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Visit to Mount Hope Training Centre

This is a follow up article to one we published in October last year, about an organisation who has been successful running a school for the past 17 years in Balai Karangan, Kalimantan. The school has since grown into a small village with their own vegetable farm, fishery and other self-sustaining facilities. Mount Hope or Yayasan Gunung Pengharapan is home to 150 boarding students, with another 350 who attend school from Primary 1 until Form 3. There are 65 teachers who live and work with them in the 'village' - together with other workers who keep the place running - many of them are student's parents.

After publishing the article last year, we followed up with our promise to visit Craig Pilcher, and measure an existing timber classroom block, and draw up its extension adjacent to it. The timber building measuring 7 metres wide by 75 metres long is slowly falling apart and Craig is keen to have the new block ready as soon as possible. The timber building will not be demolished completely, instead its internal walls will be dismantled, its structure reinforced and converted into a verandah space for school and social activities.



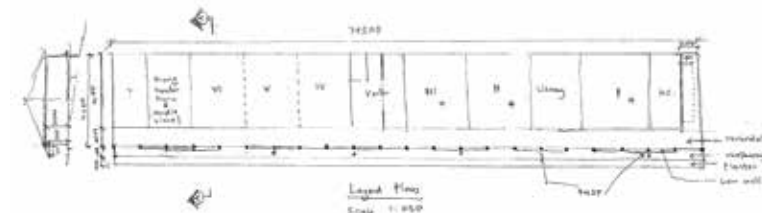
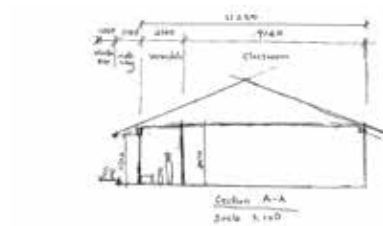
One of the foundation's success stories is their Manna Bakery, which produces bread and other baked goods for the school while selling up to 5000 loaves weekly in nearby towns.



The organisation intends to slowly replace all their timber buildings to cement block ones, to reduce the amount of time spent on maintenance and repairs. Craig has a local team that makes their own cement blocks, even customising them to suit their construction method.

Craig is from New Zealand, where he has a construction company. He has spent the past 11 years in Balai Karangan, overseeing the construction of new buildings and projects, and also coordinating overseas volunteers. During the site visit, Min was the photographer, while Vivian and Yvonne were the day-slaves.

Intersection will be organising several follow up visits to Balai Karangan; as volunteers to build the new school. People who are interested can contact me personally or email intersection.editorial@gmail.com. We cross the border at Terbedu, and Tony will meet us there - the school is about 30 minutes drive from the border check point. Mount Hope will provide food and lodging to volunteers.



by Min