

The Silent Language

BY ABIGAIL HESS



I slipped out of the truck and made my way to my first patient, Daprina. After being accidentally shot in the foot, Daprina's wound had become badly infected, necessitating a trip to the hospital. I shyly greeted her in Palawano, "Menungang Meriklem!"

Because communicating in another language was still new to me, I found myself mildly surprised to hear the appropriate response, "Menunga gasi." My team and I took Daprina to the hospital, where the bullet was removed and she received antibiotics. Daprina then stayed at our project farm so that her foot could recover before the five-hour hike home.

During the time she stayed at the farm, I visited her daily. After caring for her foot, I would sit with her to learn Palawano. Despite being unable to communicate much, we began to bond, and I looked forward to these visits every day. I learned about her family, too; she was only 25 but already had six children.

I unexpectedly got to meet one of her children a few days later. Chris, her nine-month-old baby, was brought down from the mountains with a bad case of pneumonia. This time, I met them as they were dropped off at the emergency room. I watched as the admitting nurse took his vitals, and

I didn't even need to make the conversion from Celsius to Fahrenheit to know he had a high fever. His oxygen saturation was in the 80s, and as they started the oxygen and breathing treatment, I couldn't help but notice how tiny he was when compared to my nieces and nephews of similar age. My heart began to break as I realized he had several classic signs of malnutrition. I helped get some things that the hospital needed before admitting Chris, and then I prepared to leave. I could tell Daprina was stressed, but there were other patients I needed to help.

I hugged Daprina. I had considered trying to pray with her in the beginning, but I hesitated due to my poor language skills. However, at this moment, I finally just prayed with the words I knew. "Ama` Empu` . . . salamat para si Daprina and si Chris . . . (Please help Chris to get better soon and help them to know You are with them.) Dut ngarang i Isus (In the name of Jesus), amen."

Every day, we would bring food to our patients in the hospital, and I especially enjoyed preparing and bringing food for Daprina and Chris. It was satisfying to see him getting better every day and to watch his previously toothpick-like arms and legs filling out. However, I still worried about Daprina. I could tell she was stressed, and having come from such an isolated village, everything here must have seemed very new and different for her.

I tried to pray with them at least once a day, with as much Palawano as possible. I would fill the rest with English, thankful that God can understand any language — He created them — and having confidence that humans can often understand the sentiment even when they don't understand the words.

On the third day, when I prayed with one arm around her, Daprina started to cry. At that moment, I wished more than at any other time, to speak more of her language: to tell her it would all be okay, that her baby was getting better, and that Jesus was with her, but all I could do was sit there with her for a few more moments. Though there

was nothing special about the few words I had said, and despite my total lack of ability to say anything more, I knew there was something special taking place in that moment. I knew that I was in the right place and that God was doing something He loves to do — letting His strength shine through our weakness. I knew He had touched her heart in a way I never could, even if I had spoken perfect Palawano.

Abigail Hess served as a Student Missionary with Adventist Frontier Missions from 2023-2024. This story has been shared with permission of Adventist Frontier Missions.

World Church Prayer Requests

NOVEMBER 8 — 14, 2024

- **United States:** Pray for the political tensions currently going on in the United States. Pray especially for God's people to remember that HE is still on the throne. Help us to stay focused on our true mission and goals and to help prepare people for His soon coming.
- **Madagascar:** Pray for IMPACT 2025, an evangelistic effort intended to bring the everlasting gospel to every corner of West-Central Africa. Pray that this will be especially fruitful in the District of Besakoa Mahajanga community.
- **Zambia:** Please pray for the people suffering from drought. Basic needs have become too expensive for most families and some animals are dying from lack of pasture.
- **Canada:** Please pray for the Evangelistic Series "The Great Hope" on November 17-22, 2024. Please pray for the speaker and the people in the city to realize that there is hope for the future amid the wars, calamities, and sufferings in life.
- **United States:** Pray for the Umatilla SDA Church as they seek revival and reformation. Pray that each member will be fully surrendered to Christ so that His mission of seeking the lost will be the sole mission of each member.
- **Zambia:** Pray for encouragement, strength, spiritual growth, and unity among the members of the Hillview Park SDA Church as they seek to build God's church in their community.
- **Kenya:** Pray for the Ebenezer Sabbath School. Church members there wish to make it a "Center of Influence" for the immediate community.