



HEART-
WARMING
WINTER edition

WELCOME TO HAPPY LAND P.22

A TRIP TO TONDO, IN THE SLUMS OF MANILA THIS TIME NOT FOR FMO BUT TO JOIN A TEAM PERFORMING MEDICAL CHECKS FOR CHILDREN ON BEHALF OF THE EMILE NIEUWENDIJK FOUNDATION TOGETHER WITH A GROUP OF SIX DOCTORS, THREE NURSES AND TWO OTHER TEAM MEMBERS WITH NO MEDICAL BACKGROUND.

MEET THE AUDITOR P.6

An interview with Friso Schellekens

FINTECH FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION: INNOVATIVE IDEAS IN BERLIN P.28

A fantastic Fincluders Startup Challenge event



A word from the editor

A power outage on January 17 in Amsterdam. 360.000 households without electricity. Our structured capital was for once (if you don't count kingsday) a mess. It maybe makes you feel nostalgic but when you start to realize the trains aren't running and the shower provides only cold water the sentimental feeling is suddenly gone. Most people decided to take the car instead, the result was gridlocked traffic with an endless stream of cars crawling along bumper-to-bumper.

If you ever experienced a power cut, you understand immediately how hard it is to live without electricity and good infrastructure. When your basic needs like food, water, shelter are shut down or out of reach you realize how often you take the infrastructure in the western world for granted. And how hard it must be for the development world to live with poor infrastructure daily.

This brings me to David Nieuwendijks story about Happy Land, the Philippines. A medical hospital located in the middle of Tundo, Manila. The hospital offers medical support to children from 0 to 18 years old, who are deprived of basic healthcare. Reading the article, you understand clearly how important it is to have access to food, safe drinking water, health care, clean air etc. It is a simple truth but easy to forget sometimes.



Danielle Wempe
Editor-in-chief

It was Wednesday evening, October 26th, Schiphol Airport, and I was ready for a trip to Tondo, located in the slums of Manila. This time I was not travelling for FMO, but Medical Checks for Children (MCC), a medical team on behalf of the Emile Nieuwendijk Foundation (ENF). I went to Tondo together with a group of six doctors, three nurses and two other team members that, like me, had no medical background. During that week, we checked and treated more than 960 children between eight and 12 years old free of cost.



This fifth medical mission of MCC in the Philippines was organised in close collaboration with Bless the Children Foundation

in Manila. Technical equipment, toothbrushes, children clothes and some of the supplies were brought from the Netherlands by MCC team members. Most of the medication however was ordered at a local generic drug company in order to support the local economy. We stayed at the five-story building Centro Salvador of the John DV Salvatore Foundation in the middle of the slum Tondo. This location was also used during the previous missions. The basic facilities in the building, the daily shortage of water, vermin everywhere, domestic rats and the combination of high temperatures and high humidity made life during the mission almost unbearable.

On the first checking day, we started with a Meet & Greet with the local team of St. Martin de Porres and 27 volunteers/translators. All MCC team members were introduced as medical doctors, which gave me a rather strange but also proud feeling as I had always wanted to become a medical doctor myself when I was young, just like my father. A heart-warming highlight was the presence of the operated and rehabilitated children from the 2014 and 2015 missions entering the room with their caretakers to present themselves to the MCC team. One of the kids we met was Romini, a child that used to suffer from a severe heart disease. After being successfully operated on by a local cardiac surgeon, which was sponsored by the Emile Nieuwendijk Foundation, Romini was again in perfect health. Another child with a harelip was able to laugh again after having an operation and other children with orthopaedic tools were





Tondo is a district located in Manila, Philippines. It is the largest in terms of area and population of Manila's sixteen districts, with a Census-estimated 631,313 people in 2015 and consists of two congressional districts. It is also the most densely populated district in the city.

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able to walk again. All these children got a chance. For us quite obvious, but definitely not for these children in Manila.

The checking of the children was done by means of a carousel with seven stations. The carousel started with the registration of the children with their caretaker. This was done by local volunteers who spoke the local language Tagalog. At the second station, anthropometric

measurements (height and weight) were recorded, which gave a very good indication of malnutrition or growth retardation. Finger prick samples at the third station were taken to determine the haemoglobin (Hb) concentration, in order to diagnose the level of possible anaemia. Each child was thoroughly examined by a medical doctor at the fourth station. Special attention was paid to respiratory, cardiologic, gastrointestinal, skin diseases, infectious and

developmental/neurologic problems. The next station was the pharmacy, where the prescribed medication was distributed. Most of the ailments could be treated on the spot and consisted mainly of multivitamins, iron, anti-worm, antibiotics and cream. The last two stations were the food education and hygiene station (tooth brushing and hand washing). Except for the medical examination station, I was able to serve at all other stations that week.





After three days of volunteering, we had a day off on All Saints Day. We took the opportunity to do a slum tour in order to get a better understanding of the miserable circumstances of the children's existence. We first visited a few shacks alongside the (stinking) river, which crosses part of the city. Most of the

Hereafter, we went to "Happy Land" (what a name!), where most people (scavengers) survived from waste separation. It is still very difficult to describe what we saw: overpopulated areas full of plastic waste, mud and children running around on their bare feet. The magnitude and misery is difficult to comprehend and touched

During the second part of the week, the MCC team checked approximately 510 children at the Delpan Evacuation Center, which was located near Happy Land together with volunteers of Enfants Foundation. The Delpan Evacuation Center is being used to evacuate people during the annual typhoons. During these days we had treated two critically ill children who were in a life-threatening situation (a dehydrated baby and a teenager suffering from severe tuberculosis) and who were admitted to hospital after stabilization at the above-mentioned center. These incidents touched us deeply.

Working with team members from different cultural backgrounds, exchanging ideas, learning from each other and fighting for the same cause was very inspiring to me. This trip was definitely one of the most impressive events in my life, which I will not easily forget. Despite the sometimes difficult circumstances, working with children appeared to be very rewarding.

Please feel free to contact me directly in case you want to learn more about MCC or ENF. ●

"...overpopulated areas full of plastic waste, mud and children running around on their bare feet."

dark shacks were illegally built alongside the river, partly under bridges where whole families lived on a few square meters with no water or sewage. The main source of income is scavenging (separating waste) and charcoal production. There are very little latrines, sanitation or sewage, and electricity is dangerously tapped to the shacks, creating all major health problems. Many of the filthy children we saw were undernourished.

us deeply. At the same time, people were extremely cheerful, always welcoming us and very friendly, children asking for a high five and asking our name which they repeated while laughing. For all MCC team members the extended slum tour provided the context of this year's medical mission. The tour was a unique experience that gave us insights in the hard living and working conditions of the marginalized scavenger families.



The Emile Nieuwendijk Foundation (emilienieuwendijk.foundation) sponsors the operations of children with a severe heart disease in developing countries. The funds raised by the ENF will, at the sole discretion of ENF, be made available to specific organizations like Medical Checks for Children (MCC) and Rural Relief & Development Foundation (RRDF). With the funds of ENF, these organizations are able to carry out further examinations and medical treatments on children with heart defects. Amongst others, the medical treatment comprises of medication and surgery when deemed necessary in the countries where the missions are being carried out. As the aforementioned medical treatments in general involve high costs, most of these children would never be able to get such medical treatment in these developing countries. Without research, treatment and/or operations, these children will pass away prematurely or will have a poor quality of life.

Medical Checks for Children (medicalchecksforchildren.org) offers medical support to children from 0 to 18 years old in orphanages and schools in remote areas, who are deprived of basic healthcare. The aim of MCC is to prevent disease, to protect and promote the overall health of the child and to aid in recuperation from disease. Annually MCC performs health checks on over 10,000 children in eight countries. Because of MCC's guideline to visit a region five years in a row, they can aid an entire generation of children to grow up healthy. MCC is able to do so because of the tremendous support of all volunteers and both individual and corporate donations. Volunteers at MCC pay for most of their own expenses, which allows no less than 90% of all donations to directly benefit the children.

Photos of this article by David Nieuwendijk



Happy Kid 2
By David Nieuwendijk
Summer 2016, Manila



Proud Kid
By David Nieuwendijk
Summer 2016, Manila

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