

**Press release, 14 February 2009**

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## **EAST BALI POVERTY PROJECT FIELD REPORT 30 DECEMBER 2008**

**By Dr Scott Younger OBE / EBPP Commissioner**



# East Bali

## poverty project field report

### 30 December 2008

BY **Dr Scott Younger OBE** | Commissioner

In July 2008, the project celebrated its first ten years of activities. EBPP has come a long way in that period, from the first difficult days when **David Booth MBE**, the Founder of the project and its leader, first started to engage the people of Desa Ban, one of the largest villages in Indonesia located in northeast Bali on the remote side of Mounts Agung and Abang. Desa Ban covers over 7,200 ha of steep and undulating mountain slopes, and is home to some 15,000 people in 19 separate communities, most of which did not cross communicate prior to EBPP's "partnership" with the village.

As we have recorded before, conditions at the beginning were appalling: high illiteracy, unacceptable level of infant mortality, no access to community health centres, cassava-based staple diet, no sanitation and unhealthy living – due to lack of knowledge. Access was limited; water supply very difficult. Education was tomorrow's dream as the village elders explained to David in the first few months.

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, companies, charities and philanthropic organizations over the years, EBPP now supports a lively, vibrant community, and the recent completion by government of a sealed through-road in the valley between the two mountains will accelerate the ability of the people to move and trade beyond their village.

In the following paragraphs, however, I am only going to address two key areas of development, namely education and the future livelihoods programme, as we move forward with the plan for self-sustainability. The community is now healthy, has a balanced diet, thanks to the school-based organic vegetable gardens and nutrition education curriculum, most now replicated by the villagers, ironically, being taught by their children who learnt in their EBPP schools.

Our first school started on 31 August 1999 in the Bunga hamlet bale banjar

(community centre), with a school building built in late 2000 thanks to a US\$2,000 grant, erected by the villagers themselves, since empowerment has been a key driver of the manner in which development has gone forward. Today we now have 6 schools located in the most remote hamlets, two on Mt Agung slopes and four on Mt Abang. We have educated over 900 children since 1999, 260 children attending last year until September 2008, when the new intake of 6-7 year-old youngsters, equally balanced between boys and girls in our 6 schools, gave us a grand total of 373 children. Most children are at primary level, and obtain their certification with consummate ease, most passing into the high school after 3-4 years – though we presently have 43 children in junior high school and 60 in senior high school, quite an achievement for children who were illiterate 8-9 years ago!

Our comprehensive and holistic curriculum, based on our 'learning by doing' philosophy, includes teaching the children to live in harmony with their environment, to use it and take care of it – and to improve it for future generations. The photograph, taken on 30 December 2008 shows an end of term presentation of exam reports to some 50 pupils at our newest school at the sub-

village of Darmaji. It was a sheer pleasure to witness the obvious keenness to learn and the open dedication of the teachers.

The second photograph shows the Bamboo Research and Development Centre at Daya hamlet, where we aim to establish comprehensive Self-sustainability training and learning programmes, appropriate technology and bamboo-based, designed as model programmes for students from high school to university and government organisations to get hands-on experience, field training and train-the-trainer programmes.

We are fortunate to have the support and technical advice from the Ubud-based Environmental Bamboo Foundation (EBF), who has guided EBPP since 2004 with leading edge bamboo technology, as well as donating bamboo plantlings in 2006. The aim is to plant in some of the driest, yet steepest mountain slopes that could eventually generate sustainable livelihoods from bamboo products. Our sustainable bamboo-based afforestation-agroforestry programme combines the most up-to-date technology for the processes of planting, growing, harvesting, sustainable bamboo treatment and, quite recently, a newly developed concept for bamboo clump management. All of these steps are essential to ensure that the impoverished villagers in

this previously inhospitable environment can (a) understand how to sustainably improve and manage their natural environment, (b) learn how to incorporate appropriate agroforestry crops in between the newly planted bamboo plantlings, (c) develop community based cooperatives to ensure best practice husbandry during the bamboo growing period and (d) optimise the eventual environmental and economic benefits of the bamboo seedlings now being donated, and through a community-based participatory assessment programme, design their choices for future sustainable social and economic development.

The project has come a long way in 10 short years, giving over 3,000 families a door of opportunity due to one key factor: ACCESS to knowledge, improved health, the world outside, their own religion and, most important, a vision for a better future, which none of the 3,000 families had before the community accepted David Booth's initiative. ■



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**For more information on any of EBPP activities, The Indonesian Vetiver Network (IDVN) or to support us, please call on (0361) 410071 or email: [info@eastbalipovertyproject.org](mailto:info@eastbalipovertyproject.org); Homepage: [www.eastbalipovertyproject.org](http://www.eastbalipovertyproject.org)**