



SEKOLAH BINA CITA UTAMA SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

'UNITY IN DIVERSITY' SCHOOL CONCERT

Kalimantan May 2007



Fennysia, a Grade 8 student in Dayak costume.

The BCU school concert was held in December in the MSC building, Rungan Sari. The evening was a magical event of color, music and food that was attended by about 150 parents, relatives and Rungan Sari residents.

The students from grades 1-10 were dressed beautifully in traditional Indonesian costumes as they sang Dayak, Indonesian and English songs, as well as some traditional Christmas carols. Primary students also performed a traditional Dayak dance.



The atmosphere was happy and festive but relaxed. Parents brought food and drinks to share, which turned into an amazing banquet of Indonesian food. The theme of the evening was "Unity in Diversity"; the Indonesian national motto, which is also a reflection of our School that has both Indonesian and western students and a combination of both curricula.

Brianna, one of our volunteer teachers did a fantastic job decorating the place with student art work for the parents to see. Reporters from TVRI Palangkaraya and Kalteng Post came to cover the event. The concert was broadcast in Kalimantan as well as in Jakarta, much to the delight of the students!

Our **MISSION** is to develop a high quality learning environment which nurtures and educates children so that as adults, they will be able to make real and positive contributions to the development of their communities and the world.

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VOLUNTEERING ENTHUSIASM AND ENERGY



Owen

The 2006-2007 school year has been greatly enriched by the presence of our team of volunteers, most of whom are now moving on. Their energy enthusiasm and skills will be missed by all of us at the school and in the wider community of Rungan Sari.

Raphaela Schipper joined us from the French International school in London and has spent the last year working as the high school coordinator, teaching, developing the high school curriculum and providing training to our local teachers.

Brianna Bryson-Haynes arrived with Raphaela in July 06, and has been teaching art, ESL (English as a second language) and sport in both the primary and high schools. Steven Bryson-Haynes, Brianna's brother, arrived in February from the UK. At BCU he teaches Math, craft and sports. We are delighted that Steven has decided to continue his volunteer work at BCU until December.

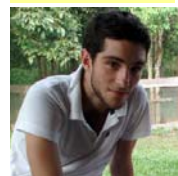
Owen Riparetti arrived in October 2006 from Santa Barbara, California, and has been teaching high school science and English literature.

Lalita Geiger volunteered for two months at BCU after she finished Year 12 in Australia. She taught psychology and health and also helped the high school students on the Global Mercury Project.

Each of our volunteers have commented on having experienced great personal and inner growth during their time in Kalimantan and are leaving with a feeling of having received more than they've given. I'm very grateful that this is the case because their contribution has been immense. All us at BCU wish them the very best for the future. *Karim MacDonald*



Lalita



Steven



Raphaela & Brianna

FARIDAH WINS A PLACE ON AUSTRALIAN STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM



Faridah (left) with Brianna

Faridah Alsa is a young Dayak assistant teacher at BCU and also a student at the University of Palangkaraya. This month she applied to a student exchange program and was chosen as the only recipient out of the whole of Central Kalimantan to go to Australia in September.

I asked her how the selection process was and why she was chosen. She said that she had to do four different tests as well as an interview. During the interview she found it very natural to answer the questions in English as she is used to speaking English in the BCU school. She also added that having worked with Mardiah Gleeson (from LA) using Dayak motifs in the arts and craft classes at the school, had given her new skills and a lot of self-confidence.

We feel very proud of Faridah and happy for the opportunity that's offered to her.

Utami Geiger

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

BCU now has two scholarship students that are being sponsored by two different groups in Australia and two students on half scholarship that are sponsored by other donations.

Cristi Devi, our original scholarship student is being sponsored by several donors and Subud Adelaide South. Cristi is one of the most enthusiastic and hardworking students in the school. She has made huge progress since starting at BCU. (see profile on right)

Subud Perth, together with Laksar Burra, are sponsoring a new scholarship for Susilawati, the six year old daughter of a family who live in Rungan Sari.

Her parents are originally from Sumatra and came to Kalimantan ten years ago. Susilawati Hapsari (called Sila for short) was born in a neighboring village and attended grade 1 at the village school. She is very excited about coming to BCU and is also a bit nervous, which is understandable as she does not yet speak any English.

We are very grateful to all our scholarship sponsors, and Subud Adelaide South and Subud Perth for making it possible for these students to have this unique opportunity to learn English and to have quality education.

If you are interested in helping a village child have this opportunity, please contact Utami Geiger or Bachrun Bustillo at: yaysan@bcu-school.org



Scholarship student, Cristi Devi (right)

CRISTI DEVI

"This kid is making so much progress, coming, as she did, into BCU at Grade 6 level from the Indonesian school system, that you really do start thinking in exponential curves.

I'm told that when she first arrived, she wanted to be a 'maid' (a common job here, and very low on the scale) ; well, she'd make a pretty fine 'National Director of General Medicine' or 'Lady President'."

Felix Hude, Cristi's English Teacher 2006

From Cristi's Report Card...

An excellent year. Nobody pays more attention nor makes more effort than Cristi. She is lively in class discussions, and is not afraid to ask questions/raise ideas. A first class student and a pleasure to teach.

•**Focus:** Keep going and the hard work will pay off. Cristi has a big future.

•**Attendance/organisation:**
Excellent organisational skills.

• **Grade: A+**



Cristi Devi and Robi presenting at the school concert

SUSILAWATI HAPSARI



Susilawati with her parents Pak Hari Susilo and Ibu Murtiana

Susilawati outside her family home with her sister & aunt.



Utami Geiger is the Chairperson of the Bina Cita Utama Foundation and works tirelessly as a volunteer as head of Administration.

The years unfold with such speed, and so many changes have happened almost unnoticed on a day to day basis. When I look back 4 years ago, how we started the home schooling centre occupying just 3 rooms on the side of the latihan hall building, the only students were the children of the residents of Rungan Sari. It was from that time when the possibility of setting up a proper school became more real.

From a home school centre of nine children to a public school of 23 students in our 1st year, now our second year is almost coming to the end we have 33 students. Currently we have twelve new enrolments which hopefully will reach twenty by July, to bring our total number of students to over fifty when the new academic year begins in July. Our campus occupies all 6 rooms around the latihan hall, and the Siregars' house as the high school building, administration office, computer room, and small assembly hall.

The core to our progress is a result of the dedication and enthusiasm of our teachers, staff and volunteers. A student who recently moved to Jakarta to complete her final high school years commented on this. "Our teachers at BCU are so much more dedicated, helpful and sincere than those at my new school."

Late last year we held a meeting with the parents to tell them that we would have to increase the school fees. The intent of the meeting was to explain to them the 'financial crisis' facing the school and how we would go about in covering the deficit of the school i.e. increasing school fees, marketing, fundraising etc. What impressed me was the response from the parents. They were extremely supportive; not in big financial terms but with a lot of moral support and ideas. They were also very encouraging and one of them explained how important the school is and that it should be considered as a Provincial asset, because this is the first and only international standard school for students in the whole of Central

Kalimantan. They suggested we increase our marketing and publicity program to let the wider public know about the school in order to increase the student numbers.

They understood the struggle we were facing and had no objection to the increase in the school fees. They also mentioned their relief and gratitude at having this school, where their children can really learn and study subjects more in depth compared to the Indonesian national curriculum which emphasizes more the quantity of subjects taught rather than quality.

As part of our effort to improve our financial situation by recruiting more students, we organized two open houses in the school grounds in April and participated in three different public events in Palangkaraya. The BCU student choir performed at a Dayak Cultural Festival, where they sang Dayak, Indonesian and English songs. They also performed at the opening of the Palangkaraya Mall and then handed out leaflets to people in the audience. We also had a stand at the Expo held to celebrate the 50th birthday of the Province of Central Kalimantan.

BCU students have also been very busy throughout the year with a variety of projects that reach out into the wider community. In October the high school students studied the impact of mercury used by the small-scale miners on the environment and on human health. Sumali Agrawal, who was running the Global Mercury Project, a project of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) in cooperation with Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta, asked our students to be involved in disseminating the information to the local school children in the mining village of Kereng Pangi (about 50km from Rungan Sari).

For about one month they studied the information and made descriptive and colorful posters in Bahasa Indonesia. Our high school students then visited the local high school and made a presentation about the dangers of mercury. (see article by Raphaela and Lalita for the full story)

In February, Raphaela Schipper our high school coordinator was invited to be a speaker at a seminar organized by the Math and Physics Department of the University of Palangkaraya. She presented a paper on "Qualities

of Successful Learners" to about 100 students and lecturers. The response was enormous, as she presented the paper in a lively, fun and interactive discussion, quite different than the norm here where you get very bored.

Another school outreach program was the proposal by Chandra, Miranda and Adriani, to teach English lessons to the village children. Although originally intended for their soccer friends, it turned out that the boys were too shy, so the children of our household staff and our local village children came forward. Chandra has now 8 students between 9 and 22 years old. We hope to extend this program in the coming months as we have received a great deal of interest from the local people.

All of these activities and interactions with the broader community help us to strengthen our ties with the people of Kalimantan by bringing something that is different to the norm found here.

Olivia Reksodipoetro, Hannah Baerveldt and Ala Sulistyono from YUM (Foundation for Noble Work) visited the school in March and we had a great meeting in which ideas, experiences and hopes for the future were shared. They put us in contact with the AusAID office in Jakarta, which is an Australian Government program to supply volunteers from Australia to Indonesia. We are currently working on applying for Australian teachers to come and work at the school through this program. If there are any Australian teachers that are interested in joining this program in the future, please contact us and we can nominate you for this program.

In setting up a school, there is always so much more that needs to be done, but at the same time when we look back to see where we started we feel a sense of achievement and reality that encourages and motivates us to be patient and persevere through the challenging times.

We are so grateful for the generosity of so many people around the world in helping this project to bring quality education to Central Kalimantan. You have made it all possible.

Thank you for your support.

A BCU STUDENT AND A TEACHER

By Chandra MacDonald Grade 8

Around November last year I wrote a proposal to the BCU School Board asking if Adriani & Miranda (Geiger) and me were allowed to teach English to some boys from the local village across the road from Rungan Sari. Our proposal was approved, and the boys said they would come. Sadly, after photocopying all the books for the lessons, our future students changed their minds and said they were too shy.

Adriani, Miranda and I found this very disappointing. Why hadn't they wanted to learn English? Why didn't they realize that it would probably help their future if they could speak the language, especially because of all the unemployment here in Kalimantan? Most of the boys had left school at the age of 12-14, so their only chances for jobs were to be laborers earning \$3 a day. Unfortunately we had no choice but to accept their decision.

Before we had started the lessons we were given some money from a big Australian family to go towards books and photocopying and any other expenses that we might need to cover for the future lessons. The money was much appreciated because we knew the students had no money to pay for the books. Thank you to that wonderful family!!

Not long after the lessons were turned down, I heard of a very poor lady from the village across the road, who had two daughters around my age who were really eager to learn English. I gladly offered to teach them and we started having lessons twice a week after school. Since I am a seriously inexperienced teacher and not marvelous at speaking Indonesian and their English at first was very limited, our classes were always very amusing. We would sit either on the floor or at a table learning from each other, me improving my Indonesian and them learning English, laughing for hours.

One of us would always seem to say some thing in the wrong order or not make sense that we would be completely stuck and I couldn't understand them or them not understand me. Some times the dictionary would have a mistake which would leave us on the ground in hysterics. My favorite example

was when I was trying to teach them how to say what their favorite vegetable was. The eldest student who is 2 years older than me, said "my favorite vegetable is ka-kun". I had never heard of that so I asked her what it was. Because she didn't know what it was in English she looked it up in the Indonesian/English dictionary. Then when she had found it she said "Oh my favorite vegetable is frog". I wasn't sure if frog was what she was really trying to say so I along with her younger sister told her what frog really meant.

When she realized what she had just

the original proposal allowing us to use the school. Our first lesson was kind of tricky, because now there were students from ages nine to 22 at all different levels. Some of them could not even say "My name is " But any way it seemed to go OK. (I hope). I asked one of my original students to help me translate some of the things I was trying to say in to Indonesian which made things easier.

I now have eight students in total who I really hope will benefit from these lessons. I now can really see the difficulties of teaching which I



Chandra and her English students

said she was like "No no no no! I hate frog, I not eat frog, ooops, sorry sorry". After that none of us could stop laughing and that's what we did for the rest of that lesson, just laugh about frogs. And it's funny still to this day we joke about frogs to one another if ever we start talking about vegetables. It turned out that ka-kun is really just like a type of leaf that they cook here.

The lessons with the three of us carried on for four months until other girls started asking to join our lessons and I decided it would probably be more fun with more students anyway. Although I must admit I was rather nervous before I had my first lesson with the new students along with the original ones.

Because there was now more than two students, my Dad suggested that we held the lessons at the school, since we already had the permission from

never realized before. Do you know how hard it is to make a lesson fun? Seriously it is hard!

There are so many nice girls around here that have very little but want to learn English so much, that it is really hard to say no. I guess that's why I'm doing it even though I have no experience and can't really teach.

Just seeing that they really want to learn is motivating me. Also I think I'm really learning a lot in these classes as well. My Indonesian is improving. For example today they taught me how to say in Indonesian, "I'm single, but I'm happy" !

I think its also boosting my confidence and is helping me to communicate and become friends with the local village kids.

BCU HIGH SCHOOL GLOBAL MERCURY PROJECT

Last Friday the High School students of BCU went on a field trip to the town of Kareng Panggi. On the way there, many students felt nervous, because they knew that they were about to give a presentation, in Bahasa Indonesia, to some one hundred students of a local school of a similar age as them.

In fact, this trip was only the very end of an interesting, unusual and very inspiring learning experience they had this term. It all started when Howard Ray, a science teacher from the UK, came to visit



Robi and Christi working on their posters with Ibu Raphaella.

Rungan Sari. He kindly offered to do some volunteer teaching, and taught the students about the geology of Kalimantan, and in particular the gold that is found locally. He explained all about the process of artisanal mining that takes place in many parts of the world, and in particular in the direct vicinity of our school.

When Howard left, his teaching was followed up by two further speakers, Mansur Geiger and Kevin, a geologist who works for the United Nations on the Global Mercury Project.

Mansur has been active in mining here in Kalimantan for the last 25 years. He had a lot to tell us about the social aspects of the local mining. He explained all the different factors that make the life of miners here so difficult. For one, they spend 8 hours a day in the burning sun, digging big sand pits. But what is

worse, is that the mercury that they use to separate the tiny gold particles from the sand at the end of their day, is slowly poisoning them and their families and neighbours, as well as the rivers and the fish of Kalimantan.

Mansur also explained that many of the miners in areas such as Kareng Panggi, are actually families from other islands such as Java, that moved here in search of a better life. The sad truth is that they end up living in very poor conditions, and rarely even make enough money to visit their families elsewhere. This means that their entire life becomes based around the mercury contaminated regions that they work so hard in, and many end up getting sick.

Dr Kevin is a geologist from Canada who has been involved in the Global Mercury Project, (a UNIDO, WHO, and UNDP combined project) which aims to not only educate people around the world about the dangers of mercury use, but also help find and implement effective alternatives. It is impossible, he explained, to just abolish mercury use. The fact is that some 100 million people around the world, in Asia, South America and Africa, rely on mercury based gold mining for their livelihood.

If it were to be made illegal, the work would just be continued underground, and it would become even harder to offer assistance in preserving people's health and our global living environment. The simple fact is that all these miners are people like the rest of us. They need to eat and have a place to live. So according to Kevin, the only way to help miners improve their situation, is to offer them

alternatives which in one way or other make them able to earn more money. When people have become set in their way of doing their work, this is a powerful tool for motivating change, possibly the only effective way. Some may think that just education, and being faced with mercury poisoning (loss of teeth, loss of memory, cough, tremors, madness, kidney problems, etc) might convince miners to work in a different way, and not use mercury. But from experience, this is simply not true. As explained before, in one way or other, these people need to earn a living (Indonesia has a 40% unemployment rate). But also, the symptoms of mercury poisoning only



Ibu Brianna working with Adriani

occur gradually, and are often blamed on other factors, or denied altogether.

Class discussions about these social challenges that people face in Kalimantan amongst other places, have been a valuable learning

experience. What really brings it home is that, apart from the fact that all this is happening just an hour away from our school, some types of fish that are contaminated with mercury, might be on their menu that same evening. It is especially the larger carnivorous and omnivorous types of fish, which are higher up in the food chain, which have shown high levels of mercury. But it was also explained to the students that fish is a very healthy source of protein, and that as long as certain species



BCU high school students (at the front of the room) presenting their research to students from the Indonesian High school.

are avoided, it is important that both the miners and the students themselves continue to eat fish as part of a healthy diet.

After having listened to the wonderful and interesting presentations by Howard, Mansur and Kevin, the next phase of our project began. Sumali Agrawal, the locally based representative / field worker / project coordinator of the Global Mercury Project, provided the students with a varied package of resources, explaining further about the mining process, the use of mercury, and the social, environmental and health issues involved with this. It also contained explanations and recommendations with regards to the safer use of mercury.

Along with this, came an invite to the school to be involved with educating children their own age who's parents are in the mining business and who may well be confronted with the effects of mercury in their daily lives. Sumali asked us to produce information posters, showing not only the effects of mercury use on health and environment, but also solutions where possible.

The students came up with some fantastic poster ideas that materialized into true works of art. Stephen and Chandra made a poster explaining that using retorts can save lives and money. A retort is a contraption which condenses mercury vapor after the gold/mercury amalgam is burnt to purify the gold. By trapping it, it can be used again the next day (thus saving money) but more importantly, the poisonous vapor won't enter the living environment of the gold shop owners (thus saving lives).

Christy made a poster showing how mercury enters and accumulates in the food chain. She also listed fish types that are safe to eat. Fenny, Robi and Cristi made a poster explaining how the animals of Kalimantan are affected (losing their habitat in case of orangutans, for example, but also eating contaminated food in case of fish, birds and many others) with some recommendations for improvements (assigning limited amounts of land for mining, and preserving forest buffers to ensure that the mercury contaminated water from amalgamation ponds cannot get washed into the main rivers of Central Kalimantan).

Miranda and Cynthia made a poster explaining how, as mercury enters the atmosphere, it becomes a global

problem. It doesn't just come from mining either: the burning of coal in power plants is a large factor too and this happens around the world. This problem can only be solved if every country does their part, they explained. Last but not least, Adriani and Nia decided to explain all about the health effects of mercury contamination in people.

When the posters were finished, accompanying speeches were written, in Bahasa Indonesia, in order to present them to the school we visited in Kareng Pangi. Everyone worked very hard, and while the nerves were understandable, it turned out that there had been no need for them. The presentations were well received and a great success. Sumali was incredibly grateful for BCU's contribution to his project.

The students had a real sense of achievement, knowing that the work they had done might actually contribute to the well-being of their fellow Kalimantanese. I myself, as their teacher, certainly felt very, very proud of them all. I too, learned an incredible amount from this process we went through.

After our presentations, Sumali took us to see the desert-like landscape in which the miners were working as they

time. It makes you realize what the miners go through, working there 8 hours a day.

The treat at the end was ice creams, and lunch at a local warung. I don't think any of us ordered fish.



Students visit the illegal mining site at Kareng Pangi and witness the devastation to the forest.



Indonesian high school students watching the BCU students presentation.

are every day. Before this area had been primary forest, but now there are sand dunes and amalgamation ponds for as far as you can see in most directions. It has a ghostly atmosphere. Even with umbrellas to protect us from the sun, we got incredibly hot in a very short space of

Written by: Bu Raphaela, (High School coordinator and teacher), and Lalita Geiger, (teaching assistant and proud former student of BCU).

SQUEEZE OTAK, CLIMB MOUNTAIN!

*The classroom
experience at BCU.*

by Felix Hude

“OK, write a report on ‘Film-making at BCU,’” I announce to my year 8 English class. They know all about making films because we’ve been making them all year, which is also why I chose the subject - nothing like digging into your own experience.

‘Observe, know, communicate!’ has been our motto since Day One: how to find what you know, how to know when you’ve found it, and then, once all that’s in place, how to communicate it. It’s a big mountain to climb, if you really think about it, but we’ve been cracking away, day in, day out, in various guises and forms, and ‘report writing’ is our latest set of crampons.

“Cristi, you’re on the board!” I say, handing her the whiteboard marker, and it’s obvious Mr Felix means business today and is leaving no room for ‘role negotiation’. ‘Running the Show’ is also another thing I’ve been training them up to do, and slowly but surely, we’re getting there.

Cristi is one of our scholarship students, a local Dayak girl, and a real success story. A room full of Cristis on a Monday morning would be a welcome sight. Up she jumps, walks out to the front and writes ‘Film-making at BCU’ in big, clear letters at the top of the board. Underneath that she writes, without prompting, ‘Who’s the audience and why are we writing this report?’

The students know this routine well and there’s a pulse of anticipation in the room, a feeling of ‘here we go again’. We’ve written a lot of reports, not because I like to see children suffer, but because they provide a good structure and a clear direction for *thinking*, which is what we’re really doing.

We don’t have a lot of things at BCU. No internet hook-up with San Diego Middle School (we talk about orangutans, they talk about dolphins), no spider’s web experiments sent aloft in hermetically sealed plastic

Tupperware containers on board the Space Shuttle, and no science lab, for that matter.

What we do have is a small group of low-paid and voluntary teachers coming in from the West and engaging in a deeply personal dialogue with a bunch of students who have seen nothing, and I really do mean *nothing*, like it before. The local school system is like something out of the Dark Ages, and must be seen to be believed. ‘Jaw-dropping’ and ‘mind-numbing’ are two emotive descriptions that come to mind, and breeding freethinking, creatively independent young adults that system is not.

(Apologies if I’ve just offended a large slice of the reading public, but as I tell my students, personal observation is not necessarily going to win you friends in some quarters – it goes with the territory.)

When I first arrived at Rungan Sari over 12 months ago now and began teaching at the school, Karim said to me that ‘even on a bad day when you feel things aren’t going well, never underestimate what you bring these kids, just by being you’. “Your experience, your approach to problem solving, your ability to think on the run,” he went on, “all of this is what really gets taught here, and in the Kalimantan context in which we live, it’s invaluable.”

I tell the kids who this report is for: Grade 6 kids who will be doing film next year: what’s it all about, and what can they expect?

“Ok, Cristi, squeeze Fenny’s *otak!*” I announce, and so we set about defining film-making as we know it. ‘Squeeze the Otak!’ is code for squeeze the thoughts out of someone’s brain, ‘otak’ being Indonesian for ‘brain’. It’s taken some doing, but they’re finally getting the hang of it. Viz.:

Cristi: Fenny, define ‘film-making’. (Everybody turns to look at Fenny.)

Fenny: Ah.... making films? (Chuckles all around. Everyone knows this isn’t going to wash.)

Cristi: Yes, but what is it? (“Good, Cristi!” I say. She’s turning the screw right from the get-go.)

Fenny: Ah, it’s when you make a film! (More laughter.)



Pak Felix: Cristi, has Fenny actually told you anything yet?

Cristi: No, not really. (Even Fenny’s laughing now.)

Pak Felix: Ok, Fenny, is it a process, like making a car, or a thing, like an elephant, or a car?

Fenny: Ah, it’s both... I think. (Fenny looks around the room for support, but gets none. The hot seat is a lonely place.)

Pak Felix: Good, so let’s describe the process, as we know it, and then the thing, and go from there, ok? Cristi, start squeezing...

“Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, kids!” I say, as I settle into the chair at the back corner of the room.

“Death to fuzzy, non-specific thoughts!” shouts Robi, fist in the air. He’s the only boy in the class and has picked up on one of my favourite sayings. I think it’s the ‘death’ bit that he likes.

Tense they may be, but they know what I want, and if they give it – the observation, the logical or original thought, the revelation, I scream out ‘Yes!’ and stand up and clap, and sometimes dance around if it’s particularly good.

Of course, besides the joy of seeing Pak Felix wag his tail, as soon as you come up with a real solid answer, the spotlight, and the squeeze, moves onto somebody else. It’s a great relief, and a great incentive - a bit like mountain climbing, I guess.

What Karim neglected to tell me when I first arrived is how much fun it would be, and how rich I would grow. I recommend it.

SCHOOL FINANCE NEWS

In October last year, we could foresee an approaching financial crisis and send out an urgent appeal for twelve "Founding Partners" to help us through the next two years, until we could increase our student numbers to be able to break even financially. We received six generous offers of help from around the world. We are truly grateful to Andrew and Stephanie Holloway, Afal Group, Subud Brisbane & Renee Goetz, Latif Alston, Hamid da Silva and Mansur Geiger. We have also been fortunate to receive funds from individual donors internationally, and thus were able to make ends meet.

This year (2006-2007), although we are still running at a loss, it is less compared with last year. This is due to the six founding partners and other donations we have received. We are working very hard to improve the financial situation by increasing student numbers, increasing school fees and reducing operational costs in every way we can. We are still short of 6 founding partners as we actually need 12 to cover the deficit.

Our spending is mostly on teachers and staff salaries, which is normal in a school. Teachers are the most important assets of the school, and as there is more and more a need for good quality teachers nationally it is becoming really hard to find good local teachers. Being located in what is still considered the jungle by those from Java, it is very hard to find Indonesian teachers who are willing to come and live in Kalimantan.

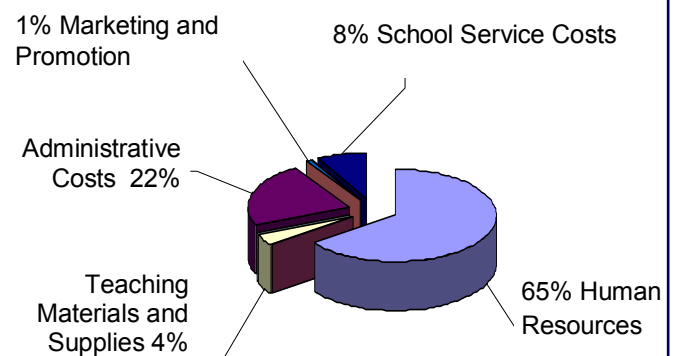
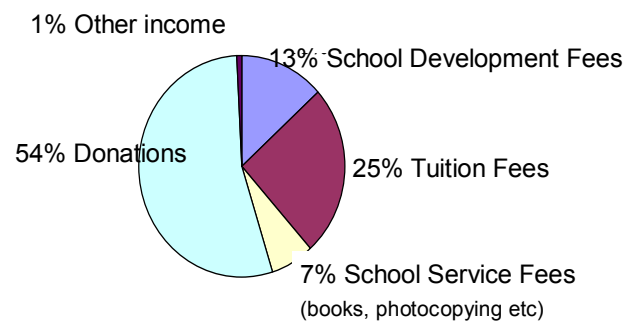
Although all our foreign teachers are here work either as volunteers or on part volunteer's salary, one of our big costs is the visas. We are working through the complex government regulations to find ways of reducing this. As an international oriented Indonesian national plus school with English as the medium of instruction it is important that we have foreign teachers. Their expertise and experience in the modern approach to education is valuable to the students in our school and their skills are transferred to the local teachers, as part of our in-house teacher training program.

We have been in contact with the AusAID office in Jakarta and we hope that we will be able to get Australian teachers through this program. This will help with our costs and continually improve the quality of the education we offer.

If you are interested in becoming a Founding Partner or in contributing to one of our programs, please contact us at the address below. Thank you.

Utami Geiger

BCU SCHOOL INCOME 2006



BCU SCHOOL EXPENDITURE 2006

From the Editor

Time has flown so fast and I owe everyone an apology for the long delay between newsletters. In January I was asked to increase my teaching hours due to a staff shortage and, as well as that, I have a long list of excuses that could fill a separate newsletter. I suggested the School Board fire me as editor, but as a volunteer they won't let me go just yet!

According to the Education Dept of Central Kalimantan, 75% of all teachers in the province are untrained and have no further education (degrees, certificates etc). Earlier this year, only 16% of all students in the province passed their mock National exams. It's statistics like this help motivate us through our struggles and show us just how important a school like BCU is to the children of Kalimantan.

Thank you for all your wonderful support!

Rashidah MacDonald

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THANK YOU!