

Kapintig Philippines 2018

TRAVEL REPORT



Franziska Maresch
Lea Bogensperger
Martin Hohl
Sophia Fritzer

Isabella Bruckner
Irene Castillo Abad
Klara Landrichinger
Martina Rosenberger

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Welcome to the Philippines!

A JOURNEY THAT UNITES

By Pina

We, a group of eight Austrians, travelled to the Philippines to get to know life on the other side of the world. We spent one month on the Philippine islands and experienced many adventures together with local Filipinos. We not just had a lot of fun with them, but also gained knowledge through them. They welcomed us warmly and we got the chance to become part of their daily life.

We started our tour in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Then we travelled to Marinduque, a little island south of Luzon. And after some more days in Manila, we visited the Cordilleras, the mountain region in the north of the Philippines. Each place offered us the opportunity to meet new people, to try out new activities and to get a better understanding of life on the Philippines.

The following report aims to present the experiences of our journey and therefore gives a brief insight in the projects supported by the DKA Austria.



CONTRAST TOUR - MANILA

By Liway

Our adventure in the Philippines was about to begin with spending a week in Manila. We were given some time for rest and acclimatization followed by the Kapintig Orientation Dinner where we were officially welcomed to this year's Kapintig programme and finally got some input on Philippine culture and language. With that, we were more or less prepared for the contrast tour on August 8.

We were all excited to finally get to see more than our Pastoral Center Saint Camillus (which was beautiful, by the way) and of course to get to know Manila. However, we were soon informed that this was not going to be an ordinary sightseeing tour as we would perhaps do it when we go to another city. Instead, it was designed as a challenge to encounter Manila in many more different ways than the touristic one and to get a different perspective of it. We were faced with challenges such as taking as many different means of transportation as possible, trying out the Philippine street food and surviving the day on the daily minimum wage.



Learning traditional dances



How to eat with hands...

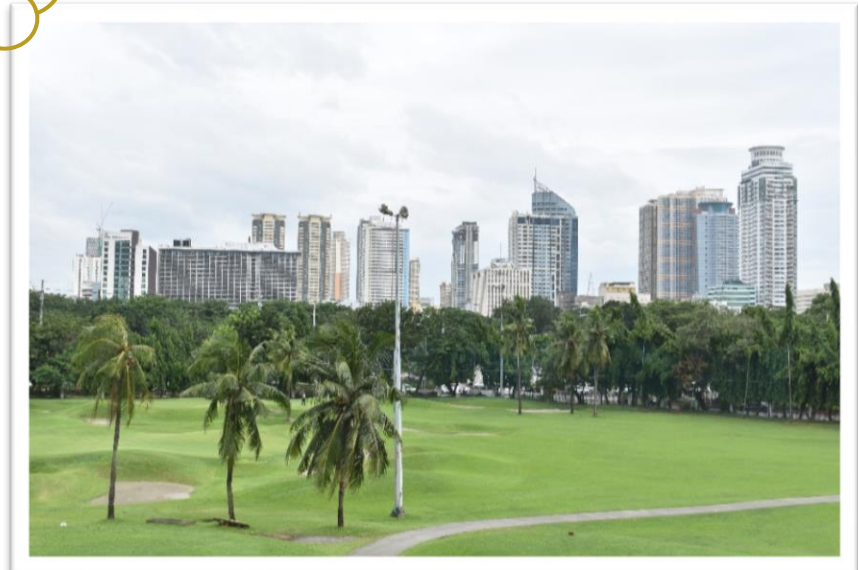
To make things more interesting and competitive, we were split up into 3 groups among the Austrians and we were each accompanied by one or two locals to show us around and to help us from getting lost completely. We soon realized anyways, that it would have been insane to spend a whole day in Manila with a group of almost 15 people, since it is very crowded in most places. However, we still met the other groups sometimes, since the locals each planned more or less the same tour around Manila.

Our group left very early in the morning and we took the LRT to the station Rectro, which is close to Manila's city prison and an area where a lot of informal settlers are living. As soon as we were getting off the LRT we were already confronted with a very poor and underprivileged part of the city.

We proceeded to visit Quiapo, a district of Manila that is commonly referred to as the old downtown. The streets were crowded with traffic while on the side a lot of shops were located selling cheaply priced items such as cameras, herbal medicine and fake passports. Visiting the Quiapo Church, we got to admire quite a few statues of Mother Mary and the black Nazarene, which is very popular in the Philippines – touching



What a contrast



statues of saints and praying to them is a very big deal there and we also got to experience it.

We visited Binondo, a district which is populated mainly by Chinese immigrants. To get there we took a tricycle, which is a very common means of transportation in the whole Philippines, consisting of a motorbike with a sidecar. Other means of transportation that we got to try out were the bus, a pedicycle, more different versions of tricycles and at the end of the day a grab taxi. Our highlight was definitely the trolley, which is a wooden construct we sat onto that is pushed along train rails at times where no train is going and we also got to enjoy rides on the jeepney. The jeepneys were originally U.S. military jeeps that were modified and rebuilt for traffic purposes. The jeepney is considered to be the king of the roads in the Philippines.

We got to see a lot more of Manila, another very memorable site was the wet market, where a huge variety of fruits, vegetables, meat and fish are sold. The more courageous amongst us also tried different kinds of street food and enjoyed them quite a lot.

We all met at the end of our tour in the Mall of Asia, which is apparently the biggest shopping mall in Asia and returned to Saint Camillus pastoral center by taking a grab taxi. Due to enormous traffic (which seems to be normal in Manila) it took us



←
Trolley! ♥



↗
Manila
Cathedral

another two hours to get there. Finally we were really tired and didn't even want to go out to have a drink or sing karaoke since we were just longing to go to bed and get a good night's sleep.

All groups successfully managed to survive the day with the minimum wage, but this of course was probably due to the local's careful planning of all our activities.

Overall the contrast tour was a very good experience for us although it was quite challenging as we were faced with facettes of Manila that we had not expected and that remained with us for a longer time. We definitely needed and appreciated the processing with Marc and Rica from IPDI the day after to clarify and deal with a lot of issues that had come to our mind and had still concerned us.

MARINDUQUE EXPERIENCE

By Ireng

After our first days in a pastoral centre located in Quezon City, we went to Marinduque and there we had the first great immersion. During nine days we lived on the island and the experience was divided into two parts. Every part prepared by an organization: MACEC - an environmental organization, and BEC - an ecclesiastical community.

During the first days we were surrounded by the young people of MACEC and we could appreciate how everyone was enormously involved in the projects of the organization. All of them accompanied us during the activities and we lived with host families. Every activity was connected to the DKA, since one of the objectives was to show us how the money sent from Austria is used. From all the common activities carried out by the people in Marinduque, we participated in the "Mangrove planting", "Sand bagging" and "fish drying". We had the privilege of experiencing two wonderful and peculiar nights: a big bonfire by the sea, full of songs and good vibes; and a cultural night, which represented their traditions and showed me how little effort the Filipinos need, in order to be happy and satisfied with the small things they have and to share all this happiness with us. But regarding once more the DKA contributions, I would like to mention the "house building" projects. We visited an house that had been built for a family with two children after a typhoon destroyed their "nipahat" (typical

house made of bamboo). And when I mention this kind of visits, two very emotional moments come to my mind. In one of the financed houses, the group performed the common ritual of the "Sternsingen" and it was a very endearing moment. As well as it was when, visiting another house, the owner started crying, but not out of sadness, as one could think her house was not enough for her and her five children, but out of gratitude and joy because



↖ Mangrove
Planting



↗ Fish drying

her family felt save now. Both moments made me realize how our small contribution is a great opportunity in third world countries.

Briefly, MACEC kept my eyes wide open, as well as my mind and my heart. My eyes could not stop admiring the tropical beauty that surrounded us and which was so bizarre. My mind? Those were days in which many conversations arose and all of them seemed interesting to me. I was able to experience first-hand how much the activities of the group are helping in protecting the environment and their homes. Most of our conversations had a personal connotation. So, I have felt grateful to be part of an intercultural program that broke down barriers and allowed me to ask questions and get answers. And finally, my heart. I have to say that I took back with me more than just beautiful memories, because even without speaking the same language, without coming from the same place, and without sharing same concerns or aspirations as the Filipino people, I managed to forget about myself. I forgot my problems, I forgot my goals momentarily and I was able to feel through another skin, to feel empathy and to understand their problems. Definitely I felt part of their community. Although briefly, although it might not have happened without the project ... the ephemeral sense of belonging was real.



What a cheerful evening!

BEC - MARINDUQUE

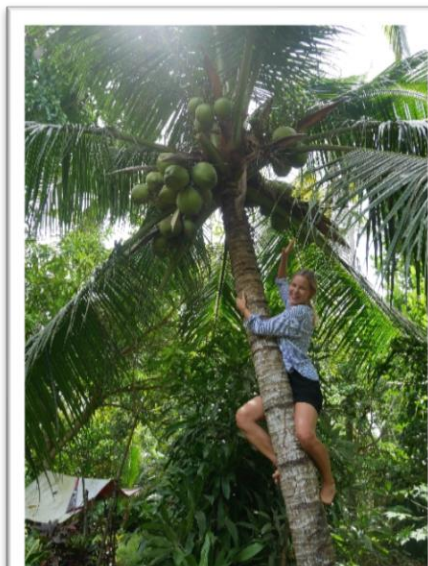
By Tinang

Our second experience in Marinduque was spent with the BEC Communities (Basic Ecclesial Communities) of the Diocese of Boac. These communities were founded and organized to alleviate poverty in the province. They are characterized by a strong cohesion and solidarity, which we were allowed to experience by ourselves.

We had the opportunity to spend time with different host families in different communities of Marinduque. We were divided into three groups and travelled to our host families, where all of them welcomed us very warmly with a big welcoming celebration and local dances and songs. Not only did we get to know many nice people, but we were also able to support them in their everyday activities and to feel the cohesion and the strong bond in these communities. They taught us how to climb coconut trees, how to wash our clothes in the river and how to make sweets out of sticky rice.

We enjoyed the beautiful nature and the interesting discussions we had with our communities. Luckily, we had a local with us, who helped us with language difficulties and cultural differences. Our family also organized a boat trip to the beach. Together with our whole community (it was not really the whole community who joined us, but it felt like it) we visited a beautiful beach and saw a lot of starfish and shells. Our evenings were usually filled with rosary praying together with the children of the village or a nice sitting together in the garden.

After our time with the communities we were all very thankful for the amazing



Coconut Tree =
Philippine „Tree of Life“

hospitality, the open-hearted and friendly people we met and the incredible cohesion and solidarity we experienced. I think we will all remember the BEC communities as a peaceful and relaxing place with an extraordinary community sense.

„Tabi Tabi po!“



URBAN EXPERIENCE MANILA

By Isay

The Urban Experience for sure was the part of our program which was feared the most in advance. How to deal with all the cockroaches, lizards and rats, which we supposed would be flocking the houses of our host families in Valenzuela City (one of the districts of Manila)? Fortunately, we were all surprised by the coziness of our dwellings, where we spent – alone or in couples – two nights overall. Even though our hosts mostly owned houses of limited space and due to low income had to stick to a simple lifestyle, they did everything to make sure that we had a pleasant stay. Therefore, we could delve without any major obstacles into the world of Manila's poor urban working class. By getting to know the community of AKKMA – an organization, striving for the empowerment especially of women and the youth – we learned a lot about the difficult circumstances, which people face there in their struggle for a life in dignity. Many of them work in the nearby factories under harsh conditions, suffering from several health problems. Even if schooling until high school is state-run and for free, it is very difficult to find a better job without a University degree and not all of the families can afford the expenses for sending their children to college. Most live as informal residents under the massive power poles and electric wires or along the rails of trains and tubes, which means that they do not own the land on which their houses



Thanks to all
our great host
families!



stand and are constantly threatened by governmental relocation. AKKMA tries to improve their situation by providing some basic health care, courses on how to produce peanut butter, oil and other products for selling, and not least by running

a day care and education center for the little ones. To offer all this, AKKMA sustains a fruitful cooperation with the local district's administration. On our first day, we visited the official facilities and even had a talk with the local mayor, who told us more about the community's challenges and achievements. Afterwards we had a lot of fun dancing and playing together with the sweet little children of the education center, who are dearly looked after by three educationists of the AKKMA organization. On the second day, we participated in manufacturing the different products they make for raising the women's income. At the end, the community members even regaled each one of us with a relaxing hand massage.

Despite all our fears in advance and our undeniable relief to return to our well-known accommodations in the Pastoral Center (affected by less noise and direct pollution caused by traffic) after this leg, we were touched by how hospitably our host families welcomed us in their homes and shared their lives with us. It was an enriching experience to catch at least a glimpse of their hopes, dreams and daily struggles as well as to perceive how strong and loving family solidarity and communal organization can help to endure even frustrating situations and not to give up hope for a better future.

AKKMA Learning Center



ECPAT MANILA

By Klaring



DANCING & LAUGHING TOGETHER

As part of our Urban Experience we got to know the organization ECPAT Philippines and spent an evening in their office rooms and their girls shelter in Quezon City, a part of Metro Manila.

WHAT IS ECPAT AND WHAT ARE THEIR AIMS?

#bringbacksmileontheirfaces

ECPAT is a global network of organizations present in more than 90 countries and together they are working against child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking. They all share the aim of eliminating and ending all forms of sexual exploitation against children:

“ECPAT PHILIPPINES envisions a world where children enjoy a life of human dignity and a safe environment where they can exercise their rights to the fullest.” (ECPAT, 2018)

In order to guarantee the fundamental rights of the children and to support child victims of commercial sexual abuse, ECPAT Philippines offers a wide range of activities and empowerment programs: campaigning and lobbying to raise the awareness for sexual exploitation of the civil society, advocacy work for children and the youth and different psychosocial activities for the victims and their families (like the ECPAT Home). The project areas of ECPAT PHILIPPINES are Quezon City, Angeles City, Bohol and Boracay.

WHAT WAS OUR EVENING ALL ABOUT?

At first, we got an insight into all the different agendas and activities by the chairperson and the social worker team of ECPAT Philippines. We had the chance to ask all the questions we had in our mind regarding the topic. After this really interesting conversation, it was time to meet the girls in their

home. ECPAT Homes are temporary welcome spaces for survivors where the children live and grow in a warm, secure surrounding and get support from the social workers.

The girls welcomed us with beautiful dancing and singing. Then it was our turn: To cheer up the group and to 'break the ice' we played our motivational game: I SAY YEAH!

After some dancing and fun activities with the whole group, we got to know each other a little bit better. It was wonderful to hear about the girls' dreams, wishes and aspirations – thanks for opening up to us!

We ended the evening with eating spaghetti, pizza and a typical Austrian dish. The girls were able to taste a real "Kaiserschmarrn" with icing sugar, strawberry and mango jam. We really enjoyed it and even the Filipinos liked the taste of it! ;-)

Although ECPAT deals with a very tough topic and we all were a little nervous beforehand, it was a wonderful evening spending time together.

KARITON MANILA

By Iska

On the 22nd of August we got up early and went to the Junkshop of Kariton Empowerment Center (KEC). First, we got a short introduction on what they do and what KEC stands for. They are a non-governmental organization named after the wooden cart that street families push around to gather recyclable garbage, the Kariton. According to estimates in 2015 4000 to 5000 families live in covered sidewalks, under bridges and in cemeteries in Manila. KECs goal is to rehabilitate and empower homeless families by "helping them to help themselves". They organize self-help groups and help them to deal with their situation in a more creative and responsible way. KEC firmly believes that all people are created to live a life full of dignity and rights. Globalisation and the existing global free market system have increased the gap between rich and poor, depriving people of resources and wealth. The group is committed to raising awareness, helping people to rise from poverty, and fighting for an alternative and just society.

We were then split up into groups, one Austrian with one local Filipino and one street family. Then one of the most challenging experiences began. We joined them in collecting garbage and soon figured that not all garbage is the same. Some things are worth more than others, f.e metal is a lot more valuable than plastic bottles. I myself stayed in the Junkshop and sorted bottle caps by color. White caps are worth the most, blue the least. I



was able to have a long and interesting talk with one of the founders of KEC, but also got to know the family that was currently sleeping in the Junkshop because their kid was only 7 months old.

After collecting garbage, the groups brought it to the junkshop and then had to f.e. clean (rip of the etiquettes) the plastic bottles to make them more valuable. Then they weighed their garbage and earned between 140 and 260 pesos (2,20€ – 4,11€). Considering the families collect garbage 2 or 3 times per day they only earn around 6-12€ per day, which definitely is not a lot and not enough to provide for an entire family.

Afterwards we had lunch there, which was from a different livelihood project of KEC. It was a bit uncomfortable for us because we were surrounded by garbage, but it still tasted really good.

All of us learned a lot this day and we are really thankful for this experience!

INDIGENOUS CULTURE EXPERIENCE - CORDILLERA

By Tinoy

After a few days in Manila the journey took us to a completely different place of earth. Stunning post card views with rice terraces wherever you looked, and natural woods were waiting for us. From Manila the bus ride lasted one night. We were glad to have a really comfortable bus, where most of us could get a couple hours of sleep.

Together with "Legend Jimmy" we started our journey to the small village Liglig somewhere in the nature. To get there, we had to walk for about two hours. The way to the village was already the first adventure of this leg. Because of the heavy rainfalls, the underground of the track was very muddy and therefor unbelievably slippery. A couple of (painful) falls on our backs later, we finally arrived at our new home for the next days.

In the evening we all met in the church to get to know each other. We really liked this evening because all the people were so interested in our lives in Europe and asked really interesting questions. It was also a very good opportunity for us to find out more about their lives and culture. All of us were very excited for the next day since we were all looking forward to planting rice.



Liglig, Cordillera

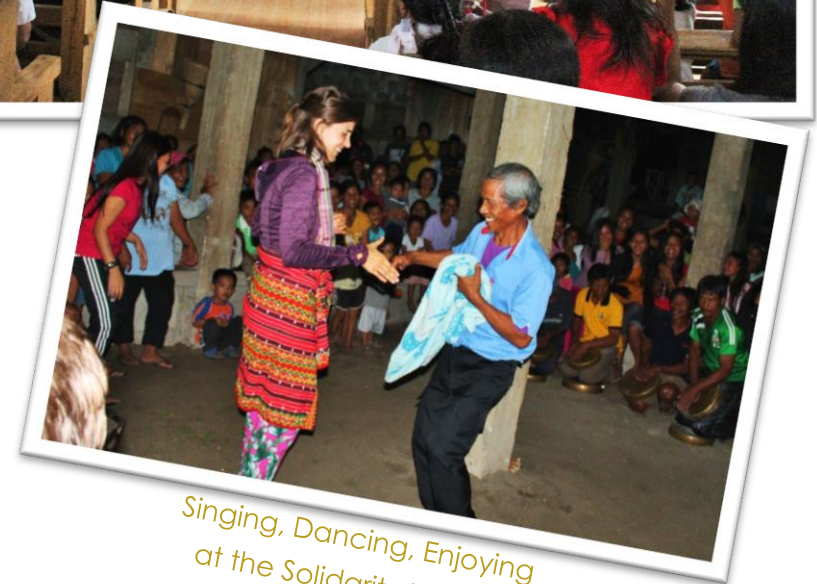
Planting rice was also challenging for some of us due to the fact that every step brought about the risk to let us sink deeper into the mud – not an enjoyable feeling for all of us. I personally really liked this activity, because spending time in this beautiful nature let me forget all the environmental troubles of the Philippines for half a day. After having lunch together, we visited the elementary school of the village. Seeing such a big building miles away from a highway was quite impressive. Due to the bad weather we spent the rest of the day at the places of our host families.

On the next day we planned to visit the neighbour village. I guess nobody of us thought that the track to this village could be even more challenging than the first track. To reach the village you have to cross the river.

Due to the heavy rainfalls the water-level of the river was getting higher every minute and after Donna, one of locals, had crossed the river they had to stop it and we had to go back to our village, because it became too dangerous. In the afternoon we and the inhabitants had to prepare for the solidarity night. During practicing our songs, they slaughtered a pig for the festivity in the evening.

The solidarity night was a perfect opportunity to see, hear and feel the culture of this village. I am sure everyone of us will remember the special kind of dance battle between a woman and a man for lifetime.

Religion plays an important role in the Philippines



*Singing, Dancing, Enjoying
at the Solidarity Evening*

On the next day we went back to the street where a jeepney picked us up.

All in all, this leg was my favourite one. On the one hand there was this beautiful nature and on the other hand it was a great opportunity to get to know the culture of the indigenous people in the Philippines.



All along our journey, we learnt a lot of new things

UNITED DREAM

By Kapintig Participants 2018

As this report aims to show, we have experienced a lot of different things. We saw, we learned, we laughed, we sang, we danced, we ate (quite a lot :D), we hiked, we talked, we feared, we enjoyed, ... But the best thing about it: we did it together, we united. We overcame borders and became a community. Austrian and Filipinos formed one big group, with a common goal: to stand up for a fair world, where people help and care for each other.

This journey let us experience the means of community, solidarity, hospitality, commitment and love. Through these experiences we learnt more about, what is really important in life. We became aware of differences and similarities between the Philippines and Austria and learnt to appreciate and value what life gives to us.

During our journey we did a lot of reflection and processing, which gave us the opportunity to get an even better understanding of the situation on the Philippines. At the same time, it helped us to cope with our emotions. At our last processing session, we tried to sum up what we have learnt and what kind of actions we want to do after our journey. Here is the brief summary:

LEARNINGS and GOALS

Our intention is to become more grateful and value our own life and therefore to have the energy to engage and become active members of our communities.

As we observed the importance of unity and solidarity we also want to strengthen awareness of the fact that there is only one planet we are all living on.

CHALLENGES

As our system causes a fast life it might be challenging for us to even take time to appreciate what we have. Additionally, individuality is becoming a more and more important aspect of our western life, therefore it easily happens that we become ignorant towards community issues.

ACTIONS

We want to share our experiences and knowledge in our parishes, schools, universities and with friends and families. We aim to raise awareness for the circumstances in the Philippines. Moreover, we want to pay more attention to our own surroundings and the needs and problems of the people. We strive to see where we can help and maybe initiate new networks of neighborly solidarity and engage in already existing projects (like DKA).

We have experienced that little action can make a difference!

PROFILES

Name: Lea Bogensperger, Liway

Highlight: living with our hostfamily in the Cordilleras surrounded by beautiful nature

Challenge: planting mangroves in the knee-deep mud in Marinduque

Always in my backpack: Anti-brumm to prevent mosquito bites and cookies for emergencies

Realization: how extremely prosperous the life we lead here in Austria is and that I can now be more grateful and appreciative of it

Tip for future Kapintigs: be prepared for this adventure and don't expect 4 weeks of relaxing holiday! It is an amazing experience but very challenging and demanding at times.



Name: Martina Rosenberger, Tinang

Highlight: outdoor showering in the Cordilleras

Challenge: street dogs and street cats

Always in my backpack: mosquito spray

Realization: it really is possible to eat rice for every meal, you will get used to it ;)

Tip for future Kapintigs: don't be afraid of new challenges



Name: Franziska Maresch, Iska

Highlight: Waterfall in the Cordillera and living with hostfamilies

Challenge: the traffic and air pollution in Manila

Always in my backpack: Gafa-tape

Realization: time isn't as important as in Austria

Tip for future Kapintigs: don't think too much about the upcoming challenges – just take things as they come



Name: Sophia Fritzer, Pina

Highlight: great conversations with great people

Challenge: noisy, over-crowded Manila and the poverty we experienced there

Always in my backpack: pen and notebook

Realization: I was inspired by all the commitment and hospitality that I experienced during the journey and learnt about the importance of a community.

Tip for future Kapintigs: be ready for a lot of things you have never done before and enjoy being with wonderful people.



Name: Martin Hohl, Tinoy

Highlight: The time at cordis

Challenge: Collecting trash with Kariton

Always in my backpack: anti-brumm

Realization: Almost all people of the Philippines have a lot of hope and a positive attitude towards their lives even if it is everything else than easy.

Tip for future Kapintigs: Take enough anti-brumm with you :D



Name: Isabella Bruckner, Isay

Highlight: the many joyful celebrations, the singing and dancing with those awesome, hospitable people

Challenge: eating Balut (although it is indeed very tasty)

Always in my backpack: my scarf (is apotropaic and protects from anything harmful)

Realization: The experience with the poor people there made me realize, what a huge taboo it is to be poor in Austria and how differently societies can approach this living condition.

Tip for future Kapintigs: "Laß dir alles geschehn: Schönheit und Schrecken. Man muß nur gehn: Kein Gefühl ist das fernste." (Rainer Maria Rilke, aus dem Stundenbuch)



Name: Irene Castillo Abad, Ireng

Highlight: The people. I would undoubtedly highlight the fact that we were able to experience the community feeling.

Challenge: To see beyond my mind and eyes

Always in my backpack: My notebook. I had the purpose of writing a diary during the experience and I made it.

Realization: Altruism and solidarity bring people together, even if it is a quite diverse group, constituted of really different individuals.. Unity is possible because a common objective is guiding them. As well as I realized that individualism in Europe might be one of the reasons, why we do believe that our small problems are big ones.

Tip for future Kapintigs: Dear future Kapintig, enjoy as much as you can and more, because everything you'll experience there, everyone you'll meet there will be there for you just once. You will never be again in that place, at that time. And even every "big" challenge you'll have to overcome will seem a small point, a tiny trace when you're back. For that reason, the only way of make it bigger, is grasping the sense of it and taking that learning with you.



Name: Klara Landrichinger, Klaring

Highlight: singing karaoke and dancing with the people (especially the children!) of the communities we stayed with

Challenge: experiencing the harsh everyday life of the KARTITON families

Always in my backpack: flip flops and hand disinfection

Realization: We only have one planet – waste reduction and environmental sustainability is a serious issue for the world as a whole.

Tip for future Kapintings: Filipinos loooove to eat! Be prepared for eating five times a day loads of rice and chicken ☺



GREAT THANKS TO:

DKA Austria,

...for giving us the opportunity to participate at this program, through which we learnt to see things from a different perspective.

...for organizing the journey so perfectly well and

...for all the great hours you spent with us during the seminars, prior and after our journey.

.... and of course, for your contribution to make this world a better place.

IPDI,

...for all the planning and organization of our trip. We always felt perfectly safe and very well cared for.

... for always listening to us and answering our questions in the processing lessons.

... for responding to our wants and needs and helping us to cope with different challenges.

... for all the presents and souvenirs.

... for the emotional support during our journey.

All the great **organizations'**, that let us be part of their projects (MACEC, BEC, AKKMA, ECPAT, KARITON, CorDis RDS,...)

All the **people** involved, who made this journey an unforgettable experience! ♥



Salamat po.

Isay, Iska, Tinoy, Tinang, Pina, Liway, Klaring, Ireng