

# 2014

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## [INDONESIAN INVESTIGATION]

Our adventure in the country of many smiles, great social capital, amazing nature and crazy traffic.

## Introduction to Indonesia

After Iran, Indonesia is our second main destination. It holds the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population in the world and it's rapidly changing into a modern industrial developed country. It has an overwhelmingly rich history and culture: over 300 ethnicities live on Indonesia's 17.000 islands and more than 300 languages are spoken. From its paradise seas, to lush rainforests to hundreds of active volcanoes, Indonesia's nature holds the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest biodiversity in the world.

Can the modern developing society, the traditional cultures and the pristine environments coexist in Indonesia? Our investigation aims to take us across the Indonesian life, from urban Jakarta to wild rainforests; it will give us an overview of Indonesian society as well as an inside knowledge to problems that affect not only Indonesia, but our entire world.

Because of Indonesia's sheer size – from Banda Aceh in Sumatra to Jayapura in East Papua it's 13 hours by flight or 6000km on roads and boats – we decided to focus on a single island: Java. It is the most populated – 110 million out of Indonesia's 240 million – the most developed and it holds the capital city Jakarta and the informal cultural capital Jogjakarta. So let's dive into Indonesia's heart.

## West Java Chapter

### Jakarta

We leave the cold winter of Iran behind and land in Jakarta around midnight. It is exciting from the first breath of hot, humid tropical air. Hordes of teenagers on scooters swarm around our taxi and large groups of people dine around street food vendors. It's a complementary mix, the improvised shacks where simple people cook simple but delicious food on the sidewalks, under the bright lights of a modern downtown with towering steel and glass skyscrapers.

It's all very exciting, especially after one months of life under Iranian Islamic laws. But after a few days we see the bad side also: Jakarta is just too hot and too crowded. Spending two hours on the way to work and another two hours on the way back home is a normal thing for Jakarta's residents.

It's 28th of December so every company and organization is on holiday and staying in Jakarta until the holidays are over is out of the question. This is of course a very big inconvenience for our research, but with a bit of luck we meet our investigation guarding angel in Jakarta.

Kestri Ariyanti<sup>1</sup> is 28 years old and she worked for a mining company in Sumatra. After seeing the damage these companies make to the tropical rainforests, rivers and local communities, she had to quit her job and applied for an opening at UN's office in Jakarta. As she had previous experience working with NGOs she got the job and now she's working at United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP) on Indonesia's REDD+<sup>2</sup> Agency. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) is

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/kestri.ariyanti?fref=ts>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reducing\\_emissions\\_from\\_deforestation\\_and\\_forest\\_degradation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reducing_emissions_from_deforestation_and_forest_degradation)

a set of steps designed to use market and financial incentives in order to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases from deforestation and forest degradation. This program is funded by Norway with \$1 Billion, which are awarded in installments depending on the program's results.

To avoid government corruption the agency is coordinated by the UN and the results of their work – which sometimes includes investigations incriminating powerful corporations and officials – go directly to the President of Indonesia.

So Kestri was the guarding angel of our investigation because she and her friends opened all the gates we needed in Indonesia. By the way, the friendship of Indonesian people is truly amazing; I will have to open a chapter later in this document about it.



Figure 1. Talking about mining companies, here's a random view from our plane to Singapore, while flying over Sumatra

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[http://www.cifor.org/online-library/browse/view-publication/publication/3876.html?\\_ga=1.70172624.1318205183.1390989615](http://www.cifor.org/online-library/browse/view-publication/publication/3876.html?_ga=1.70172624.1318205183.1390989615)

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/may/31/worlds-largest-redd-project-indonesia>

## Halimun Salak National Park

Halimun Salak preserves the most complete rainforest ecosystem in Java. Finding accurate information on how to get there is a bit of a challenge, but of course our friend Kestri was there to help and she also put us in contact with Mr. Pak Tri Siswo Rahardjo, the director of the National Park.

There is only 100km from Jakarta to Kabandungan, a small village where the Park's Head Quarters is located. However on the crazy Javanese roads this means a full day of crazy travel. My Indonesian friend warned me about the „road madness“ but I only understand what he meant while sitting in rusty minivan waiting to fall apart, with 18 people inside, swerving on a tight bumpy road between trucks and motorscooters. We try to imagine what happens if you take a Norwegian driver and place him in the middle of this chaos.....: heart attack.

So it is late in the night when we get to the HQ of Taman Nasional Gunung Halimun Salak. We are welcomed by Mr. Pak Tri, the head of the park. We sit with him for a nice tea and a cigarette. He smokes four packs per day to compensate for a healthy lifetime in the middle of national parks and reservations. He told us about the main activities of his staff. One of his reserach teams is out in the park gathering data, even though it is one day before the New Year. While the park is pretty successful in stopping illegal wood cutting, the biggest problem is illegal hunting. The protected are of the park also hosts a few dozen small villages, mostly of rice farmers. The staff at Halimun Salak runs training programs for environmentally friendly farming.



Figure 2. Rice farming just outside the protected area of Halimun Salak.

Second day we start walking up the mountain towards Cikaniki research station. Mr. Pak Tri advised us to rent a ride with a 4x4 but it was too steep for our budget. Five hours walk then. So we start to walk up in the tropical heat... and 10 minutes later we stop for a break. Hiking in Java it's not like in Norway.

Five painful hours later we get to Cikaniki Research Station. It looks deserted, but that must be normal on 31<sup>st</sup> of December and with one research team out in the forest. Anyway we are too tired to investigate at this point. Iosif takes a nap before walking a few more kilometers to Citalahab village.



**Figure 3. Tea plantation around Citalahab village**

Citalahab looks traditional and clean, and it's full of tourists during the dry season. We rented the cheapest accommodation in Indonesia at a local homestay. 1 kilometer further on the road we find the second part of Citalahab village, where the local people stay, and which looks like a vacation resort. We spend the New Year night here, with the local people doing karaoke on Indonesian songs.

Next morning we leave Citalahab taking a trail through the jungle. The rain forest is amazing and it gives us a great and wild energy. You'll have to see this in our upcoming video. After 3 hours of jungle action we stop for a rest. Here I discover 4 blood sucking worms on each of my ankles. Must be from river crossings. I take them off and apply a cream for scorpion bites from one of our Iranian friends. That's right; I gave my blood for this investigation.

After five hours in the jungle we come out near the Cikaniki Research Station, where two people are working on the canopy trails. And it's 1<sup>st</sup> of January. It's also amazing that we didn't get lost, although there were many trails and we couldn't understand the marking system.



Figure 4. The Moose in the jungle

### Cianjur floating village

Let's fast forward through another round of Javanese road madness and we get to Cianjur. The Lonely Planet Travel guide presents Cianjur as a small and untouristic village where you can experience the traditional rice farming. So we go there to find ourselves in the middle of a 200.000 people "village".



Figure 5. Ben, our guide to Cianjur floating village

What to do now? We go to an internet café to find the real village. I find the website of a community-based green tourism project<sup>3</sup> and right when we're about to stand up and go, a hyper active tour guide comes over. Meet Ben, our guide to Cianjur floating village.

<sup>3</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/cianjuradventure/Home>

The floating village is a few kilometers outside Cianjur, in a real rural area. Around three hundred families live on this lake, in three hundred floating houses surrounded by hundreds of floating fish farms. Here's how it looks:



However the greatest part about this place is not the way it looks, and it does look amazing. It's the people we met there. We stayed three days with a large family – around twelve people who very soon become our friends. We spent hours every day talking with them, getting to know their lives.

Most people on the floating village are fish farmers. They built a system of floating nets, keeping fish inside. They feed it with rice, which gives the fish a very sweet taste. Being close to Cianjur they have access to education and medical services. Here we also learned for the first time about a system that works in every Indonesian community. On one hand they have the official local administration system, connected with the government. On the second hand they have a traditional organization system, which includes a village chief, village people in charge of security and other matters and weekly community meetings to discuss current issues of the village. The two systems, official and traditional, complement each other. This village is quite prosperous due to fish farming and rice farming. The biggest problem we noticed, and it's a problem present in all rural Indonesia, is the lack of water, sanitation and waste disposal systems.

The people need to buy bottled drinking water. On the upside this is cheap: \$0.33 for 10 liters. The sanitation system does not exist: lift up the toilet seat and you see the lake under it. Oh wait; there is no toilet seat, just a hole in the floor. And the waste disposal system... well part of the garbage is spread everywhere and the rest gets burned. On the upside some of the plastic gets recycled, because people can get money for it. But we'll talk more about sanitation and waste disposal in the Central Java chapter, where we meet a few organizations working with these issues.

The three days we spent with our family on the floating village were among the most pleasant in our trip, despite sleeping on wooden floors in an open space where ruthless mosquitos attacked us every night. But let's not forget why we came to Cianjur, the rice village.

In the last morning we wake up early and our friend Ben takes us to a rice farm. You'll have to give some small money to the farmer for his time, Ben warns us. No problem, let's go! We meet the head farmer – he is the cousin of the land lord – with Ben acting as translator.



The farmers work from the early morning to noon. In a sunny day like this one it's a hard job just standing in the heat. After noon the workers go back to their homes and have the rest of their day for chores around the house or selling in the local market. They are paid around 3 dollars/day for their work in the rice field. These fields you can see produce around 16 tons of rice per crop, and due to Indonesia's climate the farmers can easily grow two crops per year. 1 ton of rice leaves the farm for around \$350... just 35 cents per kilo.

We're getting ready to leave and Ben reminds us about the small money for the farmer. How much, we ask. Ben asks the farmer in Indonesian, and then tells us two hundred thousand (around \$15). We smile,



look at each other and hand the farmer twenty thousand. He smiles and welcomes the money. This points out something we faced all over Indonesia: if you're white and traveling local people see you as a RICH man. We've been asked 15 euros for a kilo of grapes for example. Even our family on the floating village asked the price of 2 good hotel rooms for sleeping on their floor with no walls around. Of course we never paid what they ask for. Just smile and ask for a fair price, and you'll get it.



Figure 6. Last picture with part of our family on the Floating Village

## Bandung

Bandung is Indonesia's second largest metropolitan area with 2.4 million inhabitants. We rush from the rice farm in Cianjur straight to Bandung to make an appointment with Hani<sup>4</sup>, a young volunteer who's going to take us to her project. But first she takes us to her house, where we meet her nice family who quickly prepare food for us. Perfect, it's 6pm and we only had time for breakfast.

<sup>5</sup>Hani takes us to a project called Save the Street Child<sup>6</sup>. It works with children (some living with their families, some on their own) who were rarely attending school as they had to earn their living by selling different products on the streets. The problem in Indonesia was that pupils and students had to pass what was called the "National exam" every 4 years: when they graduated from their primary, secondary

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hani.ramadhani.3>

<sup>5</sup> Alina liked Hani a lot, so the part about Hani's projects is written by her.

<sup>6</sup> <http://sschildbandung.org/>

school and high school. Due to their attendance and poor studying conditions their families were providing to them, they rarely managed to pass this exam and continue their studies.

This project was initiated by a group of students few years before. It became so popular among students that every time a generation of students was graduating, another generation took over the project. They have little funds from few sponsorships and personal contributions; therefore, they have no proper facilities and conditions to hold the classes. This is the reason why the classes are held in parks in the city, close to the areas where the kids were selling their merchandise. The classes are held twice per week, on Saturdays and Sundays. The curriculum was established by the coordinators of the project in accordance to the national curriculum and the needs of the pupils.

We get to the first area where at the beginning more volunteers than kids gathered; however, little by little, all the kids come and soon, more than 30 arrive. For that particular day English and Math class have been established. At the beginning we have the impression that the efforts of the volunteers are hopeless as chaos seems to reign over the place. In little time, the volunteers manage, by games and activities to capture the attention of almost the entire group of kids. Even the most difficult kids (who obviously had some emotional problems) soon become captivated by the classes. Our group also divides so that in each age group, 1 or 2 of us are present (as the kids are quite happy with our presence). The English lesson starts by simple things such as introducing oneself and slowly evolves to more complex description of our hobbies, likes and dislikes etc.



Figure 7. Children and Volunteers at "Save the Street Children" project

We are truly impressed by the dedication of these volunteers who sacrifice their weekends for a cause they believe in.

The next day Hani invites us at another place where they give classes to children. There we find only 4 kids (3 girls and 1 boy aged 7 to 12) who are selling some stone made pots used for crushing spices. The funny part (in the most cynical sense possible) is that a couple hundred meters far from the busy street where the kids are trying to sell their items, their mothers are supervising their children from under the shadow of a tree.



Figure 8. One of the kids trying to sell some kitchen accessories

Hani asks the kids to come to class but they are too afraid of their mothers because they did not sell anything today so they have to keep working. We wait for more than an hour but the four kids don't manage to sell anything.



At this point Alina decides to try herself and see how difficult it is. She is lucky (most probably due to the strangeness of the situation) to sell one pot to the first car where she knocks at the window. First the driver, together with his wife look shocked at her but after insisting, they roll down the window and ask her what she's doing. Alina explain

the situation – she is a volunteer from Europe trying to teach English lessons to the working children in Bandung but that is impossible until they sell some of these items as their families need the money. The people inside the car become very sympathetic and immediately decide to help out. The faces of the kids when they see this is priceless. They are literally in awe of how Alina managed to sell to the first car when more often than not they need to stay an entire day to sell 1 item.

In a way, the day is unsuccessful as only 4 kids show up and we did not manage to hold any classes. It is very sad to see that parents are so irresponsible towards their children education and lives. They are literally using their kids because they inspire more compassion and as Hani told us, some of the mothers were offered some tailoring jobs but they complained it pays too little – so they decided it is more productive to stay under the shadow of the tree hoping their kids will get lucky.

We live this part of the city, with Hani taking us to the second project she is involved in: AISEC<sup>7</sup> – a well-known international organization that is dealing with many types of projects. Hani is the president of a project in Bandung and she is responsible of all the international volunteers AISEC is sending to this project. We met volunteers from Austria, Czech Republic, China, and India as well as the coordinators - local young people, with Hani as their leader. Today we visit one of the three orphanages they work with. This orphanage – as most of the orphanages in Indonesia – is run by a private couple, both in their thirties. In their house they have 2 dormitories with bunk beds (one for boys and second one for girls), a classroom at the second floor and an administration office. They have 37 children who seem happy and healthy. This family pays most of the expenses – with little help from outside.



Figure 9. The classroom

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.aiesec.or.id/>

We have a wonderful afternoon with the kids and the other volunteers. Today each of us has to present their dream in life. Many of the kids dream of becoming teachers or doctors, some martial arts masters and many other beautiful professions. Iosif says he wants to go to the moon ☺ - everybody laughs.



Figure 10. Iosif is good with kids

Hani is a special person who comes from a well off family that is able to provide her everything she dreams about. She chooses to reach out and help her community....if everybody would lend just a finger, not even an entire hand to the needy, the world would be a happier place.

It's already dark when we leave Hani's project and regroup back at her home. She's also a couch surfer host, but she's going out of town so we can't stay. I'm sending a text to another couch surfer I'm in touch with. He replies: "I'm going to Garuda for rafting tonight, wanna come?" We're dead tired but hey, let's do it. And so it starts a new adventure with Riyhan.

On the way to Garuda we get to know Riyhan. He graduated social welfare studies at UNPAD<sup>8</sup> (Padjadjaran University) and now is starting up two businesses. First a tourism agency offering out bound activities – like the rafting trip he's taking us to – and a CSR Consultant Company. He presents us his vision where CSR can be the engine behind Indonesia's development, and it's all very convincing. In his spare time he volunteers with a large NGO from Jakarta helping children develop through music.

<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padjadjaran\\_University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padjadjaran_University)

Each year they organize a big music festival in Jakarta. He's also part of a rescue/disaster relief group. Actually, later while we were in Bali, Riyhan was in Jakarta helping flood victims.

It's midnight when we park behind Garuda University. We meet Riyhan's friends who quickly become our friends. They tell us how around each university in Indonesia there is at least one group organizing out bound activities. To join the PANTERA group Riyhan stayed one week in the jungle, to pass a ritual of initiation. Also Riyhan has travelled all across Java and Bali through this network of groups, spending under \$2 per day. The friendship between Indonesians is amazing and it felt so good to be part of it. During the following days we went everywhere with Riyhan and met many of his friends. Indonesians are very easy going. You can just go to a local restaurant and when people smile at you, smile back at them; they will start a conversation, and there it is, new friends<sup>9</sup>.

So I was telling you Riyhan graduated from UNPAD. He still lives near the university campus, so we take one afternoon to visit it. I never expected what I see there. The UNPAD campus stretches on 175



Figure 11. UNPAD rectorat building

hectares of land. Free mini buses take you around alleys between high trees, sport fields, faculty buildings, laboratories and water fountains.

If surrounding environment has any effect on people's mindset – and I believe it does – then UNPAD must have the best effect.

You can see it in the way students organize – remember

the out bound groups – and the plans they have for the future. Also Indonesia ranks high in Social Capital<sup>10</sup>. You can find many academic research papers on the subject, but just from our empirical observation it's amazing how well people are able to organize and cooperate with each other. Remember the traditional community organization with village chief and so on, for example. And you'll see more example of social capital in the chapter about Central Java. But now let's see the social capital in action at UNPAD.

So during our previous visits with Hani we meet a couple of volunteers studying at UNPAD. We meet them again at UNPAD Campus and find more about what they do. They're planning a research trip for the next day to Pangalangan, a small village but a big producer of vegetables. They want to stay two weeks at Pangalangan to research for their final thesis at Agribusiness Faculty. But tomorrow they only

<sup>9</sup> At the time I'm writing this report I'm already in Malaysia for two weeks. And still sometimes I smile at people and I'm surprised they don't smile back.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.prosperity.com/#!/?asperrorpath=%2Frankings.aspx>

plan a first visit to set up contacts and find accommodation. Of course they extend an invitation to join and we accept. Perfect opportunity to investigate<sup>11</sup>!

Next day, wake up at 6:30, road madness to meeting point in city center then road madness again to Pangalangan. Once we got there every body gathered around us. Farmers, police, government representatives, liaison person between farmers and government, other friendly people. I can imagine a few countries where the farmers would gather to hit on the pretty student girls, but none of that in Pangalangan. By the way, Bandung and the area around are populated by Sundanese, a native ethnicity from Java, but distinct from the Javanese ethnicity. They have a way of greeting each other which shows mutual respect and friendship. Witnessing this for the first time strengthened the feeling these people come from a different world.

The farmers at Pangalangan are organized in a cooperative; they put their products together and sell them from the same place, giving them more leverage when dealing with buyers. From there the tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, chili and other vegetables go to local markets and export. We have a tour around the farms and green houses and the students get everything they aim from this trip. At the time you're reading this report they are in Pangalangan researching about crop rotation, distribution, supply chain management, product traceability and so on. And not only researching, they use their knowledge from university to help farmers where possible. The information goes both ways, from farmers to students and vice versa. For example Arvitta<sup>12</sup> works to map out the chain of intermediaries. One problem in Indonesia (and also in Romania and Malaysia, for example) is that products leave the farms at cheap prices but then go through the hands (or rather the trucks) of many intermediaries, reaching the market at very high prices. Building a more efficient distribution chain is in the best interest of both farmers and consumers.



Apart from learning all these things, we took dozens of pictures with the local people. They all have smartphones and when they see a foreigner they must have a picture together. And of course, we can't refuse their friendly smiles.

Figure 12. UNPAD students and farmers

<sup>11</sup> We were planning to investigate also about Industrial farming, but we simply did not have time, plus most industrial farming is done in Sumatra or Borneo, not Java. But this trip hit the spot for small farming business.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/arvitta.okta>

## Central Java Chapter

From Bandung to Yogyakarta we take an executive train, which are almost as good as the Norwegian trains. Expensive by Indonesian standards but ridiculously cheap compared to NSB. I check my email on board; we have already a detailed meeting plan (dates, times, contact numbers, addresses and directions) laid out by Aulia, a friend of Kestri. We arrive in Jogjakarta (also spelled Yogyakarta, or simply **Jogja** as locals call it) around 10<sup>th</sup> of January. New Year holidays are over so everyone was back in business. Here we met 3 organizations and 3 local communities. I'll split this chapter accordingly.

### The NGOs

#### BORDA

First evening in Jogja we met with BORDA<sup>13</sup>, an organization developing water and sanitation systems in ASEAN countries. It turns out to be a double meeting, with two BORDA staff and the couch surfing community in Jogja. The 'Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association' is a non-profit international development organization headquartered in Bremen, Germany and regional offices in India, Indonesia, and Tanzania and several project offices within the regions. In Indonesia they work together with the Ministry of Public Work, the Ministry of Health and an official environmental agency to meet the UN Millennium Goals regarding access to clean water and sanitation. BORDA designs waste water treatment systems<sup>14</sup> which are then built with government funding. BORDA surveys the project implementation, providing capacity building and training. All projects must have low running costs and low maintenance needs to make them sustainable. Of course the local community must also welcome the project.

We also ask DJ<sup>15</sup> - our host for this meeting – about the garbage problem in Indonesia. He says there is a problem with mentality; people think the garbage is the government's responsibility. In the same time the government does not invest enough in garbage collection systems as there are other urgent problems in Indonesia with higher priority. One of these priorities is water and sanitation and DJ reckons there is fast progress in this area. However, in a country of 240 million people there is a huge amount of work to be done.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.borda-sea.org/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.borda-net.org/fileadmin/borda-net/news/downloads/DEWATS\\_Guidebook\\_small.pdf](http://www.borda-net.org/fileadmin/borda-net/news/downloads/DEWATS_Guidebook_small.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.couchsurfing.org/people/oralalikaroaku/>





Figure 13. BORDA and couchsurfing community meeting in Yogyakarta

### DIAN DESA

Yayasan Dian Desa<sup>16</sup> or in English “light of the village foundation,” is a NGO active in community development activities in general, with a special focus on the development of appropriate technology. Christian Arisanti, one of Dian Desa’s managers told us about their current projects, especially about water sanitation. They use simple systems to filter and transport the water. Where gravity can’t do the job, they use a hydraulic ram pump which uses no electricity. This makes the systems cheap and easy to operate. You can see the same approach as BORDA. Also they focus on capacity building and training; the software is just as important as the hardware. Their versatile staff lives in local communities during the implementation of projects. This way they can work in the field with the people in the morning, and then do training courses in the afternoon. The implementation of a water sanitation projects takes between 6 to 18 months, depending on its scale. Dian Desa also provides training for other NGOs. They are one of the BINGOs (big NGOs) which have good connections with funding agencies like the Dutch Government, Japan Aid, Swiss NGOs, World Bank (which funds the cooking stove program), USAID, New Zealand, Australia, World Health Organization and UNICEFF.

After an hour of talking with Christina we go to a tour of Dian Desa’s grounds, guided by Utami and Rowena. First they take us across the street to a workshop making wallets, bags, belts and other fashion accessories from fish skin. This business brings funds to Dian Desa and also doubles the income of a fishing community.

<sup>16</sup> <http://diandesa.org/Home.html>

In the second workshop steel workers manufacture Dian Desa's water and sanitation systems. Close by there is a power plant model which runs on bio fuels. Farmers can burn bio waste to produce electricity. We keep walking past a collection of ceramic toilets and sinks to a new wing, still under construction. They build a research facility for testing fire stoves efficiency and pollution output. The clean cooking stove project receives a lot of attention in Indonesia, because it can make big improvements with very little resources in poor communities.

During this great tour we also discover the story of Rowena<sup>17</sup>. She was born in Philippines but her family moved to USA. After graduating she worked on interior design for Boeing. She had one of the best jobs in the world; in Seattle, one of the nicest cities in USA. Yet this job didn't make her happy, so she moved back to South East Asia. She arrived at Dian Desa through Volunteers in Asia<sup>18</sup> and she's now part of the staff. She is for sure an inspiring person.



Figure 14. Yayasan Dian Desa

## GAIA

Yayaysan Gaia<sup>19</sup> is a BINGO with a special story. It was started by 5 people who used to work with Dian Desa, but who decided they want a different type of organization. So they left Dian Desa and set up seven profitable businesses in Jakarta and Java, from a PR consultancy to an IT company to a tourism

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/rowsace>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.viaprograms.org/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.yayasan-gaia.org/>

resort. It took years to grow the companies and bring them into profit but this gives them now a steady cash flow to fund Gaia. It gives them total freedom to develop the projects they want, in the way they want. We spent five hours talking to Yudhi about Gaia. He's life story can become a series of movies. Here's the synopsis: he studied in Jogjakarta, Paris and London, worked for Dian Desa, the World Bank, a series of multinationals, consultant companies, and now is one of the people running Gaia and their businesses. He has this speech that keeps you charmed and listening for hours and hours, five hours in our case.

Yudhi told us about the water and sanitation projects which Gaia also implements. They also have a scholarship program helping children get higher education. Being financial independent gives them all the freedom to practice capacity building. Gaia spends a lot of time in local communities collaborating with them. They have a great philosophy of sharing and using open source knowledge and services.

They still have a strong network of contacts so it happens that at the end of the year a friend from a donor agency calls to say "we still have some funds to distribute, I know you're running some good projects, don't you write an application and submit it?" Most of these funds are used to provide disaster/emergency relief together with the help of 600 of volunteers.

We ask Yudhi why he does everything he does. He believes in leaving a footprint on our civilization. We all wondered at one point if we can have at least a small impact on the world around us. When we say goodbye to Yudhi we are sure we can make a big impact on our world.



Figure 15. The most inspiring meeting in our travel. At Gaia Foundation

## The Local Communities

Now, so you don't think all we did in Jogja was meetings, meetings and meetings here's some other things we did. Each day we met some nice local people from couchsurfing or fellow travelers. Oh wait, that's also meetings. We also explored the streets and met some local artists. Ok, fine, all we did was meetings.

So the local artists take us to a batik gallery. Batik<sup>20</sup> is a cloth that is traditionally made using a manual wax-resist dyeing technique. Keep in mind these products look amazing. So amazing that UNESCO designated Indonesian batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. We find out everything about how batik is made while serving tea. Then we look around and inquire about the price. Ridiculously expensive. Iosif and Alin make a deal buying batiks at half the original price. And that is still a rip off. The artists use good selling points like "it's your last chance, we close at 4pm. And it's the last day, we move to Sumatra tomorrow. Rent is expensive here and selling is not going well". Next day the artists are still there, closing at 8pm. Now let's move on to more serious meetings.

### Code slum

Next morning after the meeting with Gaia, one of Yudhi's friends comes to pick us up from our hotel. He's taking us to Code slum (read ciode), the only legally permitted slum in Jogjakarta. Pastor Yb. Mangunwijaya<sup>21</sup> (1929 - 1999) moved into this slum and together with the local community turned the place around. He is called by the people admiring his work a NGI: non-governmental individual. We walk around the slum streets which are cleaner than most of Jogjakarta's central neighborhoods. They have a beautiful meeting hall and a public library. Pastor Mangunwijaya won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1992 for this meeting hall.



We also meet Nomor, the village chief of Code slum. He is running for the local parliament of Jogjakarta with good chances to win a seat. It's really amazing that a regular man from a slum can run for parliament. It shows how close communities are in Java.

Figure 16. Nomor is the village chief of Code slum. He's running for the local parliament of Jogjakarta.

<sup>20</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batik>

<sup>21</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y. B. Mangunwijaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y._B._Mangunwijaya)

## Tlatah Bocah

Tlatah Bocah<sup>22</sup> is a community organization based in a village around Jogjakarta, close to the famous temple Borobudur. There are two ways to reach this organization: by taxi or by scooter. Taxi is of course out of our budget – just like Starbucks – but renting a scooter is only 3 euros per day. Let's ride into the Javanese traffic madness.

We make a first stop to Borobudur. It is impressive but overly touristic, especially because we visit during a local holiday. And the entrance fee is 8 times higher for foreigners than for locals.

Back on the scooters, stop for a quick lunch at local restaurant then ride to our meeting. Tlatah Bocah means Children World. We meet Yoko, a school teacher who volunteers at Tlatah Bocah. The first program we talk about is called Merapi Scholarship. The organization gives one small chicken to every child in a village, and teaches them to take care of the chicken. The children grow and breed the chickens; new baby chickens are given to new kids in new villages. Children can use the income to cover their school expenses. Thousands of chicken were given in a few dozen villages around Tlatah Bocah.

Their second program develops children by teaching them to play traditional Javanese instruments. Each year in August they hold a big festival. We try the instruments and discover sounds we never heard before. We ask Yoko if they can play for us. Of course they can. You'll have to hear these sounds in our upcoming video.

We left Tlatah Bocah with the firm assurance their door is always open. We're in Indonesia for more than two weeks already, but it's still amazing how warm these people are. It only takes a few hours to feel a genuine friendship with Yoko.



And since we're talking about friendship, by this time my Indonesian phone is getting more messages every day than my Romanian phone would get on my birthday. Just from our Indonesian friends checking how we're doing.

Figure 17. Our friends at Tlatah Bocah

<sup>22</sup> [www.tlatahbocah.org/](http://www.tlatahbocah.org/)

## Sukunan Village

Sukunan is a small village just outside Jogjakarta. Most of its residents have jobs in the city and the rest are farmers. Here we meet Iswanto, the man who found the solution to Java's garbage problem. Iswanto studied environmental health and medicine; he was a university lecturer at the time he designed a waste management system.

In 1997 farmers started to complain about big piles of plastic garbage lying in their fields. That's what people were doing with the garbage: throw it in the fields. In 2002 Iswanto started to apply selective recycling in his house and his wife started to make hand craft products from used plastic. At a lecture in 2004 he met an Australian professor who funded the program implementation for Iswanto's village.

Today we walk around the village with Iswanto and everything is perfectly clean. It's like a tropical version of a Norwegian village. There's a recycling station for every few houses. 80 compost stations across the village turn bio waste into fertilizer. 85% of the recycled plastic is sold, bringing income into the village. They also have a waste water treatment system installed by Dian Desa. Out of 300 families, 87% take part in the recycling system. Iswanto put a lot of effort into education. They organize educative competition and games for children and Iswanto goes door to door to talk with the people.

Iswanto works full time promoting his system in Indonesia and abroad. He receives support from the local government, JAICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), universities, NGOs and other stakeholders. 190 villages around Jogjakarta replicate Iswanto's system.



It is truly inspiring to listen to Iswanto as he takes us step by step through his program: from his house packed with recycling systems, across the village streets, to a meeting hall where Australian high school students learn about Sukunan, to his future plans for spreading the system.

**Figure 18. Iswanto introducing us to his recycling system. It can be a model for any rural community.**

The meetings we had in Jogjakarta were truly inspiring. I hope this impression will last throughout our travel and project, to our return to Norway and to the time we start putting our plans in action.