’t want change for themselves but for their neighbors as well. Like they share their hardships, they also share their joys. And this was the last step of my learning in Malabon and I think one reason why it is so important that young people from Austria take part on Kapintig: I learned to cope with my desperation, my hope- and helplessness. I didn’t stop there, didn’t sit back and tell everybody how bad it is and that unfortunately nothing can be done. That’s not the attitude in the Philippines. People do things, they try to change things and they change lives. I trust them and I know, they know best what help they need. And until I make big money in Austria which I can give to them or find another way to save the world, I will just do my share and do it much more consciously than before this journey: I will go Sternsingen with the kids in my parish, I will buy fairtrade products and I will share what I learned in this summer with as many people as possible. These might appear like tiny drops in the huge ocean, but in the Philippines being small is not a big issue because without the many little drops the ocean won’t be one but an empty desert. And so the tiny drops are no longer in vain but highly effective, of mighty importance.





Cordillera

Back to the Roots

Travelling to Chapyusen felt like travelling around the world. It took us several hours to get there but it turned out to be an extraordinary experience. Having spent the last nights in urban poor host families it was again a contrasting experience to get on the “DeLuxeBus” with a proper stewardess on it! After four hours we reached Bagiuo. From there we took two minivans – really uncomfortable ones but the amazing view topped everything – to Tucucan. We arrived there totally exhausted, grumpy, tired and curios about what was going to happen next.

Next step: get your backpacks on and be ready for an one hour hike to Chapyusen. We walked down through the small city and crossed over a rope bridge. The landscape we hiked through was amazing – rice fields, woods, river – breathtaking. We arrived in Chapyusen sweaty and exhausted. After a short orientation we went to our Host Families, prepared some delicious dinner and took part in our Welcoming fiesta. If you think you can sleep long here, you're totally wrong. ;-)

Around 5 a.m. in the morning everyone is awake – especially the children. There was no other way than jumping out of our bed. ;-)
Really nice thing to mention here is that that it was the first night

we felt cold during sleeping. A feeling we hadn't had in a long time. :-)
The whole day was planned – harvesting corn, mushrooms, snails, ... with our families, a shower at the waterfall, a refreshing bath in the river and taking part in weaving. Oh, do you want to guess how long it takes to actually start weaving? It is so much work to roll the yarn into neat little ball, while some women were preparing the weaving loom and pattern, the rest of us tried to roll the yarn into neat little balls. We lost the balls like a thousand times, but we never gave up. :-)
Now there comes the funny part of this story: The women finished the weaving loom and showed us how it's done. We were all eager to experience the actual weaving. In fact a little over eager, so the first Austrian to try managed to destroy the pattern in a matter of minutes. Thank god everyone took it with humor and laughed about it. :-)

We spent the rest of the evening with our host families – preparing dinner, handing over some small presents from Austria, showing pictures from our lives in Austria, and talking about Life. After a short and cold night (we still don't know how Filipinos manage to survive there ;-)) we started our day with mass and continued with a music workshop. Our task was to learn how to play different kinds of bamboo instruments and we had to prepare a short composition for the solidarity night.

Another really hard and exhausting activity was the "rice pounding". It is really hard for us to imagine how women can do that after giving birth to their child. This is how it works: The first step is shredding the grains off the hard stems. When we had accumulated enough rice grains, we put them into the grinding stone – a huge mortar. The next step was to pound the rice. Those objects we're holding are not little sticks, they are heavy wooden paddles. We took turns pounding the rice. The rice was then placed in a flat basket and sifted to get rid of the loose husks. Then, we put the rice back into the mortar and started pounding again. The process of pounding and sifting the rice was repeated three times, until the grains were white on the outside and ready to be cooked. Every day, the family takes a portion of the dried stalks of rice and pounds them so they have food to eat. It's not just for fun, but for life. It was hard work and we all were tired...e took a short rest... "Resting" – something you need to survive this journey. ;-)

We had the chance to have long and very interesting conversation with one of the elders of the community. So many questions were asked and answered. Time flew by so fast that we had almost no time to prepare ourselves for the solidarity night. For this special and last night in Chapyusen the whole community got together.

We were introduced to a tradition which includes Gongs, dances and a lot of food. :-) In the End they gave us Igorot-Names, wished us all the best on our journey and presented us with self-made Tupis (traditional cloth) and bags.

After that long and really fun night we hiked back to Tucucan in the morning. This time we were really fast ... maybe the fact that on that evening we would reach San Fabian (were we would spent the next days on the beach relaxing, swimming ...) let us walk faster :-).





