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An Introduction to Stairway Foundation

Historical Background

Stairway Foundation Inc. (SFI) is a non-stock, non-profit, and non-government child caring institution located at Brgy. Aninuan, Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro. Stairway was established by Monica Ray and Lars Jorgensen in 1990, primarily as an alternative strategy to meet the needs of street children. Their focus was particularly on the most disadvantaged or endangered, such as beggars, drug dependents, sexually exploited children, and children with serious health problems.

Over twenty years later, SFI has grown and expanded into the following 3 main program components:

- Residential Program - Each year, SFI brings up to fourteen boys (10-14 years of age) into their program. For 10 months, the boys are engaged in alternative education, life skills training and livelihood skills training.
- Community Assistance Program – This program focuses on offering scholarships and financial assistance for local children to be able to attend school. Another focus of SFI's program is to provide livelihood assistance for the local indigenous peoples, the Mangyans.
- Advocacy and Training Program – SFI's Advocacy Program focuses on children's rights, with a specific focus on the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Our Advocacy Team is continuously working on expanding SFI's campaign to increase local and international awareness on the rights of children.

Our Vision:

Through innovation, creative excellence and professional networking, we strive for universal promotion and upholding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our Mission:

To gain inspiration, knowledge, conviction and humility from working with the most outcast and endangered children in society, and to manifest these gains in creative expressions, which will alter general perceptions of the most marginalized groups of children around the world, and trigger mobilization of resources for change.

Geographical Location

Stairway is located in Puerto Galera, a scenic place in the province of Oriental Mindoro, and about 5 hours south from Manila. Stairway sits on 1 hectare of land, which is situated on a mountainside facing directly to the South China Sea. Across the street from Stairway, you will find beautiful white sand beaches.



The Residential Program

Residential Program Information

Millions of street children in the world constitute a silent but constantly growing minority. Some of the children are orphans but most of them are forced away from their families because of violence and various kinds of abuse in their home. Drugs, gangs and crimes are hard to avoid on the street and easily becomes a normal part of their daily life.

Stairway serves as a home for children who have long been on the streets. We mostly work with kids who have serious familial problems, are in conflict with the law, have drug dependence, have health problems and/or those who are having difficulty staying in the Manila-based centers. Most of our children are victims of physical and/or sexual abuse. We also accommodate street children with TB to give the needed medical care to recover. The treatment program for TB lasts approximately 6 months.

The Residential Program aims to take care of the specific needs of each child with regards to his treatment, education, and eventually, his reintegration. We have our own school which is approved by the Philippine Department of Education and offers non-formal education. Stairway offers classes in a variety of subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, English, Tagalog, science, geography, history, Children's Rights, art, music, handicrafts, and sports. In addition, we hold workshops, seminars, and Youth for Change camps for the children along with partner organizations. These events serve as a venue to discuss and work with topics that are highly relevant to the youth's welfare and development.

One of our greatest tools at Stairway is the use of creative expression. We utilize the arts to help children better understand themselves, their cultural heritage, and other social issues. Employing the arts in the daily activities of the children serves as a tool for education and therapy, stimulates learning, provides a constructive and creative means for self-expression, and serves as a medium for the release of pent-up tensions and emotions. All of this, with the complement of psychological counseling, helps the children begin to rebuild their self-respect and self-awareness.

Sample Schedule

The following schedule is an example of what a normal day is for the children:

Time	Activity
5:30 AM	Wake Up; morning exercises; cleaning
7:00 AM	Breakfast
8:00 AM	Academic Classes (Weekdays)
	General Cleaning (Sat); Mass/Outdoor Games/Environmental Exposure (Sun)
10:00 AM	Merienda
10:15 AM	Academic Classes (Weekdays)
	General Laundry (Sat); Environmental Exp./Outdoor/Indoor Games (Sun)
12 Noon	Lunch
1:00 PM	Music/Arts/Computer/Crafts/Creative Exp. (Weekdays)
	Personality Dev/Therapeutic Group /Self Eval (Weekend)
3:00 PM	Merienda
3:15 PM	Sports Activities
4:00 PM	Laundry (MW) / Beach time (TTHFSS)
5:30 PM	Wrap Up Session (MW)
7:00	Dinner
8:00	Tutorial (MW); Music time (T); Story telling (Th); Movie (F, Sa)
9:00 or 10:00	Lights out

The Community Assistance Program

Scholarship Program

Stairway's Scholarship Program is dedicated to sponsoring the education of low-income students in Puerto Galera. Candidates are screened through a process of home visits, personal interviews, and a family income assessment. The applicants that show a high level of financial need and an interest in continuing their education are selected every year for the program. The scholarships are categorized into two levels: scholars receiving basic school supplies and daily transportation, and scholars requiring extra assistance, including a daily stipend and tuition fees.

In addition to providing financial assistance, SFI aims to train scholars in valuable life-skills in the hopes of empowering these young leaders. Students attend workshops in Adolescent Reproductive Health, Online Safety Orientation and Children's Rights. In order to promote a culture of environmental awareness, every year scholars attend an educational workshop on the effects of pollution and environmental protection measures. During the summer component of the Scholarship Program, several educational workshops are held including sessions on Leadership Skills, Sexuality, Team-Building and Sports. For those students with low grades in English and Math, twice-weekly tutorials are conducted.

Indigenous Livelihood Assistance Program

For over 20 years now, Stairway has been working with one of the local indigenous Mangyan tribes called the Iraya. We employ Iraya at Stairway; we help provide clean drinking water; and we purchase their hand-woven baskets and other woven products using fair trade practices.

Baclayan Community Development Program

Baclayan is a local Iraya community, situated several kilometers from the city center in Puerto Galera about 200 meters above sea level. It's a small community, consisting of around 400-450 inhabitants. Over the years, having been pushed from their ancestral lands, the Iraya have had to find other ways to survive. For this community, most subsist by farming, selling traditional woven baskets, and begging. They are an extremely impoverished and socially marginalized group.

In 2009, we purchased a piece of land in Baclayan for the purposes of planting an organic farm. In purchasing the land, we were able to see a community living in survival mode. We decided to conduct a community needs assessment to see if, and how, we might be able to partner with the community to create positive and sustainable change. The results of the assessment showed a community in need of food security, and an elementary school in need of educational materials, school supplies, infrastructure repair, and a place to play and engage in sports activities. Given the results of the needs assessment, we began working with the local leadership to develop a community development plan to help uplift the community out of poverty and to help level the playing field in education and health.

In 2011, we launched a Baclayan project plan with the following components:

1. Elementary School Program
 - Feeding program – provide nutritious meals for the children
 - Provide necessary materials and supplies for effective teaching
2. Organic Farm
 - Plant organic fruit trees, vegetables, and cash crops (providing food for Stairway and for school feeding program)

- Raise organic livestock
 - Train community members in methods of organic farming
3. Sports Program
- Infrastructure: build a sports facility and a multi-purpose community meeting room
 - Host sports clinics, referee/coaching clinics, and sports leagues
 - Develop health/physical education curriculum for the elementary school
4. Community Development Program
- Facilitate livelihood and life skills sessions
 - Host Youth for Change Camps, integrating international school children with Stairway children and local Iraya children

To help keep this project going and sustainable, we rely heavily on our Volunteer Program.

The Volunteer Program

The volunteer program invites persons from abroad and from the local community to lend a helping hand with their projects. If accepted into the program, volunteers will be invited to join our team, lending us assistance to manage and grow our programs at Stairway and at Baclayan. Over the years, we've had incredible work done by our volunteers and have managed to maintain lifetime friendships along the way.

Preparing for Arrival: Passports and Visas

Before you arrive, you will need to plan for having a valid passport and for obtaining a visa, if applicable. In general, visitors are allowed entry into the Philippines without visas for a stay of twenty one (21) days or less. To confirm this general rule, please consult the website of the Philippine Embassy of your home country.

*Note: The validity of a visa indicates the time within which entry into the Philippines may be made. It does NOT refer to the length of stay in the Philippines. A three-month validity for a single entry visa means a person may enter the Philippines within three (3) months from the date of issuance of the visa. If a traveler holds a one-year or six-month multiple entry visa, this means that the traveler may enter the Philippines any number of times provided it is within the period specified in the visa. Travelers must secure an extension of stay with the Bureau of Immigration Office after the initial fifty nine (59) days granted by the immigration officer upon entry into the Philippines.

The following information is a general guideline applicable to citizens of the US and many of the European countries:

- Single entry visa valid for 3 months \$30.00 or 30 Euros (i.e. initial entry can be made within 3 months of the date of issue)
- Multiple entry visa valid for 6 months \$60.00 or 60 Euros
- Multiple entry visa valid for 1 year \$90.00 or 90 Euros
- The above-mentioned visas are for entry purposes only! All visas will still need to be extended beyond the initial 59 days granted
- Passport must be valid for at least six (6) months beyond the intended stay in the Philippines

Once you arrive, extending your visa as needed is easy. Extensions occur in cycles of 59 days. We have a local Bureau of Immigration office in Puerto Galera that will help process your visa paperwork and will collect your fees. The visa renewal timeline and fees are as follows:

Arrival Status	Visa Extension	Total Length of Stay	Charges	Comments
No visa – up to 21 days	+ 38 days	59 days	3,230 pesos	
Visa – up to 59 days	+ 59 days	118 days	8,000 pesos	Charges include the 1 time purchase of an iCard, which is valid for 1 year and has absolutely no use. 😊
N/A	+59 days	177 days	3,030 pesos	
N/A	+ 59 days	236 days	4,430 pesos	Additional charge of 1,400 for certificate of residence.
N/A	+ 59 days	295 days	3,030 pesos	
N/A	+ 59 days	354 days	3,030 pesos	

Orientation Process

All volunteers will be oriented upon arrival to Stairway. The orientation may include the following (depending on volunteer assignment):

- Introduction to the staff and children
- Cultural orientation
- Orientation to the rules, regulations and functioning of Stairway
- Guided tour of the grounds, buildings, workshop areas, sleeping quarters, etc.
- A few days to observe routines and activities
- In-depth discussion of volunteer assignment
- Orientation to Baclayan, if applicable (project, community, assignment, living arrangements, etc.)

Behavioral Policies

Since 1990, Stairway has built up a good rapport with the community, therefore visitors and volunteers are usually well respected. It is important that everyone is aware that we all are ambassadors of the project and must act and behave accordingly.

The community here is small; everybody knows everybody. When volunteers arrive, it doesn't take long for the community to know that you are here. When you leave Stairway's area, the community will notice and will talk about it. Gossip is a big part of Filipino culture. Because of this, it requires that you act in a proper way as any negative behaviors will fall back on Stairways' good name and reputation.

The following behavioral policies are for all staff and volunteers at Stairway and Baclayan:

- Sexual relationships with staff members, other volunteers, members of the community, etc., are strongly discouraged during your stay. If this does occur (depending on the context), you may be asked to leave the Volunteer Program.
- Any use of drugs is absolutely prohibited and may result in expulsion from the Volunteer Program.
- Guests are not allowed in the volunteer sleeping quarters, without permission from SFI Administration.

The following policies are specific to Stairway only:

- Beer and other alcoholic beverages are prohibited around the children (unless you are at a work-sanctioned celebration in which alcohol is served).
- Cigarette smoking is prohibited in front of the children.
- Volunteers are discouraged from giving a personal gift directly to a child without approval from the social worker in charge. All presents must be given to the social worker for distribution to the children.
- Giving promises to a particular child—e.g., of adopting the child, bringing him outside of the country, giving a scholarship to him—is not allowed. Should the volunteer wish to make a donation or help a child in any way, he/she should coordinate with the social worker and/or executive director.
- Volunteers are not allowed to let the children use personal mobile phones or to talk to any caller without the social worker's permission.
- Touching Rules: Because we work with a lot of children who have been victims of sexual abuse and /or different kinds of physical abuse, it is necessary to keep in mind that giving even a casual touch to the child could provoke a traumatic memory and bring on a negative reaction. This doesn't mean that you can't ever touch the children; it is just an important principle to be aware of.

The following policies are specific to Baclayan only:

- Drinking beer and other alcoholic beverages in moderation is fine within the privacy of the volunteer living quarters and at times within the community (i.e. fiesta celebrations); however, drinking in excess and being drunk in a public setting within the community is strongly discouraged.
- Volunteers are discouraged from donating anything to community members without consulting SFI Management.

Clothing and Dress Code

Stairway is located in the mountains, and across from the beach. The best way to describe living here is that it is like living in a big, beautiful campground. Besides the main road, there is very little cement. You're in the middle of nature! Clothing should be casual and comfortable.

The Philippines is a conservative country, and clothing styles are modest. For cultural reasons and for respect for the population we serve at Stairway, we ask that the clothing you wear is not too tight, short, or revealing. Wearing bikinis is not allowed when you are on the beach with the children. On these occasions, you can wear shorts and T-shirts or tank tops.

For Baclayan volunteers, clothing styles should also be modest. As Baclayan is a mountainous community and the weather is unpredictable, sturdy clothing and shoes are recommended. Warmer clothing during the rainy season, including rain gear is also advisable.

General Filipino Culture

As a volunteer, you are a guest in a foreign culture working under the local staff. Westerners tend to be very direct with their communications. Filipinos are non-confrontational. In Filipino culture, relationships are much more important than being direct (and possibly hurting the feelings of the other). Because of this, you are likely not to get a straight answer when in a situation of conflict. In addition, many Filipinos will answer yes/no questions with a 'yes', whether they really want to answer 'no', 'maybe', or 'yes'. On the other hand, if you express a need or want to a Filipino, they will do what they can to accommodate you.

Being on time is not a priority for many Filipinos. Meetings may or may not happen on time or may or may not happen at all (with no communication about it). It is best to not have high expectations, to be patient, and to just relax and roll with it.

Filipinos are a generous and giving people. If you visit their house, you will be fed (even if you just ate). Eating is a big part of the culture. The two big components of any type of celebration are food and music. Videoke is one of the favorite activities of Filipinos. They love to sing, dance, and perform.

At Stairway, the culture is friendly and quite informal. We address each other by 'ate' and 'kuya', which translates to 'sister' and 'brother'. Although 'ate' and 'kuya' are informal by nature, they are still considered a respectful way to address people.

Working Hours and Vacation

The work load at Stairway tends not to follow any set schedule. It is therefore expected for you to work whenever needed. This does not mean you will not have any free time. But it does mean that you may not always have control over when you have time off. Depending on your role as a volunteer and the scheduled activities of Stairway, you may be working on and off throughout the day and evening.

During your time here, it is okay to have scheduled vacation time. The Philippines is a beautiful country with many things to do. We would hope that you would take advantage of being here. However, we expect several weeks of advance notice so we can plan for coverage in your absence as needed.

Useful Information

Address

Stairway Foundation, Inc. (SFI)
Barangay Aninuan, Puerto Galera 5203
Oriental Mindoro, Philippines
Tel. +63 (917) 843-1922
Email: info@stairwayfoundation.org
Homepage: www.stairwayfoundation.org

Directions to Stairway from Manila

Getting from Manila to Stairway takes approximately 3-4 hours. In order to catch the last boat to Puerto Galera, you will need to leave Manila no later than 2:30 PM. If your flight arrives in the evening, we recommend staying at the Pension Natividad in Malate, Manila. The contact information for the Pension Natividad is:

Pension Natividad
1690 M.H. Del Pilar
Malate, Metro Manila
(near Manila Diamond Hotel)
Phone: +63 (02) 521-0524
Email: pensionnatividad@yahoo.com



For transportation from Manila Airport or from the Pension Natividad to Puerto Galera: take a taxi to the PNR Buendia bus terminal. This should cost around 100-200 pesos. *Note: make sure the taxi driver puts the meter on! Here is a map of the Manila Airport and surrounding areas: <http://www.manila-airport.net/Map.cfm>. At the Buendia bus terminal, the buses will have signs on the front of them listing the different cities they go to. You will get on a bus that has 'Batangas Pier' on it. You can always ask one of the terminal workers which bus to get on. In general, they are very nice and helpful. The bus ride should cost about 200 pesos. At Batangas Pier, look for the Minolo Shipping Lines booth. Tell them you are going to Stairway Foundation. They should give you a

discount for boat fare of 180 pesos (from 220). You'll also have to pay a 50 peso 'environmental fee' and a 30 peso 'terminal fee' (all at different booths). The terminal helpers generally walk people through this process. The boat will take you to Muelle pier in Puerto Galera. If you get motion sick at all, you will want to bring Dramamine with you. Once you arrive in Muelle, you will take a tricycle (motorcycle with passenger side-car) to Aninuan (the Barangay or town where Stairway is). The tricycle drivers should know us if you mention Stairway. If they don't, just tell them Tamaraw Beach Resort (we are right across the street from Tamaraw). The tricycle ride should cost around 50 pesos per person. They will try and charge you 150 pesos. Once you get to Stairway, just walk onto site and tell the first person you see that you are a volunteer at Stairway. They will walk you to the main office.

Accommodations

Depending on your volunteer assignment, you will either be housed at Stairway or at Baclayan. At Stairway, you will be housed in one of our guest facilities or in one of our on-site cabins. Where you are housed depends on the time of year and availability of accommodations. At times, you may be asked to change accommodations, based on the need of Stairway. The guest facility rooms are equipped with beds, a fan, and a CR (comfort room or bathroom) with a shower. The cabins are small but quaint. There may or may not be a shower in the CR. If there isn't a shower, buckets and water scoops (tabo) are used to bathe.

If your assignment is in Baclayan, you will be housed in our native-style camp house or in one of our small cottages. In either accommodation, you'll have a stunning view of the mountains and seascape of Puerto Galera below. The camp house is a dormitory-style facility that will be used for both volunteers and camp participants. All living quarters will be simple, yet comfortable. CR's will be available either within or connected to the accommodations. The camp house will have a communal kitchen space, while each cottage will have its own small cooking area. At this time, Baclayan is a community without electricity; however, we have solar panels for our accommodations, allowing volunteers to have a source of electricity.

Most places in the Philippines do not have hot water. We are one of them. In addition, plumbing is tricky as many places lack a proper sewage system. Toilet paper is not frequently used. If you do happen to use toilet paper, it is to be thrown in a waste basket rather than flushed down the toilet. Many public CR's do not have toilet paper. In this case, buckets of water and tabos are used to cleanse yourself (or you can always carry a supply of toilet paper with you). Many toilets do not have a system to flush. For these, you manually flush down the water and waste by dumping a bucket of water into the toilet.

Laundry is done by hand and is hung outside (or inside when rainy) to dry. Most volunteers wash clothing several times throughout the week to avoid wasting big chunks of free time on laundry.

As mentioned before, both Stairway and Baclayan are in the mountains. This means that there are a lot of insects (mosquito's, flies, moths, beetles, etc.), lizards, birds, bats, and snakes. Snake sightings are infrequent, but they do occur.

Health / Medical Care

For your health concerns, there are plenty of local clinics and doctors' here in Puerto Galera. We have a small, local clinic in White Beach for general, non-emergency medical care. The cell phone# is: +63 (917) 323 1055. There is also a Municipal Health Clinic in the city center. The contact# is: +63 (927) 287-6322. For greater medical needs or emergencies, there is a hospital in Calapan (the nearest major city to Puerto Galera - 1 1/2 hours drive) called Maria Estrella General Hospital. The phone# is: +63 (43) 286 7386. In addition, there are plenty of pharmacies where you can get most medicines.

As a health and safety precaution, you should always have tetanus, diphtheria and hepatitis A vaccines before you arrive. Furthermore, if you are planning to travel around the Philippines you should consider malaria prophylaxes. For your protection, we have mosquito nets available for your use while at Stairway or Baclayan.

Food and Diet

Volunteers at Stairway will receive 3 meals and 2 snacks per day, cooked and served by our kitchen. Rice is served at every meal and is the staple food in the Philippines. Meat protein will come in the form of fish (served at least once a day), chicken, pork, and once in awhile, beef. Fish here is served differently than it is in the Western countries. The fish are de-gutted, but not de-boned. The head and tail of the fish are left intact. Vegetables are served daily; fruits several times throughout the week.

Volunteers at Baclayan will be provided food by Stairway, but will be responsible for cooking it. Much of the fruits and vegetables will be provided by the organic farm in Baclayan. Other items will need to be purchased in town and brought to site. Those volunteers who are staying in the camp house will have communal style cooking and chores, with duties being assigned and rotated. Volunteers who are staying in the cottages can either join the communal program or cook on their own.

In general, water is unsafe to drink unless it is filtered, bottled, or boiled for at least 15 minutes. At Stairway, we have 3 faucets that give filtered water. Bottled water is available in grocery stores and via vendors. Depending on how long you will be here, it is probably a good idea to bring a supply of multi-vitamins and calcium supplements to help your body adjust to a different diet.

Weather

There are 2 seasons in the Philippines: dry and wet. The dry season runs from December to June and the wet season from July to November. The dry season is very hot and humid. Summer (when kids are out of school) is April – May. The children at Stairway graduate early April and we get a new batch of children early June. The summer months are filled with a variety of camps for local community groups (deaf, developmentally disabled, etc.).

The wet season produces a lot of rain. Temperatures tend to remain warm and humid, but can cool down quite a bit during the night. Typhoons are common and can lead to fierce storm conditions and flooding. The Philippines has an average of 6-7 typhoons per year. Typhoons are categorized into 4 different groups, depending on wind speed. Level 1 is the mildest, and level 4 is known as a super typhoon. The news stations are good about notifying the public about the typhoon categories. Local government units will organize evacuations as needed.

Communications

Communications in the Philippines is primarily through cell phones / texting. Most volunteers that bring their own cell phones are able to switch out their SIM cards to a local service provider (Smart or Globe). Cell phones are operated by buying 'load'. Load is available via purchasing a load card or by purchasing load from an e-load provider. Both cards and e-load are available for purchase at Tamaraw Beach Resort, which is across the street from SFI. In addition, many street vendors (sari-sari stores) sell load as well. Receiving a text is free. Sending a text to a phone within your network (Smart or Globe) is 1 peso. Sending a text to a different network is about 2.50 pesos. Local phone calls are 6 pesos a minute.

Stairway has internet (via wifi) and computers available for you to use email and to stay in contact with your family and friends. Some volunteers bring their own laptops, which is okay. Just keep in mind that we are not liable for theft, loss or damages to any of your belongings.

In Baclayan, as aforementioned, there is no electricity at this time. There are cell phone towers nearby, so cell phones work fine most of the time. However, there is no capacity at this time to use computers or other electrical devices. There are internet cafés available in the city center of Puerto Galera.

Electricity in the Philippines runs at 220 volts. If you have a device that does not accept 220 volts at 60 hertz, you will need a voltage converter. The most common plug outlet accepts plugs with 2 flat blades. If your electronic device has a different shape, you will need to bring a plug adapter with you. Most electronic devices work just fine here (unless you plan on bringing a hair dryer or curling iron – which we don't recommend).

Budget

The general rule is that volunteers contribute to their own food and accommodation. The amount per day is decided upon depending the volunteer assignment, skills and length of stay. Apart from this, your budget will be very individualized. Things to budget for are personal toiletries, snack food, going out to restaurants for special occasions (or for fun), cell phone load, and any other side travel or entertainment you may want to indulge in (scuba diving is big here in Puerto). As Puerto Galera is a touristic area, there are several grocery stores that cater to foreign tourists; you will be able to find most things that you need or want. In general everything here is quite cheap compared to the Western part of the world. The average monies spent for volunteers can be between 5,000 – 10,000 pesos per month (\$120 - \$220).

Credit Cards

In Puerto Galera (7 km. from Stairway) it is possible to withdraw cash using foreign credit cards at the Alliance Bank ATM. There is a 7% charge though. The bank serves cards on the Plus, Megalink, and VISA networks. In addition, you can exchange your US dollars or Euros to Pesos in several establishments in Puerto Galera. The office at Stairway has a safe that can be utilized to store your passport, monies, and other valuables as needed.

Things to Do

Puerto Galera is a popular tourist destination. Filipino's like to vacation in nearby White Beach, while Sabang brings both local and international scuba divers. There are many places to snorkel and dive and many companies offering boating and diving excursions. A lot of the local resorts offer water sports such as wave-running, para-sailing, para-surfing, wind-surfing, banana-boating, etc. There are also a variety of waterfalls to hike to, many within walking distance of Stairway, and a local 9-hole golf course. White Beach hosts a night life with live music, dancing, videoke, and fire dancers on the beach. There are many things to do here!

Suggested Packing List

Below is a suggested packing list. *What you pack will depend greatly on how long you're here. Less is more!

Clothing:	Toiletries:
5-7 pairs of shorts (include board shorts for swimming)	Travel size shampoo / soap
5-7 t-shirts / tank tops	Toothbrush / toothpaste
1-2 nice outfits (for celebrations, events, going out)	Brush/comb
7-10 underwear	Hair accessories (to put hair up)
2 bras / 1 sports bra	2 bath towels
1-2 pair of long pants (for cooler weather and/or mosquito relief)	Disposable razors
1-2 hoodies / jackets (for cooler weather and/or mosquito relief)	Bandana / washcloth (for wiping sweat)
2 swimsuits / swim trunks	Tampons (hard to find here; expensive)
2 pair of socks (more for Baclayan)	Misc:
Athletic shoes (for hiking)	Sunglasses
Good hiking shoes (for Baclayan)	Hat
Raincoat (for Baclayan)	Sunscreen (or can buy here)
Flip flops	Mosquito repellent (or can buy here)
Medications:	Camera
Prescription Meds	Flashlight
Multi-vitamins / Calcium supplements / Other supplements	Umbrella
Dramamine (if needed)	Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

Basic Language

Common Filipino Phrases

There are many languages spoken in the Philippines; however, Filipino (based on Tagalog) is the national language and is at least understood by most Filipinos. English is taught in schools and is used for governmental, commercial, and educational purposes, and can also be found on most signage.

While the staff at Stairway both understand and speak Basic English, many of the children here do not. To help you communicate with the children and the local community, here are some common words and phrases:

Greetings and other basic phrases								
*po = polite (to be used with everyone but children)								
Magandang umaga, po. <i>(Good morning - polite)</i>		Magandang hapon, po. <i>(Good afternoon- polite)</i>		Magandang gabi, po. <i>(Good evening - polite)</i>				
Kumusta ka? <i>(How are you?)</i>		Mabuti! Ikaw? <i>(Fine. You?)</i>		Ingat! <i>(Take care!)</i>				
Oo. Opo. <i>(Yes. Yes –polite.)</i>	Hindi. Hindi po. <i>(No. No –polite.)</i>	Salamat po. <i>(Thank you – polite.)</i>		Walang anuman. <i>(Your welcome.)</i>				
Family members								
(At Stairway, everyone is called ‘ate’ or ‘kuya’)								
Ate <i>(Sister)</i>		Kuya <i>(Brother)</i>		Nanay <i>(Mother)</i>		Tatay <i>(Father)</i>		
Food / Eating phrases								
Pagkain <i>(Food)</i>	Merienda <i>(Snack)</i>	Kanin <i>(Rice)</i>	Tubig <i>(Water)</i>	Ulam <i>(Main Course)</i>	Gulay <i>(Vegetable)</i>	Prutas <i>(Fruit)</i>	Tinapay <i>(Bread)</i>	
Kain ka na! <i>(You eat now!)</i>		Masarap! <i>(Delicious!)</i>			Busog na ako. <i>(I’m full now.)</i>			
Other useful words / phrases								
Ano <i>(What)</i>		Saan <i>(Where)</i>		Kelan <i>(When)</i>		Sino <i>(Who)</i>		Ilang <i>(How many)</i>
Magkano? <i>(How much?)</i>		Walang pera. <i>(No money.)</i>		Pagod ako na. <i>(I’m tired now.)</i>		Magandang tulog. <i>(Sleep well.)</i>		