

May 2018

Where to begin, it's been another busy month!

Lombok's Forgotten Children & Endri's Foundation – I found an organisation putting a call out for donations of clothing, shoes, bedding, rice and funds for the poor people of Lombok during Ramadan. I think – 1800 students, many teachers, I should get something from that & I immediately recruited a teacher to assist me with coordination. In 10 days, we'd collected perhaps 1 small op-shops worth of clothing, shoes etc, and many small bags of rice + 1,200,000.00Rp.

An Aussie, helping another Aussie to facilitate Indonesians to help Indonesians.



Rob & Giovanni - I had some friends travelling through Indonesia visit for 2 days – we went to Selong Balanak for a quick swim before heading to Kuta to climb a mountain before the sun went down as both keen photographers – this little mountain was covered in monkeys & goats which I thought fascinating. I did not enjoy the descent back in the dark with my clumsy feet, and for 2 days I enjoyed the easy conversation & every word being understood.

Poster Comp winners – so Poster Comp completed, all went to plan, though as used as an 'assessment' tool, it was easy to see that students here don't have a full understanding of the impact of their garbage problem here in Lombok. Though there was lots of colour & a buzz in the air with such big prize money at stake. Facebook friends & teachers all voted the winners.



Mangkung Village – so long story short! On my friends' trip to Kuta for photography, I met a friend of Teacher Irwandi's, Lalu, as he'd purchased a teaching resource for me in South Lombok. He literally begged me to come & teach in his village – how could I say no? A few weeks later after many discussions haggling to get the cheapest car/driver possible, the teachers decided that as Linda is going south to village/beach in a car, they wanted to come also. So I make this work for the village – I will pay for car & driver, but, 4 teachers - we all teach, deal? Plus my beast English speaking student, whom I've grown quite fond of. After teaching, we will go to the beach. What an amazing day it was – we taught, they made us lunch, climbed trees to provide us with fresh coconuts, they took us on a tour around the village & I met an innovative man making bamboo straws. At about 2pm, when my local friends were appearing quite impatient at the time I was taking, we headed to Selong Balanak for a much needed refreshing swim. Selong Balanak is paradise! And I promised to go back again to teach in the village.



Function at school – so I never 100% understand explanations for functions at school – but their translations I find endearing & at times even comical. We had visitors from elsewhere in Indonesia come visit during ‘education week’, we even have a public holiday for education – go figure! So there was lots of preparations, even I had to wear traditional clothing – what, put more clothes on, on top of my other clothes – eek! When they arrived there was lots of noise, traditional dancing, and a lot of speeches & then they left! Another amazing day at school in paradise.



EDUCATION WEEK – I’m advised almost at the 11th hour that SMP7 is in a ‘spelling bee’, ‘speaking’ and ‘story-telling’ competitions – geez Louise! Stressed to get all student documents edited (spelling, grammar & sentence structure) & teach them or closely sounding like correct pronunciation. Poor students – they were stressed & anxious & were learning everything by memory as they don’t speak English (a constant battle in the classrooms), needless to say, they all failed. The difference being, the other students in the contests spoke conversational English. I told my teacher that as teachers, ‘we failed our students’, even though they tried hard, they didn’t have a chance. Little to no preparation, engaging me to help too late & we MUST start speaking English in the classrooms.



We have another 2 coming up in June & August & this time we’re doing it differently. We have begun the planning now!

WED – for weeks we’ve been saying World Environment Day, now we say, next week! It hasn’t gone according to plan, we have no sponsors aside from one in Australia – I offered these funds as a match, dollar for dollar. I had to leave it to teachers to do the proposal & follow up, but unfortunately a beach cleanup holds very little value here, so no banners, t-shirts or water bottles, we are having badges made instead. We do however have the local media involved, we have met with the local council, we have a radio interview next Monday, we have the sanitation Dept picking up our garbage post cleanup & we have the recycling (plastics) being picked up & delivered to the local recycling person and the military are transporting 60 students & 10 Teachers on the day. And as disappointing as it is, it’s all about education, not t-shirts, banners & water bottles.

To add to that – today I had a meeting with the man with all the power here in Mataram, **The H. Didi Sumardi (Leader of The House of Rep/Chief Chairman of the City of Mataram)**. We discussed the garbage – how did Lombok come to be covered in garbage, the Indonesian Gov’t Waste Management strategy, Indonesians consumption of single-use plastic, introducing initiatives for sellers & warungs, finding sustainable & affordable alternatives, education & awareness in every school, university & workplace. He says he will join us on WED & that he would like to meet again to discuss further. We’ll see, I’m under no illusion, he is a politician after all!

RAMADAN – so it’s the most important month of the Islamic year here & wow! The changes are very obvious – first is that I don’t get to eat lunch with my teacher friends. The warungs are closed through the day. The mosques are louder & the prayer times are longer, I worry about them not drinking water in this climate, sometimes it’s that quiet here, I think I’m the only person around. Ramadan & fasting controls everything. Whilst it’s not for me, I’m really soaking up this religious experience.

Ahmed – on a couple of occasions whilst on foot, up near the waterway (clogged choc-o-block with garbage), I became very aware of a man in a vacant piece of land behaving in a threatening manner. First time I had a student with me as we were learning about garbage & what it's made up of. She became quite scared & when I asked she replied with 'he's crazy'. Weeks later & I'm now engaging my local laundry owner about the garbage, & the man is there again, & again behaving aggressively. I asked Haerul what is his story – I get the same, 'he is crazy, his wife died & he went crazy', to which my eyes filled & I suggested to Haerul, this man needs help & kindness to which Haerul replied 'I need to pray now Linda'. So I discreetly got a pic of this man & asked my teachers at school – who knew of him, or his story – I got the same response! Hmmm. I asked my friend Irwandi to help me help this man – longer story short, by using 'empathy', I was able to get both Irwandi & Haerul to understand why this man would be angry – once this was achieved, how to help?

The three of us approached him, I could see he was tense, but accepting. 2 hours later & getting his story - & what a sad story, he is homeless, he lost his way after he lost his wife (perhaps depression), his family & community ostracized him, hence he is living on this land with only the sarong around his waist, a skin condition (perhaps from no bathing), little food that is begged for, blind in 1 eye from a beating & completely broken.

So Haerul offered some clothing & I covered a weeks dinners for him, just to start – and that Irwandi & I will check in on him weekly. He also has a wound on his face that may need a cleanup. So at the end of last Friday, this man has 5 promised evening meals and some clothing, 2 men were educated in empathy, compassion & mental health & we turned the face of 'angry' into one of humanity & I slept better that night.



Gees 3 pages, sorry Craig.

So finishing this off, this is only the condensed version of the major events for the past month, every day is an adventure, every day involves some sort of education, even at the Hypermart where they know automatically now, seeing my face means 'no plastic', or at the local seller, selling drinks they call me Linda 'no plastic'. ☺

The monsoons have ceased & the temperature is increasing – much more comfortable without the heavy, thick humidity.

I am still the main attraction wherever I go, I still don't like it & so I've begun asking for 20,000Rp for every pic they want of me, hahahaha!

Life is hectic, meaningful & adventurous. Roll on June.....