

July 2018

Well July has brought frightening new experiences & a slightly different direction!

July we're on a much needed break from school – it's been a great time to focus on other education and projects elsewhere.

PROJECTS:

Community: I had made contact with the Australian ladies running a bar/restaurant on the beach in Senggigi offering education on 'plastic pollution' for their staff at which they jumped at – they advised that their senior staff person would be in contact with me. Days later contact made, email addresses shared & I wait further instructions to meet to plan.

Meanwhile I plod away at my PPP in English & Bahasa.

School: I meet with Teachers at school to begin planning 'plastic pollution' presentation – my hope is to deliver this presentation to all students, all teachers & hopefully at least 1 parent of each student. However the difficulty lies with commitment from the Indonesian teachers support to assist me. I am learning that agreeing to something doesn't necessarily mean it will happen.

So we plan to deliver one evening session per week, and with 4 of the best English speaking teachers each committing to one evening session per month with me to translate, but covering others if one cannot make. They agree, yet I am nervous. We look at months & discuss my visa commitments, returning to Australia & length of time for this project, which will be at the very least, 6 months. It's a big undertaking.

Teachers: That saying – “if Mohammad won't go to the mountain, the mountain will come to him” comes to mind when I see teachers walking out of Alfamart carrying plastic bags with 1 or 2 items – I remember I have donated funds leftover from KESAB – I will get cloth bags made & somehow get some printing on them. I ask one of my teachers to assist me to buy some Batik from Cakra Mkt (who doesn't want a beautiful batik cloth bag?) & I start the process – speak to tailor in local village & plan size of bags – find a printer to make me printed pockets – “Katakan tidak pada plastik” = “Say NO to Plastic” & everything is rolling. I can't wait to see the finished product!



This little crowd at the door of the tailor's shop, just to see bule (foreigner), and then this magical moment on the steps of the mosque on the way out – unplanned & unprovoked!

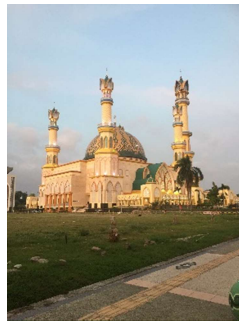


VISA: If anything tests my patience here it's mostly the Immigration process – its tedious, it's unpredictable, expensive & time consuming! This month was no different except, the officials processing know my face & position here, but grant me any favours by making it any simpler or quicker – NO!!!

Ahmed – so I begged for help from my friends by way of some financial support to provide him meals – at the very least. YES – 2 friends generously donated \$80. (\$30 + \$50). I bought him a months' worth of dinners & bought him a toothbrush & toothpaste, soap, towel & a comb & water. Haerul & I took them to him. I note Endri did not fulfill his commitment by dropping in on him to provide motivation to bathe & brush teeth.

I look to see Ahmed every day I ride past & every visit to the laundry. I also note that Ahmed sits for hours flicking a stick – I pointed this out to Haerul, suggesting he cross the road every few days to have a chat with him, however it was met with indifference. I wish I could do for this man, I wish I could magically get these people to understand 'mental health'. But for now I have to be content he has food in his belly.

Playing tourist – I've made friends with my neighbour Farjrin, a sweet woman who has 3 daughters & whose husband works away. She asked me if I'd visited to Islamic Centre yet, to which I had not & so one afternoon, we headed of – my oh my, what a spectacular building. Most of the mosques here are quite spectacular in a magical, Aladdin'ish way & the Islamic Centre was a sight to behold inside & out. I found it difficult to close my mouth!



Last but certainly not least: 29th July, a quiet Sunday morning & I'm woken by my bed literally rocking & rolling. My mind thinks, wow it's really windy, but then I realise my windows are closed. Then I see the house is moving, I grab a sarong & run to the door trying to maintain my balance as the floor was also rocking. When I open it, I see my neighbours squatting on the little road out front & they beckon me to come, still not knowing what was happening. One says in English 'earthquake & then Mt Agung'. My god, can a volcano on another island cause this – everyone is frightened & praying loudly to 'Allah'.

The earth stops, and people are still praying, we're shaking & I think, wow, my 1st earthquake & how scary it is to see your home actually swaying. Twenty minutes later we part & go back to our homes. I look for damage, things have come down in my kitchen & furniture has moved. I am shaken & I've no idea that this was just the beginning.

Aftershocks continued constantly throughout the day & with each one, everyone is running outside. I spend most of the day looking for information & researching earthquakes in Indonesia. I access the local BMKG site that records 'gempabumi' (earthquakes) & learn, we've just had a M6.5 earthquake. I also learn there is considerable damage in North Lombok & many deaths. My god!!!!

And so July 2018 ends with a big bang!