

# **A Guidebook to** ETA Life in Indonesia 2nd Edition



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“International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace ...We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.”

- Senator J. William Fulbright

The Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia is a complex undertaking involving many constituencies, all with unique perspectives on communication, cooperation and the classroom. For you, this means your year will be a balancing act. You'll arrive in Indonesia with a lifetime of formative experiences and an individual identity, but you will not always be perceived by others that way. Sometimes the assumptions will be positive (that you're an expert teacher, for example), and sometimes they won't be (that you're ignorant of Indonesian history and language because you're a foreigner, maybe). Reality is always more nuanced than assumptions – you will probably not be in Indonesia because of your teaching expertise, and you may know more about Indonesian history than the average Indonesian. In the same way, it will be important for you to always remember the reverse as well – that Indonesia is more nuanced than your assumptions. You will find this easy to say, but much harder to do consistently on a daily basis.

The regions of Indonesia are very different, so it's difficult to predict what your experience will be like. When possible, this book includes prescriptive lists of things that you will encounter, such as elements of the visa process and orientation programming. In most cases, however, that isn't possible – instead, we've compiled anecdotal evidence from our own experiences and tried to put it in a context that will be helpful for you as you start getting ready for your ten months here. Your experiences won't be the same as those you read about in the following pages, but the themes you encounter will be similar.

The writing of this book happened in cities and villages from Sumatra to Maluku during the middle months of the 2010-2011 grant period. You will find differences in voice and writing style between the sections, which hopefully serve to reinforce the different ways in which each ETA experiences his or her Fulbright time in Indonesia. (*Note: the 2nd edition of this book was created at the end of the 2011 - 2012 grant period to incorporate feedback from 2011 - 2012 grantees.*)

Please remember that the opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent official policies or practices of AMINEF or the Fulbright Scholarship Board. Happy reading, happy teaching, *selamat jalan*, and we apologize in advance for any mistakes.

- Rick Ferrera, Bethany Hellerich, Brett McNeil and the rest of the  
2010 - 2011 Fulbright English Teaching Assistants in Indonesia



# Your Role as an ETA



*As a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, here is the bottom line:  
be present, be open, be you.*

**Congratulations** and welcome to ‘American Cultural Ambassadorship’ as an English Teaching Assistant in Indonesia! Your contract has arrived, medical clearance forms are in order, and you are all set to take the long flight across the Atlantic - into Southeast Asia and ETA-dom. Excited, perhaps a little nervous and unsure of what the next nine months will bring, but (almost) ready to go nonetheless. However, if you’re like we were before coming, you still might not understand very much about what it actually means to be an English Teaching Assistant in Indonesia.

We cannot tell you exactly how your experience will manifest itself, but we can give you tips to help ease the transition into your role as an ETA at your school site. Assuredly, this time of your life will be one of great excitement, during which you will experience tantalizing foods and interesting smells, take advantage of opportunities for growth and introspection, and build new relationships. We’ll leave the rest to you, for that’s why you were chosen, remember?

Although you’ve signed up to be an English Teaching Assistant, chances are that your school will be so excited to have a native English speaker around that they want you to have a larger role in the school than you may have anticipated - although some ETAs have received the opposite surprise, at times feeling under-utilized by their schools. Before you begin teaching, it is essential that you understand your actual role as a teaching assistant and what responsibilities you do and do not have.

First things first - your school is permitted to schedule you for up to 20 hours per week in the classroom. You should plan on spending time outside of class for lesson planning, ideally in collaboration with your Indonesian co-teachers. ETAs normally teach Monday through Friday, but not on weekends (this may vary at Islamic schools or if the ETA decides to take on extra work). ETAs are also encouraged to participate in (or even form) extracurricular activities, such as English Club, Drama Club, or Debate Team, for up to 10 hours a week. Cooperating teachers at some schools may misunderstand these time allotments and give you more hours than your contract allows. Address this so that you don’t become overcommitted – teaching English as a foreign language in entirely new surroundings is difficult and may require more planning (and rest) than you foresee. If you find yourself with extra time as the year progresses, you can certainly try to get more involved – but it’s easier to go from less involvement to more involvement than to retreat the other way.

Because you are a teaching assistant, your job is to concentrate on creating opportunities for students to engage in English conversation. Your focus should not be on grammar, which is supposed to be taught by the actual English teachers at your school. However, many ETAs find that their students lack basic grammar knowledge, which impedes use of English, so they supplement the teachers’ grammatical instruction with brief grammar-oriented activities in order to successfully achieve conversation lesson objectives. If this turns out to be your experience, don’t be worried – be prepared. Brush up on English grammar knowledge before you leave the States, and bring a good grammar book with you.

Sometimes ETAs like to tell horror stories about the difficulties they encounter in communicating with counterparts about their role in the school.

These conversations will happen when you meet your counterpart for the first time, and you will find that this sort of cross-cultural communication can indeed be difficult - but relish it as a challenge and prepare yourself to go into it confidently. Start things off on the right foot by bringing a small gift from your hometown (perhaps a key chain or coffee mug). Communication is key. Working with your counterpart rather than against is always best for all involved.

### **How do you negotiate a fair schedule without offending your host school?**

- **Set boundaries and expectations - early.** The earlier and more clearly you communicate with your counterpart, principal (commonly “headmaster” here), and other teachers, the less likely there will be misunderstanding regarding your role as an ETA.

- **Rely on your contract as your negotiating tool.** When my school wanted me to teach on the weekends, I told my principal and counterpart that I was not allowed to due to the stipulations of my contract and that I could get in trouble for breaking it. Your schools will probably respect the boundaries of your contract if you are firm in referring to it. Ideally, and also according to your contract, you are not supposed to teach by yourself. But, things happen, and you may find yourself without a cooperating teacher for one or more classes. If you’re not comfortable teaching alone, inform AMINEF of the situation.

- **Establish a good working relationship with your counterpart, headmaster, and other teachers.** Take that first step and get to know the people with whom you work. Don’t wait for the school to reach out to you. Make a determined effort to integrate into your school community and connect with other teachers. Establish a Teachers Club. Spend time in teachers lounge areas or other places where teachers congregate. Accept invitations to join coworkers during outside-of-school excursions. The better your relationship is with your coworkers and school administrators, the easier it will be to work and grow with them. Remember, too, that you represent something larger than yourself. To your students and the community, you ARE America. Of course, you know that all of the US does not sound, look, laugh and think the same way you do, but it is your job to present a genuine and diverse picture of a country that many of them have only experienced via the television. Finally, it is important to establish (if you’re a first year ETA at your school) or build upon (if there was an ETA before you) a legacy of excellence, respect, and commitment.

- **BE FLEXIBLE.** This cannot be stressed enough. Your first priority is to promote English speaking skills, so don’t stress if you don’t get the schedule of your dreams or if your school doesn’t immediately seem as comfortable as the schools in which your fellow ETAs are placed. Every site has pros and cons, and it can take a long time (like six or seven months in some cases) before they’re all clear to you. Invest in your site, explore the boundaries of your comfort zone, learn to laugh at yourself and your situation, avoid judgment and cynicism, and, when you have to, renew yourself with little trips away from your site. You’ll have plenty of time to travel around Indonesia and learn about life outside the walls of your school. If you really feel forced into a situation that is dangerous or otherwise intolerable, please don’t be scared to notify

## Your Role as an ETA

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AMINEF immediately - they're there to help, and they want to help. Sometimes people at the schools say things like, "we'll just do it this way - don't tell AMINEF," but openness is important and they are making a mistake in approaching a cooperative project in such a way. Don't make the same mistake, even if invited to. Your grant will be a three-way collaboration between you, your school/community, and AMINEF. For a truly successful experience, it's important that all three parties work together to minimize problems and maximize opportunities for the students.

These suggestions are general enough to hold true in schools all over the country, from the hills of Papua to the streets of major urban areas. You will surely find out in due time that much else depends on the particulars of your placement, but as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, here is the bottom line: be present, be open, be you. The rest will come through what will surely be a life-changing experience.

*Contributed by:*

*Mia Keays, Kupang, West Timor 2010 - 2011*

*Rachel Palmer, Bontang, East Kalimantan 2010 - 2011*



*Your school might have language labs with air conditioners and headsets for every student, or it might still have blackboards with chalk. Your role is to adapt and make the best of it for the sake of your students.*



# Planning and Packing



“After accepting the ETA grant, I obsessively combed through every piece of information that I received from AMINEF and IIE and compiled a four-page, double-sided to-do list. In retrospect, most items on this list, like registering to vote overseas and buying a mosquito net, were either unnecessary or could have been taken care of or purchased in Indonesia. During the orientation, we all had opportunities to purchase anything we had forgotten or were unable to fit in our luggage. And, throughout the term, ETA e-mail chains guided me through taxes, voting and many of the logistical matters that I had been so concerned about before the grant started.”

*- Erin Fitzgerald, Medan, North Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

**You've probably** traveled before and you probably know how to pack. On top of that, you will probably receive a packing list from AMINEF. We don't need to repeat all that here, but we can supplement it with some contextual notes about what we wish we would have known or done before getting to our sites. Some of these things should be done before leaving home, but some make more sense to do during orientation in Jakarta or Bandung, which are both large cities with pretty much anything you could need.

### **Things to Consider Before Departing:**

- Go to a travel clinic and talk to a medical professional about your immunization needs. For more information, see the "Health" section.
- Find a back-up method for accessing your bank account in case your primary card becomes unusable – ask your bank what options are available. Some banks offer the option of a secondary card linked to your bank account that can only be used at ATMs. This is a handy thing to have around if you lose your primary card, which has happened to a handful of ETAs - it's a hassle.
- Call your bank and credit card companies to notify them that you will be out of the country. Some credit cards might have travel perks – ask them about travel and baggage insurance while you're at it.
- Write down important personal information and store it in a place that is secure but easily accessible to you - credit card numbers, your license and passport numbers, bank account numbers, routing numbers, phone numbers, etc.
- Think about getting a motorcycle license, but weigh your options carefully. Having a motorcycle is quite practical for some of us, but Indonesia is a dangerous place to try driving for the first time, or at all. If there is a possibility that you will be using a motorcycle, think about taking a course to get your motorcycle license before leaving home. If you are not licensed, your insurance may not pay for injuries in the event that you have an accident. After receiving your license, go to AAA to get an International Driver's License – Indonesia is not a signatory of the treaty that recognizes this document, but it is usually accepted. Be aware that transportation accidents are common in Indonesia and that a Fulbright researcher died while riding a motorbike earlier this decade. AMINEF will strongly discourage you from using motorcycles.
- Think about health insurance. Many ETAs decide not to have supplementary health insurance; however, the benefits offered through the State Department (Seven Corners) are not extensive and have relatively low maximum coverage. If financially possible, it might be a good idea to keep your current health insurance, go on your parents' plan, or apply for a cheap, high-deductible plan.
- Take some photos of your family, your house, your city, local supermarket, favorite coffee shop and other important parts of your life – your Indonesian friends and students will pore over these photos. You might want to make some slide shows and maybe even bring some videos of your family, friends and other things from home. These authentic materials could end up providing hours of conversation prompts, both in class and in the community.
- Apply for a visa as soon as you get the necessary information from AMINEF. Indonesian visa processing is notoriously slow – do your best to get the documentation in time, but be aware that delays may be inevitable and that they are probably not grounds for losing your grant.

- Think about making whatever investment necessary to leave home with a computer in good, working order. That said, more than one ETA does not have a computer this year; it's a hassle, but certainly manageable. Blackberries, iPhones or other similar devices could serve as cheaper alternatives. So could internet cafes (*warnets*).
- Take the GRE or any other standardized tests you might need if you don't want to have to spend a weekend in Jakarta or Singapore doing it. If you'll be doing applications from Indonesia, bring the materials you'll need – transcripts, writing samples, contact information for references and anything else you might need. Working on applications while in Indonesia is a mixed bag – depending on your placement, you might have lots of free time to spend on this, but it can be difficult and unpleasant as well (for reasons ranging from crowds of screaming children looking over your shoulder in the internet café to power cuts and connectivity issues).
- Brush up on basic US history, politics and national issues. Also, make sure to know the names of important Indonesian figures (like the president!) – your students just might ask you basic facts in front of the whole class.
- Get excited! Indonesia is a treasure trove of gorgeous places, cultural traditions, crazy foods, and unforgettable experiences. Check out the book list at the end of this publication and dig deeper before arriving - you'll thank yourself after arriving!

### **Things You Might Not Think to Pack:**

There are some things we didn't know we wanted until we got here. There isn't much that you can't find in a major Indonesian city, but tracking down specific things in crowded malls can be surprisingly complicated, especially with linguistic and cultural barriers stacked against you – and traffic that can make getting to a mall take an hour. Whether or not to buy the following items at home or during orientation (if you decide to buy them at all) depends on if you'd rather shop in familiar or unfamiliar surroundings.

- Earplugs are helpful for the airplane or if your house is in close proximity to a loud speaker that broadcasts the call to prayer every morning before dawn.
- Rain gear - it rains a lot in Indonesia. Make sure your rain coat is actually waterproof. If you are thinking of getting a motorbike, rain pants will come in handy – this might sound ridiculous now, but rain suits are commonly worn by motorbike riders in Indonesia. If you're not too tall, you can find these things here. Also, consider bringing water proof shoes (such as rain boots), especially if you have very large feet and fear not being able to find shoes here (8 or over for women and 11 or higher for men will be difficult).
- Zip lock bags or dry bags will help protect your valuable electronics from Indonesia's many rainstorms. These can be purchased at Gramedia (bookstore chain) or Eiger (outdoors equipment) in Indonesian cities if you forget or want to wait.
- If you are a coffee fiend, then pack a French press or a small Turkish coffee maker and maybe some coffee from home. You can find good American-style coffee in Indonesian cities as well, but it's surprisingly uncommon for a country with most of its population living on an island called Java. You can buy anything coffee-related at Starbucks in Jakarta or other big cities if you don't want to lug it across the ocean.

- Quick dry towels will be your friends. Think about buying one large one and another hand-sized one for traveling.
- Consider investing in a good-quality hiking pack. While in Indonesia, you might want to travel without checking baggage, and a comfortable pack that's not too big, but has lots of space, makes life a lot easier.
- Headlamp: this seems a little silly, until your power goes out.
- It might be a good idea to stock up on travel size hand sanitizers, toothpastes, mouthwashes, etc. They can be surprisingly expensive in Indonesia. Even simple small plastic bottles that you can refill and use for trips within Indonesia are quite helpful.
- Recognizable brands of sunscreen are absurdly expensive here, costing about 10 to 15 dollars for a 150 ml bottle - and the sun on the equator is harsh. Indonesians usually just cover their skin with long clothing or use umbrellas.
- Some ETAs use non-aerosol bug spray with 70 percent DEET, especially when traveling to areas known to have malaria; if you are concerned about mosquitoes, note that we haven't found such powerful bugspray in Indonesia. Nicer-smelling, but weaker, mosquito lotion (Autan and Soffell) is available at convenience stores throughout Indonesia. If you pack bug spray, be aware that aerosol cans might be confiscated if packed in your carry-on bag.
- E-readers: books can do serious damage to the weight of your bags. Most e-readers last for days and you can purchase books in Indonesia for the Kindle and download them through your computer (using Nook here is not as straightforward for some reason, but doable if you play with it). If you are more of a paper book person, you can trade with other ETAs or buy books in cities, although they are expensive in Indonesia.
- Bring one or more nice outfits for orientation and teaching. Once you arrive in Indonesia, you can buy more teaching clothing for cheaper prices. For teaching, both men and women usually wear long-sleeved, collared shirts and slacks. Islamic schools may require very conservative dress, but no ETAs will be forced to cover their heads (although some choose to). Closed-toed shoes are mandatory at most schools. You aren't coming to be scruffy travelers – being well-groomed is important here, just like in your workplace at home.
- Blankets do not always come standard with a bed in Indonesia. You will definitely have bedding during orientation, but consider bringing a blanket or sheet or buying one during the orientation. When you arrive at your site for the first time, stores might be closed – sleeping without bedding that first night feels rather pathetic.

### Medications We Were Glad to Have:

- Neosporin
- Z-pack
- Immodium
- Probiotics
- Cipro or other antibiotic
- Large bottle of multivitamins
- Some brand of pain and fever reducer
- Hydrocortisone or Benadryl cream for bug bites
- Antiseptic wipes – cuts and bug bites can take a long time to heal in Indonesia's wet climate and have to be monitored carefully

### **Thoughts for the Ladies (for more, see “Adapting to a New Culture”):**

The following list includes ideas for your consideration, but it is not a list of suggestions for how you should pack or behave in Indonesia. Use the information to make well-informed decisions about your health, which is your responsibility, and what you need to maintain it.

- Cranberry extract in case of UTI
- Yeast infection medication of choice
- Year’s supply of tampons or a Diva cup
- Plan B - while not necessary, past ETAs have found it comforting to have
- Enough of any prescription medications for the whole year - these cannot be mailed to you if you run out (birth control is difficult to obtain in Indonesia)
- Fingernail polish remover - it’s practically impossible to find here, and when you do it can run you around 10 or 15 dollars a bottle.

### **Obtaining Your Visa:**

AMINEF will provide you with all of the information required during the visa process. This can be lengthy and sometimes complications arise, but be assured that AMINEF is working diligently to make sure everything is running as smoothly and as quickly as possible. Everybody will receive the necessary instructions, but only after AMINEF obtains work permits for each ETA from the Indonesian government. Your responsibility as an ETA lies in filling out the forms that AMINEF sends you and mailing or taking them in person, along with your passport, to the nearest Indonesian consulate. The process can be stressful, but be patient. Your visa documents are coming, and you will make it to orientation. If you have to come a day late, well - it’s only a day!

### **Teaching Materials:**

You will absolutely be able to find everything you need to teach a class while you are in Indonesia - thousands of people do it everyday. Additionally, you should know that AMINEF supplies all ETAs with some teaching materials during orientation in Jakarta and Bandung. This year we received:

- A map of America
- A CD of American roots music (with lyrics)
- A box of TEFL teaching books and materials, including photographs, CDs, grammar books and other things (this was shipped to our schools)

Bringing additional materials from home is a good idea, possibly including:

- Magazines
- American stickers or toys
- Books for children or teenagers
- Postcards from home to hand out
- Large pictures of your family and friends
- An American game - Madlibs, Scrabble, Magic 8 Ball, etc.
- Thumb drive: many ETAs find this indispensable (available in Indonesia)
- For Mac users: LCD projector connection cord - all schools in Indonesia are supposed to have LCD projectors, though this does not mean that they actually do. If your school does have one and you are a Mac user, you will probably

## Planning and Packing

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want to buy a connection cord - usually mini-display to VGA or mini-DVI to VGA, depending on the age of your computer - to give multimedia presentations. Mac products are fairly hard to find in Indonesia – stores with Apple products exist only in nice malls in big cities - so these can be good things to get at home.

- Your own TEFL book or books - AMINEF will provide some, courtesy of the local US Embassy, but if you have some favorites bring them along.
- A guitar to play songs for students - or buy it in Indonesia for \$30 to \$40.

*Contributed by:*

*Erin Fitzgerald, Medan, North Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

*Paige Johnson, Makassar, South Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*



*In rural placements, your computer might be the only piece of technology in the classroom – other than the ubiquitous handphones in your students' pockets.*

### Some Planning and Packing Advice from Former ETAs:

“Before departing, learn or practice ways to de-stress through an understanding of stress techniques, your favorite activities, or possibly favorite comfort foods that could assist you in times of stress. Consider the materials you may need to bring with you or the limitations of your placement. If working out at the gym de-stresses you, but there are no American-style gyms in your placement, learn exercises that use your body weight for resistance. If reading English books lets you wind down, consider buying a Kindle or Nook, or bring your favorite books.”

- *Mark Sueyoshi, Parung, West Java 2010 - 2011*

“Bring children’s paperback books (*Angelina Ballerina, Clifford*, etc.). I’ve found they make awesome gifts for headmasters’ and teachers’ kids and that people really appreciate English books. I’ve even been able to pass some out to my neighborhood kids who have no opportunity to purchase English books and to children at a local orphanage. You can find them in book stores here, but they’re ridiculously expensive.”

- *Rachel Palmer, Bontang, East Kalimantan 2010 - 2011*

“I went to a wholesale store before leaving and dropped about \$300 on supplies that filled an entire suitcase. After lugging this heavy suitcase through several airports and getting to know Indonesia, I realized that much of what I had brought was unnecessary, such as shampoo and conditioner, Immodium, and body wash. What I did fully appreciate, though, were the granola bars and hundred calorie packs that I subsisted on for our first month here when I was sick and afraid to eat anything else. If you’re a coffee fiend, bring Starbucks Via – the instant coffee you’ll find here is less than desirable.”

- *Kelsey Ritzel, Pekanbaru, Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

“Things I’m really happy that I brought are my netbook, my iPod, a few books, my painting supplies, linen pants, a rain jacket, floss, cosmetics (face wash, lotion, makeup... it’s hard to find those things without whitening elements here), pictures of my family and friends, and a lightweight hoody. Don’t bring any clothes that you absolutely love... they will get ruined from washing and all the traveling!”

- *Mary Martin, Bandung, West Java 2010 - 2011*



*Don't stress too much about packing. Whatever your bags look like, they won't contain any of the things that are really important to your experience as an ETA - like students singing on your doorstep.*



# Orientation



*In Bandung, we spent an afternoon during language class writing reports (in Indonesian) about traditional clothing in different parts of the country – and creating examples out of newspaper.*

**You'll** spend about a month completing an orientation program with all the other ETAs at the beginning of the year. We don't know that your orientation will be the same as ours, but we can give some tips that will probably hold true despite any changes.

### **Where you will probably be:**

First, you will take care of obtaining a KITAS (limited stay permit). This may be done either in Jakarta or in your placement sites - AMINEF will provide more information on the process. It usually takes around a week. After that the focus will shift to language learning, teaching practice, and preparing you to have a successful experience at your site. This is normally done during three weeks in Bandung, the capital city of West Java. After these three weeks, all must say goodbye to each other and the cozy hotel life and ship off to various placements spread throughout the far-reaching archipelago. You might be surprised to wipe away a tear or two as you say goodbye to new friends; but you'll have ample opportunity to stay in touch, travel together and exchange inter-island text messages when you need an ear that understands where you're coming from. Value the friendships you create during orientation; they'll be integral support networks during the year ahead.

### **What you will probably do:**

- **Information and administration:** Presenters from AMINEF, the US Embassy, and possibly other organizations will bring you up to speed on what you need to know about being a Fulbright grantee in Indonesia.
- **Language:** You will have a few hours of language class every day offering basic instruction in Bahasa Indonesia. Do yourself a favor and go into this with the understanding that the amount of language you learn will depend on the amount of effort you put in - a teacher can't learn a language for you. The "Language" section of this book suggests resources for starting before arrival.
- **Teacher training:** This aspect of orientation will be covered later in the "Teaching" section.

Be prepared for a constant deluge of information coming from all directions while you are battling culture shock, jet lag and the challenge of memorizing far too many new names. As stressful as this sounds, ride it out for the adventure that it is, and get involved! Despite being a bit over-stimulating at times, orientation promises to be one of the best parts of your year in Indonesia. Every bit of information you learn during this time will assist your teaching, and every friend you make will be another person by your side as you live out this amazing opportunity in Indonesia. The class time can be overwhelming, but don't forget your agency in the situation. This time is meant to provide the foundation you need to be a successful Fulbright grantee in Indonesia. If you have questions or concerns, this is the time to address them.

*Contributed by:*

*Brian Kraft, Pekanbaru, Sumatra 2010 - 2011*



Housing



*Many ETAs will live in one-room apartments like this.  
(Just kidding - but this is what your backyard might look like.)*

**After** leaving orientation and finally arriving at the place you'll call home for the rest of the year, you'll quickly realize that living in Indonesia presents a whole new set of challenges from the ones to which you're accustomed at home. In parts of the US, your water pipes can freeze and burst if you don't take care of them. In parts of Indonesia, your water pipes can become highways for rats and roaches to get into your house. Expect some frustrations as you try to get comfortable. You'll adapt to the new realities of life in your own way, but here are some tips to help.

**Water:** If you are living in an area that's prone to water outages, it's a good idea to keep the *bak mandi* (the large tub built into the wall under the faucet in the bathroom) or plastic tub full so that you'll still have water to wash with when the outages occur (and so you won't end up covered in soap and have to use your drinking water to rinse off). Try not to let soap residue or other gray water get into the *bak mandi*, as it can cause slime to start growing at the bottom. If there are mosquitoes breeding in your bathroom, it's a good idea to drain and scrub the *bak mandi* every few days to get rid of any larvae. There are also chemicals that can be purchased to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in your bathroom.

**Mold:** Indonesia's climate is hot and humid. That's fine if you're on the beach, but it can pose a challenge if you're trying to keep a mold-free house. If there are leaks in the house, make sure to wipe up the water with a towel or a mop as soon as possible. Invest in a bottle of Vixal (pronounced "fix all") and a sponge to scrub down your bathroom at least twice a month. Gloves are recommended because products like Vixal are harsh on the skin.

**Pests:** Ant and cockroach populations can be kept under control with the use of insecticide chalk. The main brands are called "Bagus" or "HIT" and can be found in grocery stores. Be sure to draw lines with the chalk around any cracks or holes where you have noticed bugs coming in and out. If there is food you want to keep outside the fridge but don't want to share with household friends, put a nail in your wall, then draw a large circle around the nail with insecticide chalk. Hang up any food in a plastic bag inside the safety of this circle, and it should be ant free! Bug repellent spray such as Baygon works fairly well for eliminating ant and other small pest infestations. Just point and spray, then sweep up the carcasses. You may also "line" the perimeter of, say, your bedroom, with Baygon, which also somewhat discourages smaller pests from getting in. Each person has to weigh the pros and cons of using these sorts of chemicals in their living areas – some ETAs use them liberally, some never touch them.

There are also ways to keep your home critter-free with fewer chemicals. Sweeping your house frequently can help eliminate the bulk of these small pests because you are both sweeping up any food vestiges they may be attracted to and also just sweeping them out of the house. Having wet wipes around to wipe down countertops after you eat is an easy way to clean up small messes - this also gets rid of the food crumb temptations for ants. As an alternative to harsh chemicals, a simple solution of water and soap (shampoo, detergent, or dish soap will do) can halt a cockroach in its path by clogging the pores

through which it breathes. Just mix and dump. To prevent cockroaches from getting into your home in the first place, make sure all holes are covered by a screen or other barrier. If you don't have screens on your windows, ask someone to install them – this will help keep roaches and other unwanted guests away. Keep all rooms clean and don't forget to wipe down your stove-top after making *nasi goreng*, because grease attracts roaches.

Rats can also be a problem - they can live in your drains and in your roof, and you'll especially notice them if part of your house is open to the air. You have a choice: battle them or ignore them. It is hard to find rat poison or traps, and when you do find them you face the exciting prospect of dealing with the ensuing dead rats yourself. Try to get a bed bug cover and mosquito net, which also helps with rats. Your biggest problem with rats is not that they live with you, but that they poop everywhere. A mosquito net keeps bugs away as you sleep, and makes sure rats don't poop on your bed. You can also buy covers for your drains to keep out rats and cockroaches, or just find a rock or brick and cover them when you're not using them.

**Protecting your food:** The best thing you can do to keep your food safe is to stash it in the fridge, but it will fill up fast, and sometimes you want to have food out for guests. When you go into another house and see the snacks they have sitting out in little containers, know they are packed so for a reason – if you screw the lids on really tight, the arrangement is completely antproof! Invest in some of these jars and tins – Tupperware also works, but not always as effectively. When you want to leave open food on the table, you can line the legs of the table with insecticide chalk to keep ants at bay.

**Keeping safe:** Indonesia is a friendly country, but even friendly countries have a few bad apples. Differentiating between culture shock and genuine security threats can be a big challenge, especially in the beginning when you are still adjusting to everything. Pay attention to patterns over time, and trust your gut instinct. If you feel truly unsafe at your site, please share this with AMINEF staff, who can help you get more insight into the situation. If you still feel unsure, contact the Regional Security Officer at the US Embassy in Jakarta. Remember that a huge part of the Embassy's job is to help protect American citizens abroad, and they will take your concerns seriously. The Embassy also has a 24-hour switchboard that you can call for true emergencies (arrests or mortal peril); the number is 62-21 3435 9000. It's a good idea to keep this phone number on you at all times, as well as the numbers for your counterpart and AMINEF contact person.

**Utilities:** You should plan to pay your own utilities, including electricity, water, garbage disposal, phone, internet and security. Electricity and water are charged based on usage and billed on a quarterly basis, while garbage disposal and security are usually a flat rate that must be paid monthly. If no one tells you how to make payments at your site, you should ask. AMINEF will provide you with a cell phone, but you will be responsible for buying minutes, called *pulsa*, which are available almost anywhere. Similarly, you can buy a small portable internet modem and pay for service (also denominated as *pulsa*). You may also choose to have a land-line for both telephone and internet - this option provides more reliable service but not necessarily cheaper prices. Depending

on the provider, land-line services may be billed using a flat rate or by usage. Apple-compatible USB modems are available at Gramedia and most large malls in big cities - the USB modem box usually specifies whether or not it will work with OSX in addition to Windows. Telkom offers a (relatively) high-speed DSL (land-line) option called “Speedy”, and if your house can be wired for a land line phone, it can be wired for Speedy DSL service.

Sometimes it is tricky to figure out how each service is billed, so it’s best to inquire from the beginning exactly what is expected of you. In addition to your counterpart, it is useful to find someone in your neighborhood who can help you navigate this aspect of life in Indonesia. Costs vary greatly depending on living arrangements, but shouldn’t be much of a burden. 500,000 to 1 million rupiah a month is probably a decent estimate (and likely too high), but you won’t be able to know for sure until you arrive at your site. Some schools end up paying for utilities on behalf of ETAs, but you should make it clear that you expect to pay when communicating about this issue (**your contract says you will pay**). Problems frequently arise when electricity or water is cut off because ETAs and schools did not communicate about how to pay the bills.

**Neighbors:** A large part of adjusting to your housing situation will include how to interact with the people who live near you. In Indonesia, neighbors often act as extended family, coming together for major life events like weddings and parties and helping each other through rough times like funerals and illnesses. This family-like atmosphere also means they might expect you to report to them as you would your parents when you were 12 years old. This means that the door must be left open when there are people of the opposite sex at your house, and you must let the head of the neighborhood (*kepala desa* or *RT*) or your counterpart and principal know when you will be gone or when you will have guests. This can get frustrating, but try to explain to people that you like being alone, you like being independent, and that you are capable of taking care of yourself – many ETAs are initially frustrated at being treated like children, but in most cases your friends and neighbors mean only the best and are caring for you as they would a member of their own family.

You can choose to view this as an irritation, or as an opportunity for genuine cultural exchange about family dynamics and American society. As with most things you’ll encounter, this aspect of the experience will be what you make of it. A final note is that many people in Indonesia are intimidated to talk to foreigners (beyond the ubiquitous *selamats* and *mau ke manas*), so don’t be surprised if you have to take the first step and introduce yourself to your neighbors. You won’t regret taking the time to form these relationships – and don’t worry about your Indonesian not being good enough. As long as you’re trying, you’ll probably be deemed *pintar sekali*.

*Contributed by:*

*Emily Wilcox, Palembang, Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

*Melina Aguilar, Tomohon, North Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*

*Grace Chung, Genteng, East Java 2010 - 2011*

*Demi Gary, Yogyakarta, Java 2010 - 2011*

*Heather Halk, Bandung, West Java 2010 - 2011*

*Christina James, Limboto, Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*



# Adapting to a New Culture



*An adapted Halloween at a school in West Sulawesi.*

**Be careful** using phrases like “Indonesian culture.” This country is extremely diverse, and it’s difficult to say anything that holds true from Sumatra to Papua – but the reality is that you will all experience moments of shock here due to “Indonesian culture.” Topics usually considered private in America (including religion, race, finances, and the reason you’re not married yet) are often some of the first things about which strangers ask questions in Indonesia. Things like race, religion and gender will very obviously be the basis for assumptions in ways that often make Americans cringe. Your experience will be unique and depend on many things, but we’ve compiled some anecdotes to help you start thinking about how you’ll handle life in “Indonesian culture.” Trying to find the balance between your identity as an individual and the one-size-fits-all “American” identity foisted on you by others (or denied to you, if you don’t fit their preconceptions) will be a constant fact of life during your Fulbright grant term. When it gets tough, try finding some distance by looking at the situation around you as a cultural anthropologist might (this recommendation comes from the Korean ETA program guidebook) – concentrate on what you can learn, not on what offends you. And don’t overlook the moments of simple kindness from strangers that will most likely pave your road through Indonesia.

We’ve chosen three sub-sections for this chapter – “Your Identity in Indonesia,” “Indonesian Social Life,” and “Indonesian Food.” In our experience, these tend to be the areas in which cultural differences are most apparent.

## **Your Identity in Indonesia**

No matter what you look like, the year you are about to embark upon will force you to directly confront questions of identity in ways that you may not have experienced before. The locals you encounter at school and in your community – people who for the most part have your best interest and safety at heart – will often make assumptions about your ‘strength’ or abilities based on your gender, ethnic or religious origins. In this sense, non-white ETAs will have experiences that are different from their Caucasian counterparts; female ETAs will be forced to encounter obstacles that male ETAs will not. In short, your personal demographics will become of utmost importance in your daily life – in Indonesia, all people are not always perceived to be equal. Below you will find some thoughts and stories related to our identities in Indonesia (mostly concerning matters of gender, race and religion). Realize that they are based on our experiences, and that you will soon form your own. We hope they help.

### **Girl Talk**

*by Mary Barnes, Makassar, South Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*

#### **Dressing the Part:**

As an American female, you will have to adjust your dress and habits upon moving to Indonesia, but it’s not nearly as dramatic or debilitating as you might imagine, especially in the cities. Dress codes vary tremendously from site to site and largely depend on how conservative your counterpart and principal are. This year, ETAs dressed in a variety of styles: some could wear short sleeves, while others needed three-quarter or full-sleeves; some had to wear

flowing tunic-shirts which covered their butts, while others could wear tucked in collared shirts; and some could wear capris, leggings or skirts which stopped just below the knee, while others needed ankle-length skirts. However, high necklines seemed to be a consistent rule.

In summary, bring whatever conservative clothes you already own and feel comfortable in, but don't bring anything you love and plan to wear later in life, as clothes tend to get worn and tattered very quickly. You can supplement your wardrobe when you arrive and figure out the rules. Also, pack a few cute and/or casual American outfits for your time living with other Americans during orientation and for your vacations. Clothes are easy to purchase (as long as you're not much bigger than the average Indonesian), but not as cheap as you might be expecting – though still generally cheaper than in the US.

When deciding what to wear, you should also evaluate how much extra attention you can take. If you live in a big city, you'll be able to get away with bare shoulders and knees, but dressing this way will definitely draw eyes and, if you're white, you'll already have plenty of eyes on you. Covering up has benefits besides winning the approval of those around you and deflecting unwanted attention: sun, bug, and motorcycle protection. On top of all that, loose clothes are much more comfortable in hot weather. Billowy pants and skirts are the best.

### **Independence and the Opposite Gender:**

Enough about clothes, let's talk about boys! Like dress codes, rules about having the opposite gender visit you at home vary tremendously. Don't be surprised if it's a taboo to have a member of the opposite sex visit you alone. In addition to violating cultural norms, your neighbors will probably notice and assume the worst.

You'll probably be living alone and the revelation of this fact (if you're a girl) will inevitably prompt questions about your safety and whether you'd like to have another female sleep on the couch. Explaining that it's not uncommon to live alone in America usually makes for a pleasant cultural exchange and most people, while they might be slightly incredulous, will let you be.

You'll also get asked about whether you are married or dating quite often. If you are single and aren't actively seeking a soul mate, you will puzzle many Indonesians. Likely, they'll want an explanation as to why you aren't romantically interested in Indonesians, then offer to introduce you to their nephew. Again, explaining that in America it is quite acceptable to be single at this point in your life works pretty well. In short, you will be exempt from a lot of societal expectations by virtue of being a foreigner and, in general, people will laugh off any *faux pas* you might commit.

That said, once you understand the rules, the way you choose to dress and act will also depend on how comfortable you are bending them, and whether you think of it as being progressive or disrespectful. Also, despite these concerns, many of the Indonesian women you meet will have careers, drive motorbikes, and (at least appear to) live fairly independent of their husbands and fathers.

### **Your Toiletry Bag:**

Beware: bodily functions are discussed more casually in Indonesia. If you are female, you will likely be asked about menstruation, usually as it relates

to your eligibility to enter a mosque – but sometimes your friends just want to know about your favorite feminine hygiene products. Speaking of which, you may want to invest in a DivaCup before leaving the US. It can be easily cleaned with wet wipes and bottled water. That said, it is simply not true that you can't find tampons here. They are available in all the major cities and they abound in Bali. They are expensive though, so bring them with you if you have space. Just don't worry if you forget. Lastly, you might also want to pack in face washes and lotions, especially if you're picky or don't want to accidentally whiten your skin; in Indonesia everything that can be applied to your skin may have whitening compounds added, including deodorant.

### **Dramatic, Debilitating ... or Both? A Response to 'Girl Talk' (page 35)**

*by Jenna Wallace, Pekanbaru, Riau, Sumatra 2011 - 2012*

True or false: harassment and stereotyping of women exists in America. You'd be kidding yourself if you said false. Now true or false: It will be worse in Indonesia. True or false: As a female in Indonesia you'll have to dramatically change your habits and dress. True or False: As a female you will find the adjustments debilitating. Truth is, there isn't an answer. Everyone's experience of Indonesia is different as placement sites differ, schools differ, communities differ, and ETAs' definitions and expectations differ.

For me, in many ways the adjustments of dress and habits were often both dramatic *and* debilitating (in contrast to what I had read in the Guidebook produced by the 2010-2011 ETAs - page 35 of this edition); however, what I gained from adjusting was more than what I lost. At my school, it was inappropriate to wear pants and it was expected that I dress according to the school's rules, which meant uncomfortable uniforms of floor length skirts and long jackets made of fabric ill-suited for steamy equatorial weather.

So how did I gain anything from that? Sitting in the teacher's room towards the end of my time in Pekanbaru another teacher took my hand with tears in her eyes and said, "I'll always remember you in your teacher's uniform." Every day I showed up to school dressed similarly to the other teachers made the gap between us less noticeable. The people I worked with appreciated my efforts to adapt to their culture, and for me, that was worth it. If wearing uniforms wasn't exactly debilitating, the social restrictions for females could sometimes feel that way. It was frowned upon if I went out after dark (6pm), which drastically changed my social life since as soon as the sun went down it was expected that I be home. Having male friends was often difficult, interacting with male teachers and administrators could be tricky, and avoiding uncomfortable situations dealing with gender was a challenge every week. This wasn't ideal, but it gave me time to get to know my neighbors, sit and chat with my landlady and play with the kids in the neighborhood.

So if you were to put adjustment into terms of true and false, for me, the truth would be that I had to adjust my daily activities, my dress, mostly all social habits I was used to, especially the way I socialized with men, and yes, sometimes it was frustrating and sometimes I felt restricted. However, what's false is that it ruined my experience or changed the way I felt about the Indonesians I knew. You'll have to adapt in many ways, but that's what is so special about the experience. Adapting opens doors into people's lives, even if it isn't

always a comfortable process. The more you adapt, the more you learn, and it will be your choice where to draw the lines between adaptation and unhappiness.

Harassment is another story. The biggest truth is that it is a reality and that it is likely going to affect your experience in some way, either at your site or when you travel, or both. Stereotypes of American women often color how female ETAs are perceived, and there are certainly cultural structures at work that allow it to exist, often at surprising levels. For example, one time wearing a conservative outfit (long, loose pants and a long sleeve shirt high around the neck) I walked to a store to buy a few things for my apartment. To occupy myself I counted how many people cat-called at me, followed me, stopped to ask me if they could have my number, etc. I got to 35 before I gave up counting. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable and sometimes it was clear that the person was simply curious or wanted to practice English. Other times, I was furious and often I was simply annoyed. Throughout my time in Indonesia I dealt with it in various ways. I learned what worked for me, what turned something rude into something funny. I learned to laugh it off and sometimes I fumed about it to other ETAs. So yes, harassment affected my experience in Indonesia. It was challenging, frustrating, demeaning, uncomfortable, and ridiculous, but looking back what strikes me about my experience isn't being cat-called in the street on the way to the store, but rather it's the memories with my co-teachers and students, times with friends, and learning about a new culture and language. The truth is that adapting and dealing with harassment are both parts of the challenge, but they don't hold a candle to the wealth of truly wonderful memories that I will bring home from Indonesia.

### **Riding like a Girl**

*by Hannah Vann, Medan, North Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

After pestering the people at my school for three weeks about getting a motorcycle, an accidental public mental breakdown (manifested in uncontrollable sobs for the better part of an hour) turned out to be just the thing to turn their absolute refusal into a skeptical "maybe." In spite of my many assurances that I know how to drive a motorcycle and have my license, I was required to take what the male teachers at my school described as motorcycle lessons. I would prefer to call them firsthand experiences with third-world chauvinism. Pak Habib pointed at an automatic moped and said, "You will drive that." I looked at him with a smile and replied, "Okay, I can practice on that. But the kind of motorcycle I want is not an automatic; it's a manual. That's what I drive in America." He frowned at me, then looked at the other men in the group and said something hurried in Indonesian. Then they all turned to me and started gesturing, cigarettes in hand, at the automatic. My experience told me that there is no use arguing at the beginning of any endeavor; inching your way toward what you want is much more effective. So I walked over to the moped, turned it on, and drove figure-eights in the parking lot. Then I spotted the kind of motorcycle I wanted. In my broken Indonesian, I pointed at the bike and said, "*Saya mau sama yang ini*" (or roughly, "I want one like this"). My request was met with laughter. Only this time, instead of laughing at yet another failed attempt by the American to speak Indonesian, they were laughing at my request – because, in Indonesia, women do not drive manual motorcycles.

Manual motorcycles are too much machine. They are for men. Women aren't coordinated enough to work the clutch. Women who drive manual motorcycles are loose, immoral women.

As I listened to the men tell me all of these reasons for not being able to get the motorcycle I wanted, I could not help but laugh. Motorcycle sexism is quite possibly the last thing I ever expected to encounter in Indonesia. Dressing like a nun in spite of the heat, being constantly interrupted during conversations with men, and observing an appropriate curfew for a single woman who lives alone so as not to scandalize the neighborhood are all things I expected and accept as part of my life here in Indonesia. But that's just it: you never know what will happen. As I was smoothing my ruffled feathers during the lesson, Pak Habib was already vamping up to go on a motorcycle ride with me to show off his favorite *bule* woman and her mean motorcycle skills. I did, of course, have to ride the semiautomatic to preserve my honor.

Being a Western woman in a conservative place in Indonesia is not easy. I often have to remind myself that people like Pak Habib act out of genuine concern for my well-being, not because they are consciously trying to put me in my place. Although the feminist in me wants to jump on my soapbox and preach about equality, I have to remember that my way is not always the right way or the only way. And oftentimes the purity of someone's intentions is a much better thing to focus on.

The important thing to remember is that this is an exchange. Inasmuch as we are trying desperately to fit into Indonesian culture, we are also supposed to share our culture. When someone expresses concern about me living alone or traveling alone because I am a woman, there is nothing wrong with talking about the independence and individualism we value in America. Sometimes I might have to give a little more than I would like, but that's okay. Because when I least expect it, I find that my day-to-day actions are inspiring the women around me to venture out on their own too. Like Ibu Sri, who was so inspired by my fearless motorcycle driving that she made her husband teach her how to ride. Or my student, Nora, who realized that if I can move 10,000 miles away from my family to follow my dreams, then maybe she can, too.

### **Being Friends with the Opposite Sex in Indonesia**

*by Adam E. Bazari, Gresik, East Java 2010 - 2011*

In Javanese Muslim Gresik, gender roles are very clear. Generally, women and female students cannot come over to my house without at least one friend or relative (this is specified in Islam: a chaperone is required in every mixed-gender group), and they cannot stay past 10:00 pm. Once, I wanted to take my two female neighbors out to a movie and I learned that I needed to ask for permission from their father – who declined, saying that the movie was showing too late. I also find that I need to be careful about spending too much time with any single person of the opposite sex – people do start to talk about it, jokingly at first, but in a way that can become uncomfortable.

The male-female divide goes both ways. For example, the closest male friend of a female ETA living in a Muslim area told her that if she were a man they would probably have sleepovers together every weekend and hang out

much more often.

Thus, building strong relationships with the opposite gender is rather difficult, given that many of the opportunities for socializing are limited. Even minor, everyday contacts with women, such as shaking hands, are made more difficult or impossible because of cultural barriers.

While it is probably easier to build relationships with women in more liberal places, it is not impossible anywhere, even in Gresik. In general, it is socially acceptable for me to hang out with women in mixed-gender groups. For example, if a married woman is visiting my house, she will always bring her husband or her son, and when I hang out with my closest female friend, we are always with at least two of her siblings. School is another venue for hanging out, as the social atmosphere in my school is quite informal and people tend to relate to each other as friends rather than as teachers.



*When men and women socialize, it's usually in a group setting like this.*

As of this writing, I've only been living in Gresik for a few months and still have much to learn about gender roles, so I decided to ask some of my co-teachers for their opinions. Most of them told me things one wouldn't be surprised by: women are expected to take care of their family and work at home, while men are supposed to be providers. Women are encouraged not to talk, laugh loudly, or express controversial opinions, while boisterous men are fairly common. Men will almost always be served meals before women, and women will almost always clean up after men. Once, I tried to insist on cleaning up after a meal with a slightly younger female neighbor and she absolutely would not have it.

However, not everyone in Gresik agrees with all of these norms, and many women and men believe that both sexes should have equal opportunities. The best advice I could give to a new ETA is to be culturally sensitive and be open to the situation you are confronted with: you will learn how to act with people of the opposite gender very quickly and it is best to adapt to the conventions as well as you can – even if you don't like them, you probably won't succeed in changing them. The people with whom I have discussed these issues in Gresik have been very open to differing points of view and, at least with friends, I wouldn't worry about offending anyone when discussing gender roles.

### **Finding Your Own Narrative**

*by Rupita Chakraborty, Samarinda, East Kalimantan 2011 - 2012*

You will quickly learn that the term *bule* will be a significant part of your year here. *Bule* colloquially means foreigner, but its strict definition is “albino,” i.e. white person – although that may depend on who you ask. Definitions aside, it is likely the word will come to mean something different to each of you. Personally, as a person of Indian origin, the word was never used to describe or address me: I managed to live my life completely outside its scope. Its absence, however, is just as important as its presence. It means that though I can shop in a grocery store in relative peace, a luxury I both relish and appreciate, I am relegated to second class when I am with Caucasians. In these situations, Indonesians will frequently only briefly acknowledge me, fail to make eye contact with me, and render me invisible. I am another one of their brown-skinned brethren, really nothing special. This hierarchy of race that you will quickly observe Indonesians abide by (white, brown, black) can initially be shocking and hurtful, but it’s important to remember that Indonesia is not the only country that operates this way and that the people making such observations likely don’t associate the same historical and cultural connotations to them as you do, and therefore are not mal-intentioned.

Moreover, because so much of your experience will be based on how you are treated, and how you are treated will often be based on your identity, you will each have different “Indonesia narratives.” Do not be startled when your stories are different from your fellow ETAs. There are a multitude of ways to be a good ETA and though ETAs of color will have fewer stories about hoards of people wanting to take a picture with them and bringing them food at all hours of the day, know that there are other ways to connect with your students and communities. Diversity among ETAs is living proof that Americans are not all blond-haired and blue-eyed. They come in hundreds of shapes and colors, and in this way, your students can be exposed to a side of America that too often goes unseen in Indonesia. Take advantage of this in the form of lesson plans, chats over tea, games of futsal. Instead of being handicapped by how you are received, let it motivate you.

Lastly, there are certain parts of this experience that you can control - your relationship with your students and fellow teachers, your lesson plans, safety precautions you take at home - and others that you cannot. Understand and accept that many of the parts of the experience that you cannot control will derive from your identity. Don’t allow this to frustrate or anger you - you will simply waste precious time. Accept this for what it is and move on - it is just as much a part of the Fulbright experience as anything else.

### **Being African-American in Kalimantan**

*by Karen Evans, Samarinda, East Kalimantan 2010 - 2011*

For weeks, I had observed everyone wearing jackets, even though Kalimantan is extremely hot. One day, I finally asked my students, “Why do so many people have on jackets?” She answered, “Because we do not want to get darker.” As an African-American female, I was immediately taken aback. It is one thing to deal with everyone assuming that I am from Papua or singing Shakira’s “Waka Waka” South African World Cup theme song when they

later decide that I must be from Africa. However, dealing with Indonesian color issues was the one thing that really disturbed me. The entire conversation made me uncomfortable and it made me wonder how the students perceive me, considering that I am darker than most of them.

Furthermore, I have had students and teachers openly tell me that I should have never cut my hair off because I was much prettier when I had hair (I cut my relaxed hair down to the scalp three months before coming to Indonesia and I am currently letting it grow out in its natural state). In general, Indonesians are more frank in talking about appearances (they openly call people fat, dark, handsome, etc.). While you may find yourself occasionally frustrated when having to address Indonesian stereotypes, remember that your fellow non-minority ETAs are dealing with similar problems, but on different issues. More importantly, you truly are a cultural ambassador, and it is essential that you do not reinforce any negative stereotypes of Americans during moments of anger.

Recently, my cousin was in Central Borneo, a remote, sparsely populated area. He overheard an Indonesian woman tell her traveling partner, a Caucasian American female, how she thinks black people are ugly and stupid. She did not realize that my cousin speaks Indonesian. When he responded in Indonesian, she was very embarrassed and apologetic, but the damage had been done. I think it is necessary to always address these situations. If you do not start a discussion about skin color, then people will continue to believe stereotypes and, even worse, they will think that Americans agree with them! I have tried to talk to my students about their skin tones and explain to them that being tan or brown is a good thing in the United States. I also try to encourage them to appreciate the diversity of skin tones in Indonesia. Next semester we are going to study famous black people from around the world, including Indonesia. It is impossible to correct every person, but, as ETAs, we can ensure that our students do not grow up believing bigoted, backwards ideas are okay.

Lastly, I want to leave you with the best thing about being a minority in Indonesia: whenever you want to go unnoticed, you can simply not talk. I can travel undisturbed around Indonesia in a way that other, lighter-skinned ETAs will never be able to. I have often taken a bus or *angkot* without saying a word, pretending that I have lost my voice. People give me a sympathetic look, but they do not bother me at all because they assume that I am from Papua. However, the moment you want recognition as an American, you simply can start talking and most people will correctly place your nationality. It is great to be able to switch your foreign status on and off. For example, last week I was at a national park in Indonesia and I was a bit tired when I got on the bus. The man selling us tickets assumed that I was *orang Indonesia* and he gave me a ticket for half the price of my Caucasian traveling partners. You never know when your minority status may come in handy.

### **Living My Identity Responsibly**

*by Ken Snyder, Pabelan, Central Java 2011-2012*

I think it might be interesting and beneficial to take a moment to think about being a white male in Indonesia, where the privilege that comes along with that will be particularly noticeable, and in many ways celebrated. What I'm getting at is the experience of being extremely conspicuous in all the "right" ways: gen-

erally taller, whiter, considered more beautiful. I've heard a lot of ETAs comment on the rock star celebrity treatment they receive in public spheres – however, I have yet to experience any genuine, insightful conversation about this phenomenon. What I don't want is a mass lamentation about the annoyance of signing autographs and taking endless pictures with Indonesians; in fact, that's the opposite of what I want. What I do think could be constructive is opening the dialogue of how this year as an ETA can help a lot of us begin or continue to navigate the discussion of some important themes: I think it's important that we constantly strive to remain humble instead of relishing in the increased attention; discussing ways in which this experience can be a springboard to further delve into issues of identity and privilege.

Throughout this year, I've questioned myself about what it means that I am the only white male living in my small village. I've thought about what it means to be in the minority for the first time in my entire life. However, in this circumstance, being the minority carries none of the negative connotations usually attached to being the "other." In fact, being a minority here has augmented my privilege in that not only have I experienced zero negative effects from being a minority – but I have even received preferential (more privileged) treatment. I've had a lot of internal discussions with myself about how comfortable I am with this experience, the ways in which I try to counteract these forces, and the ways in which I'm complacent and accepting of them.

### **I, Too, Sing America (In honor of Langston)**

*by Mia R. Keeyes, Kupang, West Timor 2010 - 2011*

I am the darker [sista]. They send me to eat in the kitchen when company comes, but I laugh, and eat well, and grow strong.

Tomorrow, I'll be at the table when company comes, nobody'll dare say to me, "eat in the kitchen," then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am [they are], and be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

*-Langston Hughes*

Pak on the *bemo* points his gnarled, bronzed finger at my hair and skin and says to me, "Papua? Dari Papua?"

"Bukan, Pak," I reply, "Saya dari Amerika." His countenance, which is sun-baked and wrinkled from both age and long days outside, contorts, deepening his facial lines. This, I gather, is a look of pure confusion and, somehow, faintly disapproving. He silently takes me in; the long, curly locs, deep brown skin, short frame and muscular arms. I watch him watching me. Snapping out of his reverie, almost angrily, he shouts, "Ndak! Papua! Papua! Kulitmu hitam!" He points vehemently at the caramel complexion of my exposed arms.

"Yes, I am Black, saya hitam, seperti orang-orang dari Papua, seperti Anda. Tapi, saya African-American." I speak slowly while adjusting the postal envelope in my hand so that I may point to my skin and then to his. By comparing my skin color to the Indonesian people of Papua, my hope is to discourage his rising volume and voice inflection.

"Afrikan? Kamu Afrikan?!"

"Ya, 'Pak. Saya African-American. African dan American." My duality obviously annoys him. My speaking English is taken as an affront to his brown-

ness: how dare this fellow Papuan insult me by speaking a foreign tongue? I try to explain that not all people in America have blond hair and blue eyes, no matter how prevalent this image is projected in the media. His rising agitation bothers me and he does not seem receptive to my explanation. Our encounter sits heavily on my mind even after I climb out of the *bemo* and walk toward the post office. I can feel his eyes searing into my back like a little sun, and my neck burning.

At Pos Kupang, I hand the long yellow manila envelope to Ibu behind the counter underneath the sign that reads Pos Di Luar Negeri. Our hands brush briefly and I cannot help but to notice the sharp contrast between my sun-brown and her light pear-colored skin tone. But I push the thought aside to calculate just how much this international mail would cost in dollars. While waiting for my money, Ibu doesn't hide her curiosity concerning the destination of my package.

"Mia—Keeyes—," she reads my name aloud. "Washington D.C. Dekat di New York? You relate Alicia Keys?" Smiling at this familiar inquiry (which I receive from people no matter what continent I am on), I took a breath, preparing to explain that 'Keys' isn't even her real last name and, furthermore, I spell my last name with two E's. But my retort doesn't matter, for Ibu cuts me off mid-sentence:

"No, no, you not relate. You too dark. She too light." She and the young woman next to her behind the counter—the boring beige, colorless counter—shake their heads in agreement, oblivious to my being taken aback by what I perceive as a tactless and ignorant response. Teaching moment, or feeding anger moment? Should I tell her that, in fact, my mother is damn near Alicia's complexion? Or that so-called Black people in America boast of all skin colors, and we actually could be family? Or that Alicia's own father is closer to my complexion than to the color of his daughter? I argue internally the pros and cons of teaching or reacting. But they've already moved on to the customer behind me. Or, rather, he's already moved me out of the way because I am somewhat frozen with shock. Walking out of the post office, every brown and black fiber in me wants to shout, "Alicia Keys is a Black woman!" (In the American legal sense of "Blackness")

I need a cool drink to calm my racing mind and heart. Of course, Kupang, reflective of most of Indonesia, is a dry town, so I really mean I need a cold green tea from Cemara Indah, the closest grocery store to the post office. Walking to the store, I pass several beautiful women, old and young. They are hot, like me. I watch one of them daintily pat at her face. As she does so, I notice that where she dabbed at her face there is an apparent two tone-ness: her browner skin is exposed underneath a veneer of white foundation. White foundation, I ponder while crossing the street toward the store.

"Selamat siang," I greet the sweet sisters who work the front cashiers. Now that I am here, I might as well grab some soap, because I just ran out of the peppermint soap I brought from home. The long aisle, Lantai 5, offers about 79 brands of soaps. Lavender-honey soap, cool fresh soap, tutti-fruity antibacterial soap, pink soap infused with rose hips, peach colored papaya soaps, bars of soaps treated with skin-softening essential oils... I run my fingers down the aisle; the sky blues and bright pinks, light yellows and soft tans of the soap packages are like a rainbow of cleanliness. Now, which to choose? *Yang mana?* I like the soft, clean smell of the wintergreen colored bar, so I pick it up to read

the contents (I'm a nerd, so I read EVERYTHING!): Somethingsomething-mineraloilssomethingelseWHITENINGblahblahblah... Whitening? Whoa, not what I'm looking for. I put it back. Yet, to my deepest dismay, almost all of the soaps that I pick up have a skin whitening agent. 'Well, I guess my Black behind is just gonna have to be dirty,' I conclude, before spotting Johnson & Johnson's baby bar soap at the far end of the aisle, on the bottom shelf. Surely there isn't an agent meant to alter the skins of innocent, lovely babes, so this is the soap for me. I guess there's not even a point to check the shampoo aisle for natural hair care products.

At the counter, the man before me in line wearing a dark black suit, and whose dark black hair is slick-backed, stares at me, unabashedly.

"Hello." I meet his gaze head on and hope that he realizes that I think he is terribly rude to stand so close and stare so openly. (This is me projecting my Americanized personal space, of course.)

"Dari mana?" the ever-first question surfaces.

"Saya dari America." Surprisingly, he laughs loudly and colorfully, almost cartoonishly, yet I cannot understand what I said that is so funny. Now he is pointing at me.

"You? From Amerika? Not Afrika?"

"I am from America—but I am African-American—like Michelle Obama—." This reference resonates with him, so I continue. "Like Will Smith?"

"Yes, yes, yes, saya tahu, I know them!" I am excited to have made a connection, so I keep going.

"Like—like—like Michael Jackson!" I exclaim. We both pause. He, out of confusion, and me because he looks worried. "Don't worry," I assure him, while collecting my bag of contents from the cashier belt. "Many Americans are confused, too."

Sipping my green tea, I am still heavy in thought by the time I reach my house. Many people in Kupang and in greater Indonesia, like the darker people of all colonized nations, suffer from serious post-colonial race and skin color issues, which stem from their years of being underfoot the Dutch. So, I should not take personally their aversion to 'other.' Yet, it pains my heart just the same. Where are the images that celebrate the darker brothers? How are the darker sisters uplifted and fed without a predominant culture of the celebration of their beauty? Why do they feel the need to be hidden, banishing the positive recognition of 'Blackness'?

The presence of Opa next door, who is sitting in his customary, brown chair underneath his sun porch, shakes me from my thoughts. His clay brown skin and deep facial recesses remind me of earth, strong, grounded, abundant earth. He greets me in *bahasa Indonesia* and proceeds to introduce me to his friend, a dark elder who looks similar to Opa. I gather that they are family, in some manner. He does not speak, initially, and then speaks softly and thoughtfully, "Amerikan, ya? You beautiful. Like my Alor people beautiful."

Alor is an island off the coast of Kupang, and its people tend to be dark skinned. I smile at his affirmation, his acceptance of me as a part of his reality and world, a beautiful part of this world, a beautiful part of what he knows to be beautiful, color and all. As I move to enter my house, he then says, "Selamat pulang baru," which means, "Welcome back home." And I feel that.

## When to Speak

by Victor Chiapaikao, Kupang, West Timor 2010 - 2011

Dear Indonesia,

Your persistent prodding has worked. I am physically and mentally exhausted. This, dear friend, is my tipping point.

I'm talking about convincing you all that I am American, of course. You obviously are not thrilled with the fact that I consider myself American, and the thought of being Asian-American doesn't quite register as being ethnically possible. "Orang Cina!" ("Chinese!"), you insist. You won't have it any other way until I give in and say, "Saya orang Cina."

"Jackie Chan!" you add with a howl, as if your repetition makes you more persuasive. You practice your karate kicks on me and even have the audacity to throw in a couple slaps to my face hoping that I will counter with a block and flip you sideways. I control the urge. Fortunately, I am not as shocked as the Caucasian friends beside me witnessing the exchange. I have been desensitized from youth and your cultural insensitivity no longer upsets me.

I am not Chinese, Japanese, or Korean. I understand that I look East Asian and that Hollywood portrays us as one big blob propagating from China. But my parents are Thai. And my grandparents were born in Thailand. And the reality that my parents emigrated from Thailand to the United States of America, became naturalized under the US Immigration Act of 1965, and that I was born in Elmhurst Hospital in Queens makes me a Thai-American.

"But Americans have blonde hair and blue eyes," you retort in scientific modality. "You have neither," you remind me as you obstinately draw circles with your index finger to highlight my face. For a brief moment, I consider reaching for my *United States* Passport, my *New Jersey* Driver's License, and the debit card from the Bank of *America* in my backpack, but quickly retreat from the idea, knowing that the payoff will not be worth the cost. You obviously are not buckling and you certainly are not looking to continue a discussion. Defeated, I utter the phrase, "Ok, saya orang Cina, Pak. Sampai nanti, ya." ("Okay, I'm Chinese, sir. I'll see you later, yeah?")

Oftentimes, it's easy to succumb to narrow-minded notions that have been so innately ingrained; but confirming false notions is not what I was sent to Indonesia to do. And it certainly is not what 22 years of forging a Thai-American identity gives me the convenience of doing. Every incredulous Indonesian deserves my growingly repetitive response: "I am of Thai ethnicity, but my parents immigrated to America when they were young. I was born in America, and America has been my home ever since." You deserve to know that the United States of America has been and continues to be built by a myriad of peoples: not only Caucasians, but African Americans, Latinos, Jewish Americans, Asian Americans and others. This may not be the answer you'd hoped to hear, but it is a truth that I live by proudly. So the next time you ask, be ready for my response – well, unless of course you are deciding whether to charge me the *bule* price, in which case I am whatever your lowest rate says I am.

## Being Jewish in Indonesia

*by anonymous ETA, 2010 - 2011*

I am in a car with my counterpart, bracing one hand against the window to keep from tumbling as we swing around sharp curves and dodge oncoming lorries, which are also, apparently, sharing our lane. Like the road, our conversation has been meandering for the last two hours. What began with a conversation about different kinds of Indonesian desserts has turned into a discussion about civil rights in America. I had just finished explaining the Jim Crow laws to her.

“Really in the 1960s? I cannot believe America had that so recently!”

“Isn’t it crazy?” I say, “And think about the Holocaust in Europe—that was only in 1940.”

“The what?”

“The Holocaust.” I look at her face for recognition. She shows none. “You know – against the Jews.”

“Oh!” she starts, and gives the look of uncomfortable surprise that is always accompanied with my utterance of this word. She does not know that I am Jewish. Like everyone else in my community – a city of several hundred thousand – she thinks I am a Christian. Indeed, they have good reason to believe this: every time I have been asked about my religion, my response has been “Christian.” I have even begun to go to church, occasionally, with Indonesian friends.

“The Holo-cause? What is?”

“You know,” I probe, “when the Nazis killed the Jews in Europe?”

She raises her eyebrows in an even higher look of surprise, and, now, doubt. “I don’t think so!” she says, and then she laughs as if I am trying to trick her. It’s this moment when my heart sinks, when I see that the woman whom I have grown to love the most in this new country, whom I call “sister” and to whom I feel that I can say almost anything, has never heard about the Holocaust. She cannot even believe that it could be true.

I try to think of where to begin, of what words I can use to explain the Holocaust and make it seem real to her. I try, but I cannot. I am struck silent by all the words and thoughts that I cannot tell her. I cannot say, “This happened to me, Ibu, to my family. To people whom I love and who are real, whose laps I have sat on.” I want to tell her about my great uncle’s concentration camp tattoos, about how skinny my father had said my uncle had been during the war. I want to explain that the Holocaust is the very reason why my family is in America. But I cannot. She cannot know that I am Jewish. It is, perhaps, the only risk that I am not willing to take. I go running in shorts, I talk about racy movies in class, and explain that it is not uncommon to drink alcohol in America. But not this. I do not feel that I can safely be Jewish, here.

My community is not exclusively Muslim, nor is it extremely conservative. Nevertheless, I have seen and heard anti-Semitic references frequently since coming to Indonesia; in people’s comments about the arrogance and hard-hearted nature of the Jews, in swastika graffiti and clothing, in the looks of disgust and wrinkled noses when I say the word “Yahudi” or “Jew.”

No, I cannot be Jewish. Even in this moment with a woman I love, I still feel that I have to hide myself, my family, and the crimes that we suffered. I find myself fighting tears and having to look out the window to gather my com-

posture. I focus on the jungle mountains declining slowly toward the ocean, the occasional hundred-foot-tall tree that sticks out amongst the rest.

I redraw my breath and turn back to her in the car. “Okay,” I say, and give her a smile, “Are you ready for another history lesson?”

She smiles and nods her head and I begin.

## Living as an Outsider in a Religiously Divided Community

by Rick Ferrera, Saparua, Central Maluku 2010 - 2011

“Amerika.”

The *angkot* driver considers the revelation of my nationality with an approving intentionality. Then his friend turns back to me from the front passenger seat and says, in an earnestly quiet voice, that Americans are good people – but Muslims aren’t, and I need to be careful around them so they don’t kill me. This is clearly a Christian *angkot*, which I already knew from the large Jesus sticker on the windshield. I’m in an area that experienced devastating violence between Christians and Muslims from 1999 to about 2005. Unlike many parts of the country, this province’s population is split roughly evenly between the two groups. Fighting has stopped, but whispered allegations have not. In my experience, the worst culprits seem to be young Christian men, who commonly warn me about Muslims upon learning of my American roots and incorrectly extrapolating a shared anti-Islam mentality.

I’m up too early in the morning to catch a boat back to my placement site on a small neighboring island, but this guy’s ignorance lights my temper; the remains of my slumber are quickly shaken off. A flood of images supports my anger – the friendly communities of Muslims in my hometown of Minneapolis, friends who are Muslim and not at all interested in killing me, Idul Fitri celebrations in Bandung during Orientation – but I don’t need to pile up proof that what he said is wrong. I already know that. The relevant question is what I can do about it. I can’t change the history of violence and distrust between Christians and Muslims in this province, but can I respectfully hold my ground in this situation and maybe even push back a little? This is a case in which my personal identity and my identity as an American are not in conflict. Personally and as a proud citizen of America, I know that he is wrong. How do I communicate that?

“Last night I had dinner in Diponegoro,” I tell him, referencing a mostly-Muslim neighborhood of the city. “I had *ayam lalapan* and no one tried to kill me.” (In fact, after that meal, we had visited Ambon’s Peace Gong and taken the following photo.)



I thought it was a good way to handle the situation, but he just looked at me with a dismissive expression as though I'd spoken absolute nonsense and turned around to continue smoking a cigarette. I was disappointed. Once again, it had been made clear to me that the person with whom I was conversing had no interest in having a dialogue about prejudice and tolerance. He knew what he knew, I was crazy; that was that - and, really, who am I to hold it against him? Who knows what kind of trauma he may have seen in this very city? The scars of violence are deep and long-lasting.

You win some, you lose some. The night before, dialogue was more successful. I'd spent the evening in Diponegoro doing nothing but playing with kids in front of my friend's house. They know I can count in Indonesian, and I know they laugh hysterically when I intentionally count out of order. We had a good time together, and none of us will soon forget it. Sometimes you feel like an effective cultural ambassador, and sometimes you don't.

### Indonesian Social Life

It's going to take some time for your social life to evolve: be patient but outgoing. Here are a few observations that may help you ease into your new Indonesian social life:

- Your social life will be highly determined by the kind of environment you live in, city vs. village, and by the relations you set with peers.
- A great portion of your social life depends on you. Even if you are tired of going to wedding parties, funeral gatherings, or religious ceremonies, you need to make an effort to attend.
- Make sure to participate in the local cultural practices and gatherings.
- Your housing placement and transportation will highly influence your social life. Living in a solitary house in the middle of a village is very different from living downtown in a booming city. English speakers are harder to find in small towns or villages. Also, the lack of structured social activities (bars, bowling allies, etc.) in towns and villages makes it harder to meet people of your age group. Indonesians are very friendly, but in towns and villages they are often shy and intimidated by the presence of foreigners; you may have to make the first move.
- Forget about drinking and the club scene. Outside large cities, Indonesian social life is shaped by family gatherings and other formal events – birthday parties, weddings, funerals and religious celebrations.
- Parties vary by region and religion, but usually require you to eat tons of food and know how to sing and dance the famous *caka-caka* (line-dance).
- Prepare your voice and dancing moves. Indonesians like to make foreigners sing and dance at all sorts of events. Karaoke is a major part of social life.
- Get ready to be a star and for the photo shoot of your life. Taking pictures with foreigners is a big hit here.
- In some regions, it is not common to make introductions when strangers walk into a social setting. You won't realize how much Americans rely on this convention until you feel its absence. If you need to be proactive and introduce yourself, feel free to do that.
- Don't feel disappointed about staying in Friday and Saturday night; enjoy the opportunity to do things you have no time to do at home.

## Small Town Life

by Luca Valle, Majene, Sulawesi 2010 - 2011

After spending a month in Jakarta and Bandung, you know the fun that can be had in big Indonesian cities. Maybe you feel a little hesitant to leave that all behind for your small town placement – but life in a small, rural Indonesian village is a wonderful thing! Sure, we don't have grocery stores; and yeah, internet cafes tend to be few and far between and way overpriced. And so what if you're more than eight hours away from an airport or a hospital with a treatment option more advanced than rubbing alcohol?

If you're able to let go of everything you're used to in western culture, I think you'll find that life in a small town can be very rewarding. My ETA experience brought me to the small fishing village of Majene, and I found that small towns help facilitate rapid and deep cultural assimilation. It was much easier to feel like I was part of the community when I would come across the people I see everyday at school in other places as well - at the market, or on the street in random other locales throughout the day. There aren't more than two degrees of separation between anyone in the village, and, as a result, as soon as you're in with somebody, you're in with everybody. And the small towns such as Majene still haven't seen enough *bule* action to suppress the impulsive choruses of "Hello mister!" I get each time I walk to school. From *becak* drivers to motorcycle repairmen, everyone greets me with an earnest sense of curiosity and a smile on their face, which is always a comforting way to start the day.

You will also spend far less money in places without invasive western chain restaurants, pricey taxis, and expansive malls. You know life is good when getting from one end of town to the other will cost a flat rate of 20 cents via *becak*, *ojek* or *pete-pete*. Living on less than five dollars a day is a very realistic endeavor in the more rural towns of Indonesia.

But the best news is that it is not only you who will benefit immensely from the small town experience; your community will too. With a native-English-speaker-to-Indonesian ratio that is much more favorable than in big cities, more people will be able to benefit from your presence. You will also have much easier access to the people in power in your village (whether it is the mayor, the administrators at the education headquarters, DINAS, or the chief fisherman of the village) and, as a result, you will be better able to make meaningful changes. Whether that means campaigning for an update in the curriculum at your school or rallying for funding for competition travel expenses associated with the English debate club, you will find yourself more involved in things that can really make a positive difference for the people of your village.

Contrary to what Journey says, your small town experience will not leave you feeling like you're "living in a lonely world." If anything, you will find the exact opposite to be true.

## My Indonesian Social Life

by Karen Evans, Samarinda, East Kalimantan 2010 - 2011

If you are a party animal who enjoys going to clubs, drinking, and dancing all night long, you're in for a change of pace. Outside major cities, Indonesia is a fairly conservative country. While Indonesia is on average not as strict as Middle Eastern countries, it is still a Muslim-majority nation and people take

## Adapting to a New Culture

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religion very seriously – social activities tend to be much more innocent than in the United States. Many cities are dry and it is nearly impossible to buy alcohol outside of hotels and clubs. Cities with a population of half a million or more usually have nightclubs, but they are often borderline brothels – many ETAs do not feel comfortable at such establishments. Fortunately, during the earlier hours of the evening, much of Indonesia does have lively restaurants and cafes where young people go to use the free Wi-Fi and *nongkrong* (hang out) with their friends.



*Try to accept every invitation to social events that you are offered, even though it will probably be tough to blend in.*

It is very important to prepare yourself for social life in Indonesia because it will not resemble a typical American social life at all. It is likely that your best friends will be your neighbors or students – they might be 10 years younger or 10 years older than you. Do not feel weird about this. Some of my best Saturday nights are spent hanging out with neighbors who are 18, 14, and eight. In fact, the eight year old and 14 year old are tied for my favorite people in Indonesia. Do not be surprised when your idea of a good time changes from clubbing to the more adventuresome circumcision party. That's right; in Indonesia, families typically have huge parties for a son's circumcision. No, the son is not a newborn baby; he is probably around eight or nine years old. Other major parties or weekend social activities include weddings, baby dedications, religious festivals, movies, and, of course, karaoke. There is a 50 percent chance that someone will make you go karaoke in your first month. Teachers and students will also probably try to make you dance or sing during different

school holidays, so practice while you can! These events are great for learning about the culture and are also genuinely fun.

However, be prepared for people to treat you like a celebrity, which can be quite annoying. When meeting you for the first time, people may want to take pictures and ask you a thousand questions about America and what you think about Indonesia. This can get extremely irritating after a while, but grin and bear it. Remember that for many people, you are the first person they have ever met from the United States, and you do not want to leave a bad impression. During orientation, a former ETA told us, "Never turn down an invitation because eventually they will come less often." Great advice! While Indonesian social life is typically much calmer than in the United States, you can still have a great time with your students, co-teachers and neighbors. Plus, if it ever gets too quiet, you can always take a nice getaway to one of the more touristy areas like Bali or the Gilis and refresh. Enjoy this chance to really get to know the people around you, both Indonesians and your fellow ETAs. You will probably find some unexpected best friends.

### Indonesian Food

An Indonesian meal usually includes *nasi*, *lauk* and *sayur*. *Sayur* is vegetables, and *lauk* is just about everything else – maybe chicken, fish, an egg, or tofu. If you don't like *nasi* (rice), start learning to – foregoing it can be interpreted in some areas as a sign of "I'm too rich to eat rice" arrogance. As a little ritual that people do together every day, eating is packed with the trappings of the culture in which it's done. Pay attention to the subtleties of how who eats what and when, and to the not-so-subtleties of sambal and heaps of sugar. Everyone adapts to new cuisine in their own way, but here are some points of entry for your transition.

### Eating – and How to Avoid Eating – in Indonesia

by *Hannah Vann, Medan, North Sumatra 2010 - 2011*

It won't be long before you notice a tendency to offer copious amounts of food to guests. Occasionally, you'll find yourself faced with something you really don't want to eat: it can be something really nasty, overwhelmingly sweet, or just interminable amounts of food piled onto your plate, thrust onto your desk at school or brought to your home. I've gone through just about every excuse in the book to avoid eating, and the following two are failsafe:

- *Saya kenyang*. It means "I'm full." You might have to say it five times, but it works.
- *Saya diet*. Meaning "I'm on a diet." This only works if you are a woman. Sorry guys - you're on your own!

### Dietary Restrictions

As an American coming to Indonesia, you'll be giving up a lot of the comfort and choice that characterizes your diet at home. That can be particularly difficult for those with dietary restrictions, but past ETAs have found ways to make sure their diets meet their needs.

## Vegetarianism

by Mary Barnes, Makassar, South Sulawesi, 2010 - 2011

It's not at all problematic to be vegetarian in most areas of Indonesia. Tempe, tofu, peanuts, eggs, and cheese are all immensely popular. Also, most cooks are happy to accommodate special orders. Just memorize the phrases:

*Saya tidak makan daging* (I don't eat meat)

*Saya mau pesan \_\_\_\_\_ tanpa daging/ayam/sapi/kambing/udang/ikan.*

(I want to order \_\_\_\_\_ without meat/chicken/beef/goat/shrimp/fish).

Careful: you often have to specify what counts as meat, as it's usually assumed to mean beef and pork only. And don't expect to find fresh veggies outside of the market!

## Allergies

by Luca Valle, Majene, Sulawesi 2010 - 2011

Southeast Asia can be a very dangerous place for people with food allergies and dietary limitations; so, naturally, I was slightly apprehensive about coming into this experience with severe allergies to both peanuts and soy. Fully aware that there are no emergency services in place and very limited access to sophisticated medical care outside of the capital, I wasn't quite sure how my allergy would affect my experience in a remote village. But since Fulbright has a reputation for attracting the daring, fearless, enthusiastic, and adventure-some, I decided to ignore the objections of my friends and family and accept the grant to Indonesia in spite of my inconvenient allergy.

If dietary restrictions are an issue for you, then the all-too-familiar ritual of reading the *komposisi* (or ingredients) label of each food item you buy will have to continue here. But it is also advisable that you arrive knowing how to read, write and pronounce any foods you may be allergic to. Helpful phrases to know might include:

*Saya punya alergi terhadap \_\_\_\_\_.* I am allergic to \_\_\_\_\_.

*Saya tidak boleh makan \_\_\_\_\_.* I cannot eat \_\_\_\_\_.

*Pakai \_\_\_\_\_?* Does this contain \_\_\_\_\_?

For me, peanuts have been easier to avoid than soy, as peanuts are often used in sauces that can simply be omitted from the item you are ordering. Soy is a bit trickier and has a tendency to find its way into everything from margarine to juice. But the bottom line is: if you can avoid the food at home, you can avoid it here. However, you do need to be more vigilant than normal.

Though very well-intentioned, many Indonesians have no experience dealing with dietary restrictions outside of a religious context – let alone an allergy to something so ubiquitous as peanuts or soy. My first experience with such carelessness took place on the second day after arriving at my placement site. My counterpart and I had decided to dine out at a local Mandar restaurant. Naturally, I verified that there were no peanuts in the soup the waitress had just served me, and I asked my counterpart to do the same to avoid any possible miscommunication. I was delighted when she told us both that the soup

was peanut-free, and I started sipping the hot, salty soup. But before I knew it, my counterpart slapped the spoon out of my hand and told me that she thought she tasted peanuts in the soup. Sure enough, seconds later, my lips started to tingle and my throat started to swell up ever so slightly. Luckily, the amount I ingested was small enough that I did not have to experience the life-threatening anaphylactic shock that is a common reaction in food allergies. After being asked why she had told us there were no peanuts in the soup when clearly there were, the waitress simply said, “Well, there weren’t very many.” It’s this sort of carelessness that can get you into trouble, so it’s best to not take everything people say at face value. Even the cooks themselves might unintentionally withhold vital information!

AMINEF will offer their suggestions of foods to stay away from (in my case, no *gado-gado*, *sau kacang* or *sop saudara*), but the burden is still on you to be extremely careful and to trust only the food that you’ve already tried. It’s also a good idea to tell your counterpart, your headmaster, your friends and anybody else in the community with whom you regularly eat about your allergy. The more people who are aware of your allergy, the lower the probability you will accidentally ingest your allergen. And, of course, bring your Epi-Pens and a whole bunch of Benadryl with you. Armed with these medications and suggestions, as long as you tread carefully during your time in Indonesia, you won’t have to spend every waking moment living in fear.

### **Advice for Individuals with Allergies:**

- Scan the list of ingredients on everything you buy.
- Learn how to say anything you can’t eat before departure and learn the key phrases outlined above.
- Don’t take everything Indonesians say at face value. Approach foods that have been okayed by Indonesians with caution, unless you know and trust the person.
- Bring a healthy supply of allergy-related medication with you.
- Ask AMINEF for common foods that contain the ingredient you can’t eat.

### **Preparing for Indonesia’s Food:**

- Most of your houses will not have ovens or microwaves. Before you leave home, learn some recipes for basic dishes that can be prepared with only a sink, a refrigerator and a gas stove.
- It may be difficult to figure out how to get a balanced diet for the first couple months. You can bring dietary supplements from home, or try your luck at finding them in Indonesian cities. Suggestions include a daily multi-vitamin, extra calcium supplements, probiotics, EmergenC and fiber supplements.
- Bring snacks and comfort foods that remind you of home to tide you over during the transition period into your sites. Granola bars, Fruit by the Foot, instant mashed potatoes, and macaroni and cheese are all great options for a lonely, “what the hell am I doing here?” October night - but by April you’ll probably be eating like a local and even starting to contemplate missing it.



*Cuisine varies widely from region to region. This is Sundanese food from West Java, and it's very different from dishes you might find in Sumatra, Maluku or other regions.*



Language



*If you don't learn any Indonesian, you might not be able to ask any of the questions you want to ask when you find yourself in situations like this.*

**Language** is going to be a defining aspect of your experience in Indonesia. You will work tirelessly and innovatively to promote your students' communicative English abilities – but after that, it's an open question. Will you work equally hard at learning Indonesian, or will you get by communicating in your native language all year, perpetually at the mercy of your interlocutor's ability to speak English? It can be fashionable to make value judgments about how people choose to answer that question, but evaluate the pros and cons for yourself. Your success as an ETA will not be measured by your level of Indonesian language ability at the end of the grant. Maybe your energies are better used lesson-planning and being available to speak English with students, teachers and community members than they are sitting at home studying Indonesian grammar - however, you should be aware that learning Indonesian may be the single most important thing you can do to improve your happiness, safety, and effectiveness as an ETA. How much to learn is your decision, and, like many other things during your grant, it will depend largely on a combination of your placement and your own interests and abilities. Following is an outline of the linguistic landscape you'll encounter in Indonesia, and the experiences of four 2010 - 2011 ETAs, each of whom had a very different experience with learning Indonesian.

### **The Linguistic Situation in Indonesia**

Almost everyone in Indonesia speaks Indonesian, although it's common to hear local languages too. Some are almost just variations of Indonesian (changing the pronouns and switching some letters out in predictable patterns), while others are very distinct. Although almost every person in the country knows at least a handful of words in English, relatively few of them are able to understand English as spoken by a native speaker. You will undoubtedly find yourself in situations with no other English speakers present – you can try to smile and nod your way through them, but don't be fooled by the lack of language requirement in this grant - Indonesia is not a country where everyone speaks English. If you live in a large city, chances are that you'll be surrounded by some competent English speakers; but in rural areas you might find yourself quickly learning a lot of Indonesian or relying very heavily on two or three English-speaking colleagues.

### **Learning Indonesian from Scratch**

*by Brian Kraft, Pekanbaru, Sumatra 2010-2011*

Perhaps you and I linguistically share some common ground. Maybe we both applied for the grant in Indonesia largely because it required no prior language skills. Or it could be that we both unsuccessfully pondered about in little second-language ponds without ever taking the arm-floaties off. Maybe one month it was Russian, and when that proved difficult it was French for a bit, all the while barely pulling B's in Spanish because conjugating sucks.

It is not easy to get the first new language bagged, so, if you intend to learn a lot of Indonesian, every bit of preparation you can do pre-arrival will help. I suggest using [learningindonesian.com](http://learningindonesian.com) podcasts for the basics. In my experience, the best way to ingest these strange sounds and words is to listen to a podcast first thing in the morning and jot down the new words on a flash card

so that you can conveniently impress your friends throughout the day. And of course, let the last thing you hear before letting your brain sleep for the night be that same podcast – it will solidify these odd syllables into your mind like the lyrics of a hip new song on the radio. (You could try downloading some Indonesian songs and learning the lyrics too – music is a great way to memorize. See suggested songs below.)

Upon arrival, take advantage of the language class offered during orientation and complement it with time spent practicing out of class. You will get out what you put in. Plaster sticky notes all over every noun in your room. Watch *SpongeBob* in Indonesian. Be very willing to fail and say embarrassingly blog-worthy things (word to the wise: *mengundang* is to invite – *mengandung* is something closer to impregnate). But most importantly, if you really want to learn the language, do not give up. If you so choose, you will be able to slip by in Indonesia courtesy of the rough and compulsory English ability of others, although it could be a bit hypocritical. Are we as language teachers willing to clock in the hours with our students and learn as we ask them to? Nine months in-country is the perfect chance for us both to end this mono-lingual epoch of our lives, and Indonesian – recently deemed a “critical language” in Washington – is worth every temple-rub and brain lapse.

### Songs to Check Out:

- **Kangen** - *Juminten*
- **Cokelat** - *Merah Putih*
- **Wali Band** - *Cari Jodoh*
- **K'naan and Ipang** - *Wavin' Flag/Semangat Berkibar*

### Building on Previous Indonesian Language Study

*by Sarah Munger, Sumbawa Besar, Nusa Tenggara 2010 - 2011*

Many a successful ETA has touched down on the tarmac in Jakarta with an Indonesian vocabulary countable on two hands. However, if you have already studied Indonesian formally, you may find yourself doing quite a bit of backpedaling upon arrival in the country: not surprisingly, everyday speech in Indonesia is an altogether different beast. What's more, depending on your placement, locals will likely speak in a daunting mash-up of Indonesian and at least one separate regional language, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Sasak or some other tongue neither of us has ever heard of. This all goes to say that you should not feel discouraged if, for example, you find yourself unable to communicate simple matters of price and direction with a cab driver during your first week in Jakarta after an entire year of university-level Indonesian.

That said, arriving in Indonesia with a formal language foundation may prove invaluable. After adjusting to accents and issues of speed and informality, your jump-started Indonesian will open many doors: from reinforcing classroom activities for lower level students to writing articles for a local newspaper, a sturdy grasp on the language can only enrich your stint in Indonesia.

The Indonesian language resources available to you will be highly site-specific. In a rural placement, language class may simply involve walking out your own front door each day and interacting with those around you; while an urban placement will likely be a double-edged sword – offering both more

English speakers within your community and more opportunities to study Indonesian formally with a tutor or at a university.

In preparing for departure with a mind towards continuing your language studies in Indonesia, you may consider the following hot tips: you'll have trouble finding flashcards in Indonesia (use the neglected paper cutter at your school to make your own); loading a flash drive with your old course work, vocabulary and resources is a great idea; a comprehensive yet travel-friendly dictionary will serve you well; and finally, when deciding what to bring and what to leave at home, remember that all language learning materials can double as templates for creating your own English lessons.

### **Learning Indonesian as an Uber-Bule Who Doesn't Need It**

*by Ben Vatterott, Mataram, Lombok 2010 - 2011*

When I touched down in Jakarta to begin ETA orientation, I knew only a handful of Indonesian words; nothing more than a couple of the *selamat* phrases. Despite a summer to study and a copy of Rosetta Stone, slothfulness had gotten the better of me and my language skills were nil.

To be honest, I didn't have much motivation – none of my career plans require learning Indonesian, and foreign languages have never been my forte. After leaving Indonesia, it's unlikely that I will ever use Indonesian beyond ordering at Indonesian restaurants and shamelessly attempting to impress members of the opposite sex.

Even after arriving at my site, there were still few reasons compelling me to learn much beyond my toddler vocabulary. All of my students spoke passable English, as did many of the teachers at my school. It would have been easy to skate my way through all nine months of teaching without ever consulting a dictionary or cracking open a textbook. (Lombok is a tourist destination.)

But still, it was immediately obvious that by limiting myself to conversations in English, I was only experiencing a sliver of the culture. I was unable to converse with any non-English speakers – *angkot* drivers, *bakso* sellers, market peddlers or fishermen. I could only understand the gist of festivals and religious ceremonies, and always carried a map with me because asking for directions was nearly impossible.

It wasn't long until I was carrying a pocket notebook and dictionary with me wherever I went – scribbling down new words when I heard them (or asking someone to write them for me) and forcing locals to patiently wait as I flipped through the pages mid-conversation, searching for that perfect word I'd learned a few days prior. Rosetta Stone still wasn't helping much, so I downloaded a flashcard program that better suited my learning style (BYKI - see "Resources" at the end of this section).

Most importantly, I tried never to shy from random conversations – people at my site were incredibly eager to speak with me, always wanting to know where I was from and where I was going. It didn't hurt that I am about as *bule* as they come – as a six foot, blonde-haired, blue-eyed Minnesotan, I fit well into the pervasive Indonesian stereotypes of Americans. In addition to making me an instant celebrity wherever I went, my appearance resulted in many Indonesians assuming I couldn't speak a word of their language. Even the simplest sentences earned me praise – once the gas station attendants told me that I was *pintar sekali* (really smart) after I simply uttered *tiga belas* (thirteen).

After only two or three months of on-and-off studying, I found myself already speaking at a basic level – I couldn't debate politics or discuss philosophy, but I could have simple conversations and even make a few rude jokes. Knowing just two or three hundred words can go a long way with a language like Indonesian, and already I felt much more integrated than when I first arrived. The difference was evident everywhere – at school, where I could always make the class laugh by attempting a new word; at the market, where I could effectively bargain; or on my weekend trips to rural villages where not a soul spoke English.

So, what's my advice for incoming ETAs? Even if you have no long-term reasons to study Indonesian, still try to learn as much as you can before you arrive and during your first few months. The pay-off for those first hundred words is incredible, and with 500 words you can express yourself quite well. Of course, it doesn't need to crowd out other activities – spending nights during orientation bonding with other ETAs might help you more in the long run than an extra few hours of memorizing. But just a little knowledge can open many doors to opportunities you would not have otherwise to hear opinions you wouldn't hear expressed in English - to the true fabric of the society. You've all been given not only an opportunity to experience a country that few Americans will ever see, but also the time to fully immerse yourself in the rich culture that it has to offer. Learning a bit of Indonesian, even if you'll never use it again, will help you make the most of it.

### **Language Learning as an Asian-American**

*by Mark Sueyoshi, Parung, West Java 2010 - 2011*

This anecdote is about learning Indonesian as someone who is unmistakably of ethnic Asian descent. After accepting that many Indonesians will assume I am Japanese, Chinese, or Korean even after explanation, I've found that practicing Indonesian becomes easier for me than most of my fellow ETAs – and by “fellow ETAs,” I mean those who look closer to the Indonesian stereotypes of Americans (i.e. of European descent). This, I assume, is because more people in Indonesia know and want to practice English than may know and want to practice Asian languages: here, physical appearance is often associated with language ability. So, in the end I can often pass as either an ethnic Chinese-Indonesian (there is a large and historically important Chinese diaspora in Indonesia) or as an Asian tourist who does not know English well and thus can only interact in Indonesian.

On the other side of this, because I look more Indonesian than American, less people initiate conversation with me. Photos with other Americans are a big deal; photos with me often are not. That said, extroversion is really the game changer. When I approach Indonesians for conversation or anything else, I'm often well received. When I do something off key like pulling out some basic swing dance moves at a dinner for a pedagogy conference, people want pictures. However, I could easily keep to myself and not practice spoken Indonesian, which is not always the case for lighter-skinned ETAs who are frequently approached by curious strangers. In terms of learning Indonesian, I face some basic advantages and disadvantages that can be magnified or overcome based on my personal actions.



*Even if you don't know any Indonesian, you might find yourself thrust behind a live microphone in front of too many people. Hope you have some good jokes ready!*

## Resources:

If you want to get started learning Indonesian at home, your problem should not be finding resources, but deciding which ones to use. *Bahasa Indonesia* by Yohanni Johns and *Beginning Indonesian Through Self Instruction* (from Cornell) are the most comprehensive resources on this list, allowing for in-depth study by motivated students. The Cornell product, with its method of introducing new vocabulary through recordings of native speakers, is particularly useful for developing accurate pronunciation.

**An Indonesian-English Dictionary by John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily**  
Probably the best dictionary available, this publication includes two books, an English-Indonesian dictionary and an Indonesia-Inggris dictionary. Available from Cornell University Press in the States, but probably easier to buy after arriving in Indonesia - Gramedia carries it. (Same as *Kamus Indonesia-Inggris*)

## Anki

Located at <http://ankisrs.net>, this downloadable program allows you to make virtual flash cards and provides various ways to study them.

## **Bahasa Indonesia by Yohanni Johns**

This two-part series consists of *Bahasa Indonesia: Book One, Langkah Baru and Bahasa Indonesia: Book Two, Introduction to Language and Culture*. It accurately uses English and Indonesian to explain Indonesian grammar and then presents language in context through texts taken from various media. It is available at Periplus bookstores (located in airports and malls in major cities), or possibly found online with the ISBN 978-0-945971-57-3.

## **Basic Indonesian Survival Guide** by Kathryn McNamara & 2011-2012 ETAs

A compilation of what this group thinks is most important for you to know. Distributed through the virtual PDO website and by AMINEF during the summer. You will have to adapt its format to your learning style.

## **Beginning Indonesian Through Self-Instruction by John Wolff**

This book is a very comprehensive introduction to the language that incorporates integrated learning (reading, writing, speaking and listening) better than the other products on this list. Each chapter includes new vocabulary, a dialogue, applied grammar exercises, and then an explanation of new grammar and structures introduced in context in the dialogue. Using the accompanying CD, it should be possible to hear a native speaker pronounce every new word you learn – this helps in avoiding the pitfalls of interference from pronunciation patterns of your native language. Must be ordered from Cornell University – <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/southeastasia/publications/item.asp?id=1085>

## BYKI

Byki.com offers free language flashcard software that you can download onto your computer. It's a little more advanced than Anki because it's geared specifically for language learning. Flashcards come in themed sets such as travel, animals and colors, and there is an audio option that helps with pronunciation. The beginner sets are free, but you can also pay for more advanced software.

### **Instant Indonesian by Stuart Robson & Julian Millie**

If you find rote learning difficult, *Instant Indonesian* may come in handy. This pocket-sized guide introduces you to 100 popular Indonesian words and provides instances in which you're likely to see them. This book is helpful in getting you on your feet, even if you're only learning one word a day - doing one word a day all summer before departure will add up!

### **Kamus Indonesia-Inggris**

Probably the best dictionary available, this publication includes two books, an English-Indonesian dictionary and an Indonesia-Inggris dictionary. Available from Cornell University Press in the States, but probably easier to buy after arriving in Indonesia - Gramedia carries it. (Same as *An Indonesian-English Dictionary*)

### **Learning Indonesian Podcasts**

This is a great way to learn some basic Indonesian while on the go (driving to work, running, or wherever else you can play a podcast). Many ETAs have been quite satisfied with it. For the motivated learner, the website, [learningindonesian.com](http://learningindonesian.com), includes PDF worksheets to accompany the audio lessons.

### **Live Mocha**

Livemocha.com is a free online language-learning tool that has just added Indonesian to its repertoire. It walks you through a large range of vocabulary using flashcards (these have a native-speaker audio accompaniment) and then offers quizzes to test and practice. Perhaps the best feature of Live Mocha is its ability to record and play back your own voice as well as submit a speaking sample to a native speaker for tips. Note: Live Mocha requires internet access during use, unlike other downloadable programs on this list.

### **Lonely Planet Indonesian Phrasebook**

Phrasebooks help you immediately communicate on a basic level and get you familiar with grammatical structures of the language without having to necessarily understand every word. Once you have begun to learn the language, knowledge of common phrases can help you create sentences of your own.

### **Mivo TV**

Mivo.tv lets you stream eight Indonesian TV stations. After you pick up a few words from the other sources, TV is a great way to familiarize yourself with speech patterns, as well as the concept of *lebai* (dramatic, over-the-top) via Indonesian soap operas, music videos and commercials.

### **Rosetta Stone**

Rosetta Stone is expensive - but if you can get it from your school or public library for free, get it. It connects sounds and images and has no English. But it has a flaw common to most basic language-learning resources - you'll rarely hear anyone actually speak this formally. It also doesn't emphasize "survival Indonesian" - the phrases that will be immediately helpful when trying to get on your feet in a new country.



Health



*The more time you spend home sick in bed, the less time you have to sit and help local merchants like this kid sell Fanta and eggs.*

**Like** the rest of this book, the advice in this section is strictly from former ETAs to current ones. These words do not reflect official policies of AMINEF or the State Department. You should consult your doctor to determine the best immunizations, prescriptions and disease-prevention strategies for you. The “Planning and Packing” section includes a list of medications that prior ETAs suggest bringing from home, so that will not be repeated here.

### Pre-Departure

When you visit the travel doctor before you leave for Indonesia, you will likely receive a laundry list of vaccinations, recommendations and, if you're lucky, a stack of pamphlet-style literature on topics like “Avoiding Insects,” “Dengue and Other Mosquito-borne Illnesses” and “Food: Boil It, Cook It, Peel It, Or Forget It.” How you choose to follow this slough of advice is entirely at your own discretion: as of May 2012, there are no prerequisite vaccinations required for entry into Indonesia. Your respective pre-departure immunization schedule will depend on both your particular placement in Indonesia and what your health insurance covers. That said, we suggest you consider bolstering your immune system with most, if not all, of the following inoculations. Even with vaccines, people do get sick here – 2010-2011 ETAs have experienced potentially serious diseases, including typhoid, dengue fever and malaria.

The following is a general list of commonly recommended immunizations for travel to Indonesia. Some are more important than others – nearly all travel doctors will recommend immunization against typhoid, but not all will advise you to worry about Japanese encephalitis (and in our experience no one else here worries about it either, unlike in other SE Asian countries where it seems more prevalent). Consult your physician and the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website for the most up-to-date information about recommended immunizations for your site and any potential travel destinations.

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Tetanus or Tetanus Booster
- Typhoid
- Meningitis
- Seasonal Influenza
- Rabies
- Japanese Encephalitis

There are currently no vaccinations for malaria. Medications that protect against malaria in Indonesia include mefloquine, doxycycline or Malarone. If you are placed in a high-risk area and plan to bring prophylaxis medicines from the United States, be advised that doxycycline is widely available in Indonesia for a fraction of the stateside price, though its production may not be regulated as tightly as it would be in the US. Several ETAs have used doxycycline purchased in Indonesia without problems. Malarone has relatively few side effects compared to doxycycline, but is very expensive and not available in Indonesia. Mosquito netting can be purchased in Indonesia, though it may be impossible to find in smaller towns. Consult the CDC website for a list of high-

risk malarial areas in Indonesia. This disease is a reality of life in some places, and ETAs have contracted it. Indonesians in rural areas will often suggest that eating bitter food, like papaya leaves, will make your blood less delicious to mosquitoes, so you can try that too. Because of side effects, some ETAs choose to take their chances with malaria rather than use prophylaxis medication for nine months.

For other diseases and health problems, such as dengue fever or traveler's diarrhea, your best defenses are hand-washing, avoiding mosquitoes, getting plenty of sleep and staying as hydrated as possible. It is highly recommended that you bring the immediately effective and inexpensive Cipro (Rx only) from the US for when your bowel movements get out of hand due to unwelcome bacteria (have your doctor provide multiple large prescriptions, if possible). Baby wipes may also be used as a relieving substitute for toilet paper when you find yourself using the bathroom more frequently than normal.

### **Diet and Exercise**

You are what you eat, so be careful when living in Indonesia not to become *pisang goreng* (fried banana). Fried food, over-cooked vegetables and mystery meat may quickly become your average meal. If you love salads, cheese, dairy products, burritos, wheat bread, pizza and fine chocolates, you might experience long periods of culinary dismay (unless you live in a big city like Surabaya). Yet somehow, with all of those staples missing from your nine months in Indonesia, you will no doubt discover satisfying replacements to keep you healthy and happy. Indonesia has amazing fruit that is filled with lots of antioxidants to help fight all the free radicals in the fried food. There are also fresh greens at most markets that you can cook up to get your minerals. Eating young coconut alongside fresh fish tastes great and will give you a great balance of Omega 3, 6 and 9. If you are very sensitive to spicy food, you might be in trouble. Cooking for yourself might be the only remedy, but this will depend on your placement and isn't worth worrying about in advance.

Access to workout facilities and quality running routes will vary from site to site, but most ETAs have been able to find a routine that suits their needs – one ETA even used a tree near his house for daily pull-ups (and thus always had work out buddies, of course), and put local children on his back to make push-ups more challenging. Female ETAs have often felt uncomfortable running outdoors or using public gyms; wearing loose-fitting clothing can help.

### **Keeping Your House Clean**

Many of your houses will have a water basin instead of a sink in the bathroom. In most Indonesian households the bathroom water basin is kept filled at all times and used for toilet-flushing, hand-washing and bucket showering, among other things. However, remember that stagnant water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes and germs. Make sure to empty your water basin every few days and scrub out the bottom with an anti-bacterial soap.

You can try Baygon, which is a very strong bug-killing chemical that works like magic to turn even the nastiest of bugs straight onto their backs.

Mold can be removed by dousing the affected area with a spray bottle filled with a mixture of water and bleach. Repeat this process every few weeks to keep mold at bay.

### Food Sicknesses and Germ Reduction

The most important advice about food in Indonesia is to always wash your hands and go with your instincts. If something does not smell or taste fresh, don't push your luck. Throw it away. Also, in your own home, throw out any food that has started to go bad. Indonesia is not a place where you want to be scooping off the moldy parts of food just to save what you can. Many medicines and foods are used to help prevent food borne illness, such as GSE (Grapefruit Seed Extract), yogurt or the widely available Yakult. These can be taken every day to help maintain good stomach bacteria, especially when you first arrive in Indonesia or after bad bouts of diarrhea.



*A lot of digestive ailments are traced back to street food like this. You can never be sure of the conditions when buying food at a street stall, but if you never do it you might miss out on some delicious opportunities.*

### When You Become Sick

Many ETAs have been less than impressed by their experiences with the Indonesian health care system. For better or for worse, you may find yourself more actively involved in the diagnosing and prescribing process than ever before. If you think you have dengue, typhoid, malaria, parasites, bacterial dysentery or anything that requires a lab to diagnose, then you should follow these steps (again, according to us - keep in mind that we're not doctors):

- Determine what disease you might have and find the necessary diagnostic test: for example, typhoid requires a blood test; parasites require a stool sample. If you are unsure what diseases are consistent with your symptoms, consult AMINEF, internet resources or notes from orientation (where health and disease will be covered extensively, though perhaps confusingly).

- Visit your local hospital or medical lab (such as Prodia) and obtain the tests necessary to determine the cause of your ailments.
- Again using local doctors, AMINEF, the internet and orientation notes as your guide, go to a pharmacy and buy the correct medicine. Prescriptions are often unnecessary and the medicine is cheap.
- Remember to keep your receipts and file them with 7 Corners for possible reimbursement. See below for more on this limited health care benefit plan.
- Keep in contact with AMINEF about your condition.

Generally speaking, different illnesses will be addressed at different tiers of medical treatment. For issues that cannot be safely resolved at your local hospital (such as appendicitis), AMINEF will assist you in traveling to an SOS clinic in either Jakarta or Bali. Extreme cases (traffic accidents, internal bleeding) will be medically evacuated to Singapore or the United States.

### Insurance

All ETAs will have limited health care benefit plans through 7 Corners. This plan requires payment at the time of treatment and may not cover injuries incurred during recreational activities. Plan to pay for all medical care up front and file for reimbursement later. Bring medical forms to your appointment if possible to avoid delays (<http://usdos.sevencorners.com/forms>).



*Motorcycles, called ojek when used as public transportation, are helpful but can be extremely dangerous.*

## The Malaria Diaries

*Brandon Reed, Masohi, Central Maluku 2010 - 2011*

Perhaps the only thing more disconcerting than getting malaria in rural Indonesia is the almost completely disinterested way in which the doctor presents the news to you. That fateful November day when I visited the hospital for a blood test, the doctor declared me positive for malaria, wrote out a prescription, handed it to me with a smile, and was on to her next order of business before I had time to say, "I have *what?*" Apparently malaria's just not that big of a deal in Indonesia, provided you have access to the drugs that knock the beastly bug out of you. And it turns out that even rural Indonesian pharmacies carry Malarex.

It all started with a fever. I was knocked out of commission for a few days with a headache and temperature of 102 (not quite prime for scrambling eggs on your forehead, but getting there). I popped a Z-pack and within a few days I was feeling better. But the fever came knocking again about a week later, this time inconveniently interrupting a Thanksgiving vacation in Bunaken and crushing my diving ambitions for the trip. At this point, I was thinking I maybe had dengue fever, so I opted for a blood test when I got back to my site. And while dengue it wasn't, malaria it was.

When I went to the pharmacy to get my medicine, I was surprised to learn that all I had to do was take three green pills over the course of three days, rest a lot, eat even more than usual (difficult to do in already food-crazy Indonesia), and I'd be back to 100 percent. I alerted AMINEF about my development, and, not being keen on gambling with Fulbrighters' health, they flew me to Jakarta for follow-up blood work and a consultation with the US Embassy's doctor. I really appreciated AMINEF's eagerness to ensure I was all right, but it's worth noting that I already felt loads better after my three days of green pills. The Jakarta trip was really more to set everyone's minds at ease. Malaria can linger in your blood system even after treatment, and this is what AMINEF wanted to make sure didn't happen.

Malaria is certainly a serious illness and not something to mess with. That being said, it's by far the easiest deadly disease I've ever had the pleasure of combating. While it's ironic\* that, as one of the few folks in our program regularly taking his anti-malarial drugs, I was struck with the bug, I do stand by the mefloquine (or whatever your anti-malarial of choice is). Despite the simplicity of treating it, malaria was still more hassle than it was worth and the anti-malarials do give you some protection. My best advice: if you have a fever for more than a day, get a blood test right away and save yourself the pain of watching your friends go diving while you hold down the fort (or resort). If however, malaria does find you, take your medicine - and take heart in having a new water cooler story that not many future co-workers will be able to beat.

*\* I was also ridiculously paranoid about Japanese encephalitis before coming here. I brought an embarrassingly large amount of DEET lotion with plans to lather up every night before bed if the situation called for it. Needless to say, my paranoia has served as fodder for many a joke this year among the ETAs. There are plenty of things you should be focusing on before leaving for Indonesia, but your likelihood of acquiring Japanese encephalitis probably shouldn't be at the top of the list - though it is a serious disease and you should make every effort to avoid mosquito bites while you're here.*

## **Emotional Health While Living Abroad**

*by Ben Vatterott, Mataram, Lombok 2010 - 2011*

For many of you, a year in Indonesia will be the longest time you have ever spent away from friends, your family and the United States. Certainly, it will be an incredible experience that few are fortunate enough to have, but it will also be challenging and occasionally frustrating. Highs will be followed by lows, successes will be accompanied by failures, and more than once you may ask yourself if this experience is truly what you wanted.

Undoubtedly, some of you may think this particular section of the book doesn't apply to you. Perhaps you have no history of counseling or depression. Maybe you have spent long periods of time away from home before, without incident. Indonesia might be the country you have always dreamed of visiting, and experiencing anything less than bliss during your stay doesn't seem possible. Whatever the case, know that your upcoming year as an ETA will likely be one of the most emotionally challenging experiences of your life thus far. Your living situation will be different from any previous lodgings you've known, you will have no social network at your site before arriving and may find it difficult to make close friends, your site won't look like a postcard from Bali, or you might find that locals at your site do not hold positive views of the United States and the western world. Before long, you may find yourself harboring feelings towards your site, your school and Indonesia that you previously didn't think possible.

These emotions, and those like them, are completely normal symptoms to experience when living abroad. Even if you have no previous history of depression, you may occasionally feel sad, anxious, helpless, guilty, irritable or restless. You may lose interest in activities that you used to enjoy, change your eating habits, have problems concentrating and avoid social situations. Perhaps you will begin to feel distrustful of all those around you, disgusted by how people treat you or dismayed by the way Indonesians treat one another and the environment. These are all natural responses to living abroad, and are certainly not cause to return home – rather, they are symptoms that can be addressed and remedied, yielding a more wholesome ETA experience.

### **Preparing Yourself for Emotional Challenges**

Controlling your emotional well-being is a process that begins before you ever step foot in Indonesia. Past ETAs have found it useful to create lists of goals or launch blogs for sharing their experiences with friends and family back home. If you have a previous history of depression, indicate as such on your AMINEF medical forms – you've already been selected at this point and won't be suddenly disqualified, and AMINEF can potentially place you at less emotionally stressful sites. Assist your technologically-challenged parents with setting up Skype and webcams. If you are leaving a bad situation behind – arguing parents, a nasty break-up, a family member fighting disease – make sure to say everything you need to say before leaving. Although you will be 10,000 miles away, unresolved problems at home will become more acute once you remove yourself from your normal support networks. It sounds silly to say, but distance means nothing to emotions – they can reach across oceans and time zones to affect your experience in Indonesia.

If you see a therapist, counselor or psychiatrist at home, it may be possible

to continue sessions via Skype or email. Discuss options with whomever is appropriate before leaving home. A list of therapists that are available to provide such services is available at [www.internationaltherapistdirectory.com](http://www.internationaltherapistdirectory.com).

If there is even a remote chance that you may need anti-depressants while abroad, obtain them before leaving the United States. Anti-depressant medications are essentially impossible to purchase in Indonesia, and difficult to ship from home. Further complications arise when considering that most anti-depressants must be taken for three or four weeks before their effects are felt. It is recommended that you obtain the largest prescription possible before leaving the United States – one possible loophole is obtaining the largest prescription supply allowed at the largest dosage possible, which you can later divide into smaller, appropriate dosages. If you do decide to take anti-depressants, commit to using them for at least a several month period – it can be difficult to manage your emotions during the transition periods from off to on and vice versa.

### **Maintaining Emotional Well-Being While in Indonesia**

More than anything else, your emotional health will depend on how proactively you recognize, acknowledge and maintain/improve your state of being. The following is a list of techniques past ETAs have used to mitigate negative emotions while in Indonesia:

- Create a list of goals and do your best to achieve them.
- Use orientation to meet other ETAs and focus on relationships with them.
- Maintain contact with other ETAs and discuss difficulties at your site.
- Foster and maintain a good relationship with your counterpart.
- Try not to refuse any offers or cancel any engagements.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Purchase sleeping medication (Benadryl is one possibility) if you have trouble sleeping.
- Keep a blog. It doesn't have to be much or cover everything; even just a picture and caption each week will do.
- Keep a journal.
- Endure the paperwork and headaches necessary to obtain a Skype-worthy internet connection at home.
- Skype, email, Facebook and write letters to anyone and everyone.
- Don't abuse alcohol or use drugs.
- Read and relax in public areas where you won't be bothered – the presence of others can be reassuring.
- Adopt relaxation techniques like tai chi, yoga, massage, or spa treatments.
- Exercise regularly.
- Join clubs and organizations.
- Find other westerners in your area and befriend them.
- Improve your Indonesian, thereby improving the possible depths of your friendships.
- Take part in local ceremonies, celebrations and customs.



Teaching



*Cultivating a good relationship with Indonesian teachers  
in your community will go a long way.*

**You walk** to the front of the classroom and approximately seventy eyes are fixed upon you. These eyes are clear, focused, and don't seem to blink. Ever. They belong to students whose first language is not your own, who come from a completely different culture, and who are looking to you—the celebrity of a native English speaker—to teach them. Regardless of your teaching experience, this will be a new, exciting and challenging endeavor. Your time in the classroom will be the focal point of your Fulbright experience. This chapter seeks to make the teaching facet of your grant more tangible, to help you visualize your placement, anticipate adversity and begin thinking about how you are going to best prepare yourself for the enjoyable challenge that is teaching in Indonesia.

### What to Expect at Your School

In a trite phrase, you can only “expect the unexpected.” Objective and unwavering rules concerning placement sites in Indonesia are *habis*, an Indonesian word liberally used to indicate that whatever it is you're looking for is gone. Unless you have been in contact with an ETA previously at your placement site, there is no way to predict your individual classroom situation. Most of you will not be able to learn much about your school before arrival. To give a peek into the unknown, this section provides a series of written snapshots from several different placements.

The Indonesia ETA 2010 - 2011 placements can be categorized into four different school types (madrassa, pesantren, SMA, and SMK), with two different geographical/demographical locations (urban and rural). Again, please keep in mind that no school is exactly like another.

School Type	Notes
Madrassa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religiously affiliated with additional classes on religion.</li> <li>• No boarding students</li> <li>• Typically urban</li> </ul>
Pesantren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religiously affiliated with additional classes on religion.</li> <li>• Boarding students</li> <li>• Typically rural</li> </ul>
Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically no religious affiliation</li> <li>• Students may or may not board</li> <li>• Intended to prepare students for university</li> <li>• Comparatively well-outfitted with resources, but urban schools tend to have more than rural schools</li> </ul>
Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically no religious affiliation</li> <li>• Students may or may not board</li> <li>• Intended to prepare students for a particular vocation</li> </ul>

## School Snapshots

Here's a look at four very different schools. These placements were chosen to demonstrate a wide variety of school types and locations: urban madrassa, urban SMA, rural pesantren, and rural SMK. They are included so that you can begin to visualize teaching in Indonesia – but take them as the anecdotes they are.

### Urban Madrassa

*by Abbey Jones, Semarang, Central Java 2010 - 2011*

The rooster crows as I rub my eyes. Playful carnival-like music weaves in with yet another rooster's crow, and I assure myself that I live in a city. My cell phone says it's 5:40 am, five minutes before my alarm and one hour before I must be at MAN 1 Semarang to teach.

My lessons are simple. While my students have been learning English for several years, their speaking abilities are virtually non-existent. This is due to several factors: classes are only once a week, students learn English from teachers who do not speak English themselves, and students also have the extra burden of religion and Arabic classes not expected of public high school students. My goal is to teach very basic English, followed by group practice and games, to make my students feel comfortable speaking English. This method was new for my students, as their classrooms are not normally very interactive, but my students have made incredible improvements. It makes me so excited to hear students use their English without pressure from me.

When I return to the teachers' room, I watch the women adorn prayer robes and pray in the corner of the room. Sometimes, they are so still, I do not realize they are real. They look like mannequins. But then, they swing into motion, bowing and kneeling. I watch their lips move slowly, eyes closed.

My day is often punctuated by such religious moments. While I personally cannot relate, I find myself wishing I could. I hear the beauty in the Arabic words sung during the morning prayer; I hear the enthusiasm of my students as they say, "Let's pray together!" The religion teacher sends me countless Facebook links about his religion and how to better understand it. Religion is something that is done naturally at the school, like breathing, rather than something that is staunchly enforced.

Although I am not a Muslim, I feel I have integrated well into the culture of the school. I get to know teachers and students one by one, discussing topics like Arabic, religion and Javanese. Because most teachers do not speak English, learning Indonesian has been a great avenue for developing relationships with people. I also elected to wear a *jilbab* to show respect for the school. Both students and teachers appreciated this gesture, and I am very happy with my decision. Teaching at an urban madrassa straddles the traditional and the modern, and it's up to me to try to find my place in between.

### Urban SMA

*by Polly Furth, Amurang, North Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*

Most days, I arrive sweaty to school. It's a 15 minute walk from my house, along either the main road (pros: clean and well-paved - con: stiflingly hot) or the beach (pro: breezy - cons: landmine dog poop and fishing nets). However

sweat-stained I am on arrival, I am always grateful for one of the great perks of teaching at SMA 1 Amurang: I can wear pretty much anything I want. Unlike female ETAs at more conservative schools who swelter in long-sleeves and ankle-length skirts, I can (and do) wear short-sleeves, knee-length shorts, sandals and even Converse All-Stars. The informality is partly because my school is in a Christian region and partly because it's a bit of a free-for-all.

Chickens, dogs and teachers' toddlers run happily around the grounds; teachers interrupt class to answer cell phones and smoke; students whoop "What's up, Miss?" as I pass their classrooms. This friendly chaos has its downsides, of course. If I need something done by an administrator, it can take several days of prodding. Class schedules vary unpredictably. Of the non-broken technological resources available, there's usually only one person who knows how to operate them, and he's usually out for lunch.

But I say all this with affection, because the teachers and students at SMA 1 Amurang are the warmest, most generous and eager people I've ever known. In and outside the classroom, teachers drop anything to help (including, but not limited to, offering me their home remedy for body aches: a can of Guinness mixed with a raw egg). Since a curriculum isn't followed, I'm free to teach lessons as creative and madcap as the school itself. The students, whose English proficiency is extremely low, participate enthusiastically. And when I hold after-school English Club at my house, a group of eight or ten students join me in the sunny walk home; I teach them how to say "sweat" in English.

### **Rural Pesantren**

*by Thomas Davis, Sidrap, South Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*

The end of Monday morning's flag ceremony and rays of warm tropical sun greet me as I exit the little room I call home, ready to teach in khakis, closed-toe shoes and a blue button-down shirt. A round of "Good morning, Mister!" rings out as I head past the library next door – with its small corner of English material – towards the classroom where my 10th graders are scrambling to finish homework and chatting in the local language. My counterpart, Daya, is there to greet me, as she always is, and we walk into the classroom together.

The desks and chairs for twenty-some students fail to fill the large room, with its fresh coat of green paint, recently tiled floor, and natural light illuminating the pictures of Indonesia's president and vice president hanging above a well-worn whiteboard. A straggler from the dorms sneaks into his back-row seat as Daya and I begin the day's lesson. With few resources and the lone projector in use elsewhere, the two of us proceed through the lesson armed with markers. Less chatty today, the students take notes and pay fairly close attention as we go over a simple lesson. The students' English capabilities are low on average and vary greatly between and within each class, but all are eager to learn and willing to put in effort. After class, Daya chats with me in her nearly perfect English as we dodge a couple of sheep and two of the headmaster's young children on our way to the first of my two 11th grade classes.

We head into the classroom, where another twenty-some chairs occupy a room nearly identical to the first. All the girls are seated and ready, and the boys come rushing in to take their places. With so few students, I've been able to memorize the names of all my students. I pull out the role book, noting that

the late crew will have some remedial push-ups after class. Daya sneaks out to re-fill a marker as I take roll, and when she returns, we begin the lesson. An hour and fifteen minutes later and a solid lesson in the bag, Daya and I chat for a bit. We talk about a couple of grammatical mistakes she made during the lesson, which she immediately makes note of; then we discuss a pesantren teacher's upcoming wedding, to which I am invited. We head to the teachers' lounge, where some are surfing the web and everyone is drinking tea and snacking on the *oleh-oleh* I brought back from a recent trip. They all look up to offer their greetings and make me feel right at home as I pour my own cup of tea. Outside, the students mill around, playing soccer on the lawn, visiting the co-op for a sweet treat or noodles - boys with their blue ties and girls in their white *jilbabs*; laughing together, running away from overly aggressive geese, all waiting for the next class period to begin.

### Rural SMK

*by J.T. Erbaugh, Tlogowungu, Central Java 2010 - 2011*

The classroom walls are a faded teal. Twenty-nine Indonesian students chat idly, dressed in their white and blue school uniforms. At the front of the classroom, I am hunched over my laptop, coaxing the LCD projector to work. It doesn't work.

"Hold on, everyone. *Sebentar, semuanya.*"

There are two LCD projectors at our school, one of which is functional and the other of which acts as a decoy, tricking unsuspecting American teachers. Also, three out of eleven classrooms have electricity. I am rarely able to match the working LCD projector with the appropriate classroom. On this morning, I leave my students waiting and begin a frantic scramble across the school campus.

SMK Farming Pati, the vocational farming school where I live and teach, is centered around the *joglo*, a traditional Javanese structure with no walls and a pitched roof. Around the *joglo* there are classrooms, an office, two houses, student dormitories, and a variety of somewhat functional pens and ponds that house cows, goats, sheep, chickens, roosters, turkeys, ducks, geese, rabbits, catfish and goldfish. Animal resources at SMK Farming Pati are in great contrast to technological resources.

"Jems, why do you run?" Ibu Ning, my host mother and vice principal, asks as she leans over the sink. She is one of three teachers, in a faculty of 28, who speak English conversationally at our school. She pulls at the *jilbab* around her neck and continues chopping chilies.

"Mom, where is the other projector that works?" Before she can answer, I have found the projector, thrown it on my shoulder, and jumped down the last three steps from their house.

I live in a one room house that stands five feet from my host family's porch, 50 feet from the students' dorms, and is often visited by all members of the menagerie (students included). Check your privacy at the catfish pond. I slide open the doors to my house, put the defunct, decoy projector down, turn, and run. On the way to the classroom, I hurdle a duck. Yes, I hurdle a duck.

My students are still entertaining themselves. Their English is not yet functional, so all conversation is in Javanese and Indonesian. Though I still find the rapid, mixed Javanese-Indonesian conversation incomprehensible, my

Indonesian has improved, and I have made an effort to work the language into my classes. I teach 10th grade regularly, guest-teach in grades 11 and 12, and lead English Club for students or teachers after school.

Drumming my fingers impatiently, I glare at the taunting “No Signal Found” text on the projector screen. The black screen turns blue. The projector picks up the signal from my computer, I raise my fist in a sign of triumph, and the students’ conversations turn to cheers. Then, I notice the goat.

The goats at SMK Farming Pati have the uncanny ability to break out of their pens at least once a week. I am yet to discover whether this is because they are highly intelligent and unfathomably crafty, or if the pen has simply never been fixed. I have my suspicions. Also, they may be in league with the turkeys, as the turkeys look suspicious.

At this moment, our biggest goat (I call him *Pak Besar* or Big Poppa) is standing in the doorway to the classroom. He stands about three-and-a-half feet at the shoulder, has a shock of yellow hair on his head, and ears that almost drag on the ground. I feel that he is basking in the success of my technological triumph. I feel that he is anticipating my great lesson on Halloween, complete with video, songs, and games. I feel that . . . and all of my students have rushed out of the classroom to watch their peers drag, push, and pull him back to the goat pen. After Pak Besar is safely put away (only to escape later in the week), my students run back into the classroom shouting, smiling, and laughing. It’s just another day, down on the farm.



*An ETA helps students with a class exercise. Many ETAs find that group projects help them to better manage classes with large numbers of students.*

### What to Expect Before Getting to Your School

If you've never taught before, don't worry. AMINEF will provide about three weeks of teaching instruction before sending you off to begin. This instruction is intended to help you prepare for the challenges of teaching in general, and specifically, to help ETAs confront the unique challenge of teaching students who have different native tongues, cultures and worldviews. It is only three weeks and you will only get out what you put in, so try to take advantage of the time. Orientation can be grueling, especially considering the jet lag and culture shock you might be going through, but it's very important to use this time to develop a strong foundation for success during the rest of your year.

In the end, you will inevitably continue learning on the fly upon arrival at your site. Teaching experiences in Indonesia are as different and diverse as the country itself. No two placement sites are the same; for that matter, no two classes at the same school are the same. This is as much a testament to the profession of teaching—your profession for the next year—as it is to the diversity of Indonesia.

I was once told by a 30-year veteran teacher that, "Teaching is a semi-profession. There isn't a set body of facts you have to know, off-hand, to be successful. There aren't a series of steps that you can take to ensure that you are a good teacher. Your success as a teacher has just as much to do with you, who you are, and how you relate to your students and colleagues, as it does with your familiarity with the material or, even, with teaching itself." Bringing a positive attitude into class, working with people instead of against them, and making an effort to understand each day as a new experience will translate beneficially into your teaching and your school community. You were chosen for a reason. Get excited. Those seventy-plus eyes are ready to watch you succeed. To set yourself even more at ease, check out the following resources before departure - the more prepared you are, the more confident you will feel.

### Web Resources for ETAs:

#### <http://www.eslflow.com>

This site does not offer ideas or lesson plans; just worksheets in PDF format for any topic. There is also a link for "Teacher Tools" which enables you to create your own quizzes, puzzles, worksheets and flashcards online.

#### <http://www.eslgold.com>

ESL Gold is a great site for both teachers and students who want to study on their own. It is divided into ten skills sections and then into five levels, from beginner to advanced, with materials for teaching and studying. It even offers English conversation partners through Skype!

#### <http://www.rong-chang.com>

This site is a springboard for other websites with lesson plans, ideas, and worksheets for teaching and learning English as a second language (ESL). There are so many different links that it can take awhile to find what you're looking for, but the plethora of topics leaves nothing to be desired.

### **<http://esl.about.com>**

About.com offers articles on teaching ESL, as well as long lists of lesson plans complete with worksheets and classroom materials. The website is easy to navigate and offers materials on most subjects within all of the major skill sets at three levels of English proficiency.

### **<http://www.eslcafe.com/ideas>**

Dave's ESL café is a great website for quick ideas and games to add a little fun to your English classes. While it does not offer full lesson plans, the ideas offered on this site are applicable, quick and easy to implement in the classroom.

### **[www1.teachertube.com](http://www1.teachertube.com)**

While Teacher Tube is not specifically an ESL website, you can use the search feature to search for ESL lessons and related materials. All material is presented in video format, so this site may be unhelpful for you if you have a slow internet connection.

### **<http://iteslj.org>**

The Internet TESL Journal offers articles and techniques for further developing yourself as an English teacher, as well as complete lesson plans and activities for teaching English. The lessons are easily read and implemented and range from short warm-up activities to multi-day lesson plans on a variety of topics including culture, music, and presentation skills.

### **<http://www.ielanguages.com/lessonplan.html>**

This website was created by an English Teaching Assistant in France, but the teaching principles are the same. It offers lesson plans, printable worksheets in Word and PDF formats on a variety of topics (including American slang), as well as quizzes. A list of recommended books is also included for further reading.

### **<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/lessons.htm>**

This website helps you find lessons and activities on other ESL websites. The most notable thing about this website is the variety of interactive games. Some of the lesson plans seem to be geared towards younger learners, but the games are generally easy to implement and adapt for any classroom.

### **<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/esl.html>**

This website for English teachers offers a section specifically for teaching ESL. The links on the ESL page of the website offer an assortment of activities, articles, resources, and lesson plans.

### Ten Teaching Resources You Might Want to Bring From Home:

- **More Than a Native Speaker** by Don Snow

Snow discusses everything from culturally adjusting to a new country to best strategies for teaching English at each level, including the beginning and intermediate stages where most of our students are.

- **Barron's English For Speakers of Other Languages**

This textbook explains almost every English grammatical concept and is very useful as a reference book when reviewing grammar. Although we do not teach grammar officially, you will be asked constantly about English grammar, and this can be a helpful way to explain it to people.

- **More Than 50 English Games**

Great resource for getting you through tough times when the lesson plans feel more like writer's block. If you don't get it at home, it can be found in any large Gramedia (Indonesian bookstore chain).

- Nerf products (American footballs especially)
- Deflated beach balls
- Yearbooks or photos of family and friends.
- A map of America
- Board games like Scrabble, Taboo or Apples to Apples
- Candy or something else suitable to use as a small, cheap prize
- Postcards to hand out

*Contributed by:*

*Polly Furth, Amurang, North Sulawesi 2010 - 2011*

*Adam Bazari, Gresik, East Java 2010 - 2011*

*J.T. Erbaugh, Tlogowungu, Central Java 2010 - 2011*

*Brandon Reed, Masohi, Central Maluku 2010 - 2011*

*Kelsey Ritzel, Pekanbaru, Sumatra 2010 - 2011*



*Be creative and get them talking. At this rural SMA, the front yard of the school became an airport as the students role played passengers checking in, going through security, boarding the plane and listening to the flight attendants explain safety features.*



Finances



*Before too long you'll be using a lot more cash and a lot less card than you do back home.  
This is a traditional market in North Sumatra.*

**In addition** to a rewarding experience and many new Facebook friends, your grant will provide you with a comfortable stipend. You will have enough money to indulge in endless bowls of *nasi goreng*, visit fellow ETAs and perhaps even save up for future plans.

**How to Access Your Cash:**

AMINEF will wire your stipend (usually \$2,000 every two months) into a US bank account that you designate before your departure. You will receive your first allowance, which includes a relocation stipend, near the beginning of your grant period. During orientation, a payment schedule will be provided with the dates on which future stipends will be disbursed. Depending on your bank, you may be charged a wire transfer fee ranging from \$10 to \$20. To avoid heavy fees, it is important to research travel-friendly banks. Past ETAs have found that small, local credit unions and banks offering international promotions (i.e. travel perks a la Capital One and Charles Schwab) are much more lenient with international usage than larger, more popular banks.

**Money Changers:**

When you first arrive in Indonesia, you can exchange American bills for Indonesian rupiah. Money changers and larger banks (e.g. Mandiri, BNI, BCA) will provide this service. However, this method will likely be unsustainable and often problematic since Indonesian money changers only accept very specific bills. Most will only exchange pristine \$50 and \$100 bills – this means without any rips or creases and with a print date after 2006.

**ATMs:**

- **Fees:** Past ETAs have found that the most common way to access money is through an Indonesian ATM. Mastercard, VISA, Cirrus and Plus debit cards are accepted at most Indonesian ATMs. Depending on your at-home bank, fees for withdrawing cash with a debit card may vary from zero to five dollars per withdrawal. In addition, some banks will charge a 0.5 percent to 3 percent exchange rate surcharge.
- **Large Withdrawals:** To cut back on needless fees, past ETAs have found it economical to withdraw large amounts of cash at once. Some ATMs allow you to take out as much as 2,000,000 rupiah at a time.
- **Opening a Local Bank Account:** One strategy for avoiding extractive ATM surcharges is to open a local bank account in order to use its ATMs. Generally, a minimum deposit is required and can range from \$30 to \$1,000. Also, bear in mind that only international banks, such as CitiBank or HB Swiss Financial, will transfer money to these institutions. If you are considering this route, check with your at-home bank on its feasibility prior to arrival.
- **Internationally Travel-Friendly Banks:** While there are CitiBanks in some provincial capitals of Indonesia, you should wait until you have been notified of your placement before jumping to open an account. Once your placement has been assigned, you may use the CitiBank Locator Tool online to see if one is conveniently in your site. Indeed, many ETAs have regretted not looking into thriftier debit card options. The 2011-2012 ETAs preferred Charles Schwab.

Regardless of who you bank with, it can't hurt to communicate as much as you can with your bank about your situation. Wells Fargo reimbursed a 2010-2011 ETA for all of the ATM fees (\$5 per transaction) he incurred during the time he was in Indonesia, after being asked politely in a long-distance phone call – the savings reached triple digits. Try saying that you don't want to have to switch banks, but that you are frustrated about having to pay so much to access your funds. The fees are in place partly to incentivize using in-system ATMs, which is cheaper for the banks themselves, but when no in-system ATMs are available the fees become penalties, not incentives. No promises, but it can't hurt to try – this logic has saved ETAs money in the past.

### Using a Credit Card:

In some bustling cities, a credit card may be as widely accepted as it is at home and might come in handy for your bigger purchases. Even if you are not considering making any purchases on credit, it may be beneficial to have one in situations where a debit card is lost, money is stolen, or funds run low. Be aware that you will likely incur an exchange rate or service charge fee, especially if your purchase does not reach a certain minimum. Before you leave the States, contact your credit card's customer service agency (find the number listed on the back of the card) and notify them that you will be staying and making purchases in Indonesia. Do the same if you travel outside of Indonesia at any point during your grant; otherwise, your bank may freeze your account and spoil your fun upon the first swipe. To protect yourself from identity theft, properly discard all credit card receipts, as they usually print your full name and credit card number.

### Spending Your Money: The Basics

- **Tips and Safety:** Learn your numbers, but more importantly, learn what your money looks like; otherwise you could accidentally give your driver a 100,000 rupiah note instead of a 10,000 rupiah note - he might happily accept. Don't flaunt your cash. Whether you are at home or on the road, be sure to diversify the places where you keep your money and bank cards. Moreover, it is useful to carry smaller bills (*uang kecil*) for microbus fares and other small purchases since these vendors often do not have change (*uang kembalian*).
- **Tipping:** In general, you are not expected to tip cab drivers or waiters in traditional Indonesian restaurants (*warungs*), but a few extra rupiah will always be appreciated. While there is no fast and firm rule, a restaurant catering to tourists will probably expect you to leave a 5 to 15 percent tip. However, before you rush to tip, check the bill first to see if gratuity charges have already been included – they often are.
- **"Tax" on foreigners:** Unless you look Indonesian or speak *bahasa Indonesia* fluently, you are likely to be overcharged frequently. As a westerner, Indonesians will often assume that you have more money than your pockets can handle and charge accordingly. To avoid paying an inflated price (which can be anywhere from one to 300 percent over the actual market rate), understand the price range of the item you wish to buy before making a purchase. Consult Lonely Planet for a list of price ranges for homestays, hotels, restaurants and tourist venues. For less popular sales, shop with a trustworthy Indonesian or ask a bystander – ideally, one that is not part of the business – to tell you the

going market rate. In time, trial and error along with increased knowledge of your surroundings will make you a smarter shopper. Increasing language ability will probably lower your foreigner tax bracket as well. And if it doesn't - try to relax. You do make a lot more money than most of the people with whom you're doing business, and shelling out extra rupiah here and there probably isn't going to hurt you.

- **Shopping in a Flea Market:** Unmarked prices will almost always invite the prospect of an inflated price; this is most prominently showcased at your neighborhood farmers market. When shopping at a market (*pasar*), be sure to go early (5 am) and bargain hard. Never accept the original price. If you're lucky, you will only be charged twice the original price of goods, but usually you will be charged much more. The Indonesian rule is, "If you're charged 80,000 rupiah for a batik shirt in the market, offer half price (40,000 rupiah) and settle for 50,000 rupiah." For bolder shoppers, ask for 20,000 rupiah and settle for 30,000 rupiah. As with transportation, understand the market value of the goods before making a purchase. During orientation in Bandung, check out a local market to practice your bargaining skills.

- **Transportation Expenses:** An unfamiliar route on an unfamiliar transport system may leave you broke. Whether hopping on a bus or a taxi, be sure to ask the seller to fix the price before taking off. If not, you are once again at the mercy of discriminatory pricing. If you don't know the price in advance, take metered taxis run by organizations such as the Blue Bird Company. As you get more comfortable in Indonesia, fixing the price will seem less important and more natural.

In locales where minibuses, taxis, or *ojek* are less practical, you might consider a more independent means of transport, like a motorbike. Having a personal motorbike has many benefits; however, it comes at a high initial price. Once again, understand the going market rate of renting or purchasing a motorbike, preferably from informers not in the market of selling or leasing. In addition, be sure to set aside about 100,000 to 200,000 rupiah (\$10 to \$25) per month for maintenance and petroleum (*benzin*) fees depending on how often you cruise. Be advised that motorbiking in Indonesia is dangerous.

### Taxes:

You are required to pay taxes on the grant, but nobody is reporting your income to the IRS. That means, in order to pay the required taxes, you must take the initiative to report it yourself as additional income on a 1040. If you ask AMINEF, they will point you to this website: [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/resources\\_current\\_income.html](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/resources_current_income.html)

### Student Loans:

IIE can sign loan deferment requests, but whether or not you are granted the deferment is at the discretion of your lender. Ask AMINEF how to get the form.

*Contributed by:*

*Victor Chiapaikeo, Kupang, West Timor 2010 - 2011*

*Grace Chung, Genteng, East Java 2010 - 2011*



# Books



*Pictures of books are boring. Pictures of sunsets on Lombok are beautiful.*

## You won't regret learning as much as you can about

Indonesia before arriving, but anyone looking for books in the US will likely be frustrated by a surprising scarcity of titles. A 2010-2011 ETA once heard a State Department official call Indonesia "the most important country you don't know anything about," and it's unfortunately difficult to find resources for learning more. Most books that are available focus on life in Jakarta and Bali – sadly, some of the only places in Indonesia where ETAs will not be sent. Still, if you dig below the surface, there is some great work out there. Take a look at the list below for the best of what we've been able to find. Book swapping is highly encouraged, as they can be quite expensive – it might be smart to start an email chain and plan who's going to bring which books in advance. You can swap during orientation, Thanksgiving and Christmas travels, mid-year conference meetings, Ujian Nasional (National Testing) week travels, the WORDS competition in Jakarta and any other opportunities that arise. If your imminent move to Indonesia isn't enough motivation to start learning about the country, be advised that Indonesians will usually assume foreigners know nothing about Indonesia apart from Bali – surprised smiles and approving comments often follow when Americans are able to speak intelligently about the rest of the country. Remember that you're representing millions of other Americans – appearing thoughtful and engaged isn't a bad way to start.

### A History of Modern Indonesia by Adrian Vickers

Vickers' book will bring you up to speed on the events and ideas that brought Indonesia to where it is today. It begins with the end of Dutch rule in the middle of the 20th century and continues through Indonesia's struggle for independence and the political contexts of the country's subsequent leaders. Probably the best choice if you're looking for a comprehensive history of modern Indonesia – just as the title suggests.

### Culture and Customs of Indonesia by Jill Forshee

Don't be fooled by the name - this is not your typical "do this and don't do that" book. Instead, it digs deep into the history, politics, culture and customs of Indonesia, giving you lots of insight. The book is worth reading just for its extensive timeline - one of the best in publication. Forshee guides her reader through some of the most fundamental aspects of Indonesia, from landforms to religion, encouraging you to live and travel confidently.

### Durga/Umayi by Y.B. Mangunwijaya

This book narrates the events surrounding Indonesia's independence, presenting the period as confusing and full of paradox. The irregular prose style – sentences packed with clauses and subclauses – repeats the chaos that Mangunwijaya narrates. It is by turns funny and serious, and an overall pleasure to read.

### Girl From The Coast by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Set during the colonial regime of the Dutch in Java, Toer weaves a coming of age story for an unnamed female protagonist. Originally from a small fishing village on the outskirts of a larger city, the young girl from the coast catches the attention of a high ranking Indonesian delegate and is summoned to reside as a concubine in his home and away from her own. The story contains relat-

able images of culture shock and personal development through adversity. Actually based on the story of a relative, Toer's tale provides the reader with a view of the budding Indonesia during a time of promise as well as turmoil.

### **Ibu Maluku by Ron Heyneman**

This biography of Jeanne Marie van Diejen-Roemen is full of primary source material dating from the First World War to the late 1970's. Van Diejen-Roemen moved with her husband to a remote island in Maluku, where she worked on various plantations before the Japanese invasion. Unlike most books on this list, the focus is on eastern Indonesia.

### **In the Time of Madness by Richard Lloyd Parry**

The author traveled to some of Indonesia's trouble spots during the turbulent times immediately following the fall of President Suharto. He witnessed violence in Kalimantan and Timor and writes hauntingly about these blights on Indonesia's recent historical record.

### **Indonesian Destinies by Theodore Friend**

One of the more recent books listed here, this volume begins with independence, details the Sukarno and Suharto presidencies, and then continues through *reformasi* to Megawati Sukarnoputri's term in office. The author had remarkable access to primary sources, including extensive interviews with many of the figures he writes about, making for an engaging and almost personal tour through recent Indonesian history. The perspective alternates between optimism and pessimism about the country's destiny, a tension which is left unresolved.

### **Islam: A Short History by Karen Armstrong**

Armstrong's book covers Islam from humble birth to expansive modernity. The Indonesia ETA will be frustrated to find that Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, is mentioned nowhere in the book – but it is still a useful text for contextualizing Muslim practices and understanding the religion.

### **Islam in the World Today by Werner Ende**

This massive book (over 1000 pages) offers a small chapter on Indonesia, which provides a condensed, yet thorough, look at the intersection of politics and religion in the country. The chapters in this book are probably the fastest and best way to bring yourself up to speed on religion and politics in Indonesia today.

### **Letters of a Javanese Princess by Kartini**

As a young woman, Kartini, a pioneer of women's rights and education, wrote a series of letters to her friends in the Netherlands comparing the Indonesian education system to that in the West. Walking a fine line of appreciating the tradition of Javanese culture while stressing the importance of modernity, her letters are relevant and insightful despite being written around 1900.

### **Lonely Planet Indonesia 9th Edition by Various Authors**

This book is THE comprehensive book on traveling in Indonesia. One of the

few books to have detailed information on areas outside of Bali and Lombok, you will find it to be very helpful in everything from arranging travel to booking hotels. It also includes an extensive list of additional resources and a pleasantly concise Indonesian history section.

### **Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power by Robert Kaplan**

From 2010, this book is a particularly helpful and readable option for getting into Indonesia's religious and political situation. Kaplan devotes two full chapters to Indonesia, analyzing the religious history, political situation and current context of Indonesian people across several provinces (focusing mostly on Aceh and Java).

### **Rainbow Troops Tetralogy by Andrea Hirata**

This book covers a lot of ground, including education, mineral exploitation, government resource distribution and the will to succeed in love. The story takes place mostly at or near a small Muhammadiyah school on a remote island off the coast of Sumatra and is very popular with Indonesian audiences. It provides a thorough look at the Indonesian education system.

### **Saman by Ayu Utami**

Saman is a popular book in Indonesia and, though it is cheap fiction for mass audiences, it is useful for getting a sense of modern Indonesian attitudes, particularly those regarding sex, its taboo status, and how it sometimes manifests itself in a society that often does not want to acknowledge it publicly.

### **The Buru Quartet (This Earth of Mankind; A Child of All Nations; Footsteps; House of Glass) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer**

This series is based on the life of Toer, a Javanese writer who lived through some of the most turbulent parts of Indonesian history and was jailed by both the Dutch and Indonesian governments for political activities. Toer is widely cited as Indonesia's most accomplished author, and these four works have all been translated from their original Javanese into English.

### **The Next Front: Southeast Asia and the Road to Global Peace with Islam by Senator Christopher S. Bond and Lewis M. Simons.**

Written in 2009, this work takes an in-depth look at the status of religion and politics in SE Asia. The book is divided into six parts: the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and America. It ends with a look at American policy in Southeast Asia and where we may be headed in the future.

### **The Religions of Java by Clifford Geertz**

Geertz published this book in the late 1970s and since then it has become appreciated not just as the definitive work on Javanese religion, but also on conducting ethnographic research anywhere in the world. While ETAs placed on the outer islands may feel like skipping this book, the reality is that Javanese culture is influential in almost all of Indonesia, and this work is relevant to most regions of the country.



## Acknowledgements and Special Thanks

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