



newsletter

Island Kids
Philippines 

2022/2

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Dear Friends of Island Kids Philippines

"After the anti-war demonstration and my encounter with the Russians who have fled their country, I felt a world-weariness, and I was brooding too much over the suffering people have to endure because of narcissistic men with too much power", Thomas Kellenberger writes. Yes, the international situation can be very depressive! Nonetheless, we try to focus on the good deeds: friendship, solidarity, support, development, progress

Thanks to your support, PIKIFI is able to accompany over 1000 children and help them to improve their lives. Nursi Mae, for example, describes with enthusiasm her experience during an internship in a wood processing company.

The regular distribution of food parcels offers to people in poor areas some relief in their economic distress, and the regular community meetings mean exchange of information, games and fun.

PIKIFI continues helping to establish strong communities and is involved fighting against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents. We are especially pleased to have recently received an award which confirms the success of our work.

During a communication workshop with Martin Stehli, our employees acquired valuable conversation tools for their daily work with traumatized children and adolescents. As regulations for entering the country have been loosened, we would be delighted to soon welcome new volunteers again. Such a commitment gives the opportunity to influence the living conditions of many people in an active and direct way. Moreover, it means a cultural exchange allowing to learn personally from these people.

Let's make a difference!

■ Children's Village

In February all educators from PIKIFI were invited to a two-day meeting. The entire team of the satellite house in Claveria under Matthias Dürr as well as the boys looked after there were participating. Topics were structures of PIKIFI, children's education, care and management.

At the moment we take care of 80 to 85 children full time – as many as never before.

- 45 children and adolescents live in the three houses for girls.
- On the upper floor of the new Safe House, our 11 boys from Cagayan will now be accommodated, and on the ground floor of the Women's House two children with their mother.
- In Claveria a further 15 boys are taken care of.
- In the Red House we now offer assisted living for our 15 young adults. They will be accompanied by Virgie Demata-Viacre, the director of PIKIFI, as a Life Coach.

As a consequence of expanding our offer, our fixed costs are rising. As we are looking for possibilities to strengthen our self-sufficiency, we also trust in the support of our precious donors, even in these difficult times in Europe. This will enable us to continue looking after the children in our care.

■ Activities at PIKIFI

People are still suffering badly from the consequences of the Covid pandemic and of the associated restrictions. Therefore, we continue the monthly distribution of the food parcels to the families of our school children in combination with distributing the modules for the school lessons.

In April our regular Community Meeting took place. School children perform dances, songs, theatre etc. for their parents. Lectures are given concerning child protection or education. Parents can express their concerns in a Q&A session. Afterwards there is time for food, games, fun and a cosy get-together.

BRC – Building Resilient Communities

On 2nd/3rd February an event of the BRC-program for the district Canitoan took place in the Social Therapeutical Center for Prevention and Intervention. BRC defines the immediate needs of four areas in four districts as well as possibilities to strengthen them and make them more resilient. Our employees distribute food, assist in home schooling and accompany vulnerable persons and households.



The project organized by PIKIFI is supported by the [LifeBank Foundation](#), the [Partnership for Transparency Fund Asia](#) (PTFA) and the [Jesse Robredo Foundation](#). Representatives of the social welfare (City Social Welfare and Development, CSWD) participated in the event as well, which was moderated by Debs Bartolo (Assistant Project Manager of PTFA, Manila).

Meeting of Safer Kids (Prevention of OSAEC)

On 23rd March 2022 a programmatic meeting of Safer Kids Philippines took place in the district of Canitoan. [PIKIFI](#), [Save the Children Philippines](#), the [Asia Foundation](#) and [UNICEF](#) were attending as responsible organizations as well as the Australian Embassy as financing organization. Information was circulated about experiences and knowledge gained while implementing the OSAEC programs (Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation) and about corresponding activities. An animated discussion about the consequences and positives effects of the program followed. Involved were also teachers, students and parents of the districts Canitoan and Carmen.

PIKIFI receives an award

We are very pleased that PIKIFI was given an award by the International Justice Mission (IJM) for its efforts to fight against sexual abuse of children. The American NGO (Nongovernmental Organization) has committed itself on an international level to fight against the sexual abuse of children. The award was given to Virgie Demata-Vicare, director, and Grizshelle Labank (social worker) representing all the employees of PIKIFI.

■ Concerts of the “Gendarmen” with Songwriter Rolf Marti

Variety, charme and humour have always been the characteristics of the “Gendarmen”. Together with the Bernese songwriter Rolf Marti, the charity concerts could finally take place on 8th/9th and 10th March 2022, and they did not disappoint.



The [Gendarmen](#) with [Rolf Marti](#) and Thomas Kellenberger

With Empress Sissi, King Henry VIII and the Kings of Karibum, a royal atmosphere was evoked. Once more the audience was fascinated by the talent of René Müller who arranged songs like “Sound of Silence” or “Weil du ein Herz hast wie ein Bergwerk” in such an impressive way. Perhaps the audience was inspired by Rolf Marti’s song about the unsuccessful saving (the money he put on a bench in the park was taken by someone else) and therefore donated generously towards the collection. After consultation with the “Gendarmen” the decision was taken to divide the profits from the charity concerts fifty-fifty with “[Sunshine Verein Kiev Kids](#)” :

In 2005 Thomas Kellenberger worked as a volunteer in the organization “Sunshine Verein Kiev Kids” and has since then supported this charity organization personally. His work with Kiev Kids was key for the future foundation of PIKIFI/IKP. After the outbreak of war in the Ukraine, all children could be brought to safety in the Bernese Oberland (mentioned in the [Migros magazine of 28/3/2022](#)). Some employees have stayed in the Ukraine and provide humanitarian aid. Moreover, the organization runs a house for initial reception, where refugees find a temporary sleeping place and food, as well as urgently needed aid supplies. Afterwards, help is offered to journey on and to find a more permanent stay/ host family.

Advance Notice:

Advent charity concerts of the “Gendarmen”: 10th/11th and 22nd December 2022

Looking for Volunteers

Finally, foreigners are allowed to travel to the Philippines again without any restrictions! We are looking forward very much to welcoming volunteers at PIKIFI. Those interested can find further information on our website or using volunteer@islandkids.ch. After more than two years of Covid pandemic, Martin Stehli was the first volunteer for a short stay at PIKIFI. He reports:

Short Stay at Island Kids Philippines in Cagayan de Oro from 11th to 19th February 2022

During a trip in 2019 I landed in Manila. First impression: children and adolescents sleeping at the roadside, emaciated beggars, people looking for something edible. Next to them people in modern dresses enjoying coffee and cake. Slums in the middle of the business quarter. Back home I could not stop thinking of these extreme contrasts. I was looking for existing charity organizations. When I received a newspaper clip from a friend about Thomas Kellenberger and IKP, I got in touch. A stimulating exchange was developing and the idea to offer further education for the teaching staff. As a teacher of social pedagogy this was an obvious idea, yet several meetings and discussions were necessary until we could start in February 2022.

On 11th February I was warmly welcomed by Virgie, manager and co-founder. She literally dropped everything and introduced me to her employees. Many interesting discussions and meetings with social workers, house parents and teachers followed.



Jeb, who was admitted in the Shelter of PIKIFI himself as a child and who is now teaching at this school, was leading me to the area of a former landfill and told me about the integration projects organized by IKP. He was also taking me to meet his family who still live in poverty. It gave me an impression what poverty means in the Philippines and what difference social work and education can make.

If people in the Philippines have something we definitely lack, it is time, interest and warmth. Within no time Virgie organized two-day training workshops on "Solution-Focused Tools for the Daily Conversations". The employees showed up in great numbers. They expressed a gratitude unusual for me, huge interest and big commitment. Thus, these workshops turned out to be equally rewarding for me as for the participants. For example, I learned that the word "pretend" was perceived as rather negative by the employees. However, to pretend a problem has been solved or a vision for a solution has already been fulfilled is an

important ability for an outcome-oriented communication. Taking away the moral perspective in the discussion then led to the necessary understanding. The employees of PIKIFI work under most difficult conditions and with little means, but in a highly competent way. One of their greatest challenge is to find the right balance between closeness and distance towards the persons in their care, and to stay focused on the small progress.

I look back with deep gratitude to an enormously rewarding experience!

Martin Stehli, Dipl. Sozialpädagoge FH, MAS Systemisch-lösungsorientierte Therapie, Dipl. Erwachsenenbildner HF

■ Reflection paper

World is full of challenges. So that, we must always be ready. There are times that we will become vulnerable and we don't know what to do. But we should be strong and believe that we can make it because success belongs to those who never get tired to learn.



Alian Abdulla Nurse Mae

The immersion started on April 25 until May 7 at the Primewood and Starbelle. One week in Primewood and another week in Starbelle.

*The staff in Primewood was so nice and kind, they teach me how to make paper bags, making ribbon, they also teach me how to **clean hotel** (???) and operate the laser machine. In the second week, in the Starbelle, I was assigned, I learned there how to make living room sets.*

It was difficult in the beginning but I also learned in the end. The staff there are willing to teach me what the real works are about. It's been a privilege to gain something from experience.

As I move closer to my dream, I will always remember the lessons and values I have learned from the Starbelle and Primewood such as be alert, flexible and credible, work effective and efficient, have a competence, diversify capabilities, build teamwork and act professional.

Even if most of the time I failed, I should still always be the person who is willing to learn, accept that failures are just step in reaching my goals and thank God for everything. I am now ready and prepared to face the real world and work for the better.

Alian Abdulla Nurse Mae, 7. Mai 2022

■ Fates

The 16 years old J. became victim of child prostitution. She found protection and help in the children's village of PIKIFI. She integrated well and established relationships. But the offender offered 1 million Pesos as hush-money to her relatives (= CHF 17'900, almost 4 yearly salaries of a social worker). When they refused, he offered the same sum to others if they abducted the girl and disposed of her.

We were able to place J. in a witness-protection program. Our social worker keeps in touch and meets J. sporadically. She supervises her case and supports J. in a long trial where she will give testimony as witness and as victim. Such changes of residence are very difficult for the persons involved. They lose all friends, their family and find themselves among strangers – though in a safe place, something we cannot guarantee sufficiently in such difficult cases.

Z. is victim of online sexual abuse and exploitation. It is also suspected the 14 year old has been raped. The adolescent is injuring herself.

The 15 year old D. became victim of sexual abuse by her father.

We are grateful to our donors and sponsors to enable this form of victim aid.

(All names have been hidden in order to protect the children.)

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Pictures:
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Layout/graphic: René Müller

Actual information you'll find as well

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KuyaThom

After a nice but hectic short stay in Switzerland of two weeks, Kuya Thom resumed his hiking along the Turkish coastline of the Black Sea on 15th March. This trip back home became necessary for family reasons and matters concerning IKP.

...The following day we found ourselves in a snowstorm that caused chaos in Istanbul and other parts of the country. In Hendek I was looking for medicine against reflux when we met Jamal who had worked in Germany for 25 years. He gave me medicine and invited us for tea.

...In the hilly hinterlands we couldn't find anything to eat. We were very happy when a teacher of the Teziköy Elementary School showed us their beautiful school and invited us for chicken and rice cooked by his wife. Due to much snow we had to make a detour, hiking a new record of 63km in a single day. In Filyos we slept at the mosque.

...In Catalzeytin we were happy to meet some young locals who invited us for a spontaneous party at the pier. Together we drank beer and danced to Turkish music.

...On our way, we once again met beautiful people. Two of them are Murat and Olgun. Murat called us from the veranda of Olgun's house in Samsun and they invited us to tea and toast. It marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Both had lived in the Netherlands and could speak fluently with Marijn who is half Dutch. Learning about our walk for a cause, they got very excited and began to support us by spreading the word to the media, their friends and the City Mayors of several cities in the region. Soon later, journalists from Turkish TV-broadcasters came to cover our story, which the following day could be seen on five TV-channels! Murat and Olgun have hearts of gold for children and for people with disabilities. They realized many charitable projects such as distributing more than 1000 wheelchairs to disabled children and adults all over Turkey, organizing holiday trips for less privileged children from the south and even designing and manufacturing public loading stations for electric wheelchairs.



...Arriving in Ordu, we were warmly welcomed by the City Mayor and given local products made from hazelnuts. Ordu was our last hiking destination before Marijn had to return to Switzerland. We took the bus back to Samsun and went with Murat and Olgun to have dinner with the City Mayor of Carsamba. The Mayor brought with him friends and more gifts for us. We had a great time with cultural exchange, joking and laughing together. I was amazed how open the Mayor answered questions about child sexual abuse. The next day, Murat and Olgun went with us to meet the Mayor of Samsun.

...I decided to have a short break in Switzerland to visit my grandmother and take care of urgent matters.

...One of the officers told us that as a boy he had lived in western Europe for a short time. He said that he never understood why local people there hated him. His story made me feel sad and being a western European I felt ashamed. I told him that I was sorry for what he had experienced and that I am very grateful for the warm hospitality I am experiencing in his country. Hiking from Switzerland to the end of Turkey I always felt warmly welcomed and never experienced rejection or racism - what a privilege! I wish that strangers are treated the same way in my homeland.

...Near Rize I met Fatih, Veysel, Islam and Jaylyn. They invited me to tea and cake, a very tasty barbecue for dinner and offered me a place for the night. We had a great time and I was once again amazed by the great Turkish hospitality.

...Arriving in Pazar, I got sick with fever and tonsillitis. After three days of rest and a negative Covid-test I was able to continue my journey. Teary-eyed but full of great memories I left Turkey behind me. Winter too seemed to be over as temperatures raised to nearly 30° when I crossed the border into Georgia on April 1. In Batumi I enjoyed tasty Georgian food and craft beer. I also took part in an anti-war rally for the Ukraine on the European Square

...My last night in this Las Vegas of the Caucasus (Batumi) I spent in a room with young Russians who had fled their country to avoid being recruited for the war in the Ukraine. Now they were planning their active protest against their government. They were desperate as they don't know if and when they can return to their homes. The anti-war rally and my encounter with the Russian guys caused me to overthink too much about all the agonies people have to go through because of some narcissistic men with too much power. Leaving Batumi for Keda, I felt lonely and depressed. However, hiking in solitude through the mountains restored my strength and once again gave it all a purpose.



...On my way, I visited the impressive Rabati Castle in Achalziche. The castle and its old town are witnesses for great religious tolerance as Christians, Muslims and Jews had lived there peacefully together over centuries.

...The following day, I found a box with discarded puppies in the forest. Dogs have been loyal followers on my journey and now they needed my help. I fed them, carried them back to Borjomi and turned them over to the police.

...In Tbilisi I first stayed at a hostel with more young Russians who had fled their homeland out of protest and to not get recruited for the war.

Also in Tbilisi, I became victim of a scam. Having come this far without any bad experiences with people, this was a real hard lesson for me and an expensive one too. Maybe it was needed to open my eyes for the fact that aside from all the beautiful people I meet there are also some people with bad intentions.

...In Rustawi I was offered dinner, beer and a bed at the international scouting camp. Once again I experienced kindness and great hospitality just at a time when I needed it badly. The camp had been established by a Swiss-Georgian couple.

...I shared the room with 2 students from Mariupol who took refuge here. Both were in Mariupol when the war started. They lost family members and friends, their houses and their school was destroyed by rockets. They were traumatized and kept drinking bottles of Vodka every evening. I wanted to help, but the language barrier was too big. It depressed me and I felt that it was time to leave Georgia. Kasachstan remained the only option. I took a flight over the Caspian Sea to Aqtau. With over 1000km of desert ahead of me, I needed a vehicle to transport lots of water and food. Learning about my project, a group of very kind local shop owners sponsored me a secondhand baby stroller. At the coast of the Caspian Sea I met two neurosurgeons who invited me for dinner

Kuya Thom, 24.06.2022.

