

# Report of the Interns' Trip to Nias from 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010

*When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that **God had done with them** and how He had **opened a door** of faith to the Gentiles.*

*– Acts 14:27, after Paul & Barnabas' first missionary journey*

Indeed, **God has done many things with us** interns in Nias, and has **opened many doors** for us.

However, with the modern technologies of print and the internet, we don't have to gather the whole church together to make a report :P

## Trip Outline

As compared to the previous trip, the programming for the recent April trip was less intense, allowing for more time for informal interaction with the dormitory students. Below is an outline of what we did during the trip (only activities which are formal or where the whole team was involved are recorded; all time outside these is considered informal). And because there was more informal time for personal interaction during the trip, each one of us interns had an experience that was unique to us, which explains our diverse and colourful reports. We hope that reading this will edify you and bring a smile to your face ☺

### Day 1 22 Apr Thursday

- Reached Nias around 2pm, headed to the dormitories to rest
- Gathering with dormitory students in church
  - Devotion by Chen Yi



*Gathering in church on the first night*

### Day 2 23 Apr Friday

- Free and easy to adjust to the new culture & environment

### Day 3 24 Apr Saturday

- English Lesson in church in the afternoon

### Day 4 25 Apr Sunday

- Sunday service in the morning
  - Sermon by Daniel



*Sermon by Daniel with Ceri helping to translate*

- Girls helped out with Sunday School with the children

- Visit to Childrens' Home in the afternoon
  - VBS by the girls



*At the childrens' home*

- Dinner with Ceri & dormitory supervisors in the evening

Day 5 26 Apr Monday

- Bahasa Nias lesson in the morning taught by Sokhi, Osa2 & Felix
- English Lesson in church in the afternoon
- Uncle Gary teaching bible study in church in the evening

Day 6 27 Apr Tuesday

- Bahasa Nias lesson by some of the dormitory kids in the afternoon



*Some of the informal time we had with the dormitory students learning songs.*

- Uncle Gary teaching bible study in church in the evening

Day 7 28 Apr Wednesday

- [Uncle Gary leaves for Singapore in the morning]
- English lesson in the afternoon

Day 8 29 Apr Thursday

- Journey to town and lunch with Felix & Osa2



*Eating ice-cream at the town*

- Girls have gathering in church
  - Chen Ting teaches on baptism

Day 9 30 Apr Friday

- English Lesson in the afternoon
- Farewell in church at night



*Group photo on the final night*

Day 10 1 May Saturday

- Team leaves for Singapore

## Personal Reflections – Daniel Ong



- taking pictures at a jetty

Although it is the same sky I see, the same breeze I feel, Nias is a total different 'world'. The way of living, the culture and the people are so diverse, unlike Singapore. Even though life in Nias is not that wonderful and perfect, the people are contented. Let me carry on my reflection with the 5 Ws and 1 H.

Who are we meeting? : 'Orang Nias'

Where is the place located? : Gunung Sitoli –Nias

When: 22<sup>nd</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010

What are the purposes? : Develop meaningful friendships with the dormitory students; provide lessons from the Word of God for the community in Nias; teach English and possibly how to lead better Christian lives.

Why is there a need to go? : The Great Commission – Matthew 28:19-20.

How did we do it? : With God's help of course (:

Since it was my first trip to Nias, I did not know what to expect other than listening to the stories my sister told me. It turned out to be much worse than how I imagined it. But I know this is God's way of testing me and with Him, everything is possible!

This mission trip is rather odd because the schedule is not super program-packed. Thus, it leaves quite a noticeable amount of free time. I guess this is one of the many ways God is teaching me to make good use of my time and not idle or waste it away. There are many things I did and experienced in Nias but I am only going to pen down a few in this reflection.

1. We taught and shared quite a lot spiritually with the people of Nias. There were devotions, sermon, VBS and many informal opportunities. My learning point is that although we plant the seed, always be encouraged that God makes the seed grow. Mark 4:26-29. There is a limit to how much I can do when I am there but I know that a little thing adds up just like a small piece of jigsaw puzzle will complete one big picture.
2. God prepares us beforehand in our lives so that we can fulfil His purpose. Romans 8:28. Being trained as a mentor during my poly education and also as a volunteer for National Day performance, I was able to use this skill to connect more easily with the people. Also, I learnt the importance of team bonding. It is important that even when a team of 5 people may have altogether different ideas, the team still gets together to conclude on the same thing. This can show and teach others the importance of unity, of working together as a group.
3. Importance of an individual effort to seclude oneself for God. Matt 14:22-23. Jesus is the greatest example of how a missionary should work. As much as He has many things to do in His ministry, He made sure that He spent good amount of quiet time with God. This tells us the need to purposefully find time alone with God, especially on mission trips in order to recharge with strength from Him.

I am going to sum up my entire trip with three Bs – Blessing, Burden and Breakthrough.

It is difficult to count our blessings when we have so much around us. At the point when I was physically challenged, it was then that I started counting how much I had in Singapore. First of all, I want to thank God for blessing me with a Christian family. Many do not have an opportunity to know God; I do not want to take it for granted for being brought up in church. I want to thank God for providing my family with a house to stay in and also that I am able to live with them. The dormitory students have to take care of themselves while schooling. They have to cook their own meals, do their own laundries and do the necessary for school. Next big blessing on my list is I have a proper eating place at home, a proper bathroom and my room. My biggest breakthrough is bathing in the toilet because I have to bathe the tradition way with cold water!

### **Personal Reflections titled 'A Journey of Faith' by Clarice Chan**



- Clarice with Nidar

I went on my first Missions Trip to Nias with an interesting team consisting of 2 pairs of siblings (Daniel and Eunice Ong, Chen Yi and Chen Ting) and Uncle Gary from Johor Bahru Church of Christ. A blessing it was as our team was already bonded prior to the trip.

We found ourselves stealing some sleep in between our transitions from Singapore-Median –Nias. The domestic flight to Nias was certainly eventful and unforgettable. A heated argument broke out between one of the passengers and the officer at the Nias Airport. The passenger did not manage to retrieve his luggage containing his baby's necessities and was exceedingly angry. It was unfortunate that Uncle Gary's luggage did not travel with him aboard the flight to Nias. We were worried for him. But we decided to trust God given the sheer circumstances. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3: 5-6)

We were briefed beforehand that the Class 3 students were going to receive their final year results during our stay in Nias. We were prepared that there were going to be disappointment among them. Besides, we see ourselves having to serve as encouragers for them come Monday the 26 April 2010. Upon meeting the dormitories students, I realized the importance of being conversational in Bahasa Indonesia. I was suddenly unclear of what my true purpose in going to Nias was. I did not know if it was God's calling that I heeded or simply a desire to share God's blessings in my life with others. How was I to encourage others when I was not able to converse with them? How was I to establish trust and friendship when language already posed as the greatest barrier? I realised how easily it was for us to be discouraged with ourselves and hence forgotten to go to God in prayer. I thought of the trials Jesus faced on the Cross. Christ trusted God even to His death. I was thankful for God for revealing himself through encouragements from my fellow teammates. " but God has revealed it to us by his spirit"( 1 Cor 2: 10)Chen Ting and Eunice shared how God gave them gifts during their previous trip to connect with the Nias students after persistent prayers. I thought of the prayer of faith by Elijah (James 5: 17-18) and found myself praying consistently to be better able to connect with the people in Nias. I was excited as to how God will use me for His purpose there.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Corinthians 2:9

God is certainly faithful. It's true how God answers prayers or speaks to us either through the scriptures or Christians around us. Uncle Gary managed to retrieve his luggage on the second day. We girls were taken by surprise when we got back to our dormitory after lunch that afternoon only to find Lilly and Wartu, the 2 dorm girls who gave their room up for us to stay in. They weren't in on the first day we arrived. They brought us to town where we bought stationeries for the VBS classes Eunice was to conduct during Sunday school at the Gunong Sitoli Church as well as at the children's home. We later bought dresses as birthday presents for these girls. They were exceedingly thrilled. I was amazed at how God used this mere trip to the town for us to connect and relate to each other so quickly. We were certainly glad we were girls. I realized that verbal language was not a barrier after all. Actions speak louder than words. That night, I was introduced to about 24 girls at my first prayer meeting in Nias. They found me hilarious. I don't know why. I suppose I was using a lot of sign language in my conversations with them. But we certainly warmed up to one another after the meeting.

I did a devotion titled "The Power of Prayer" during our second prayer meeting on a Saturday night. I decided to centre my lesson on themes such as God in our friendships, education and family with the aim in mind of encouraging the dorm girls lest they fall into disappointment or worst, jealousy, when they were to receive their results. We knew that their upcoming results would determine if they were one of the five to be awarded a scholarship or at the very least to secure a place in the local university. Brother Ceri did a translation for my devotion in Bahasa Indonesia. He expounded further on my sharing. This took an hour. I observed that my devotions managed to touch the hearts of the earnest and some even to tears. How true it was about how the same God's Word that opened the woman's heart (Acts 16), hardened Pharaoh's heart. All of us are given a choice. We can choose to accept or reject God's word. And that depends on whether we are going to respond to the gospel or sit on it and carry on with things. Thank God for Ed Wharton's SIBI classes! Missy pointed to the bible and told me that she learnt a lot during my sharing that night. Though I wasn't sure how much she learnt or what learning points she took away, may God used my sharing to serve as an encouragement for those who heard them.

Brother Ceri told the congregation on Sunday about how many of the dormitory girls was encouraged by my sharing on Saturday night. He said that my devotions also helped him a lot in strengthening and renewing his faith. I was deeply encouraged. And I was glad that at least my presence in Nias did serve a purpose after all.

I helped out with the singing at Sunday school and later at the children's home that Sunday afternoon. The children were innocent, receptive and accepted the word of God readily as the truth. No wonder Jesus said "the kingdom of God belongs to children such as these". I wish we could remain steadfast forever and maintain a childlike faith even though our physical body wears away each day.

The next few days were spent learning Bahasa Nias informally in the mornings from our Nias gurus— Finus, Sokhi etc, as well as teaching English every alternate afternoons in Church. Many of those who were eager to learn English were non-dormitory students. It's interesting to note the number of students there who have a great desire to better their English, take up an English Course in the university in order to teach their fellow friends and villagers the language. Many of the male students such as Sokhi, Criss, Felis, and Finus etc saw the importance and ability to speak English as an avenue to "take me out of Indonesia". The evenings and nights were sometimes spent playing badminton, soccer, table tennis and bowling with those in Church.

After 6 days in Nias, I managed to pick up and put some of my B. Nias to use in conversing with some of the dorm girls. I was glad that I was comfortable enough to start using some B. Indonesian

peppered with sign language and actions in holding basic conversations with them. Our earnestness in learning their language prompted many of the Nias students to connect better with us. We were caught by surprise at their enthusiasm to learn Mandarin from us. An exchange of culture it was! God presented me with another opportunity to share my faith when Nidar, the only dorm girl who failed her Bahasa Indonesia examination, personally requested for me to pray with her in her room. She asked me to pray for her international Bahasa Indonesia examination that she was re-sitting in May as well as to ask God to use her in ways for His purpose. We had a fun time together as we chatted, sang songs and teased one another.

Man will make plans, God will lead us. God will give us every opportunity for us to do his will as long as we earnestly seek Him. "Draw close to God and he will draw near to you." On the day before we left Nias, Eunice and I went back to the dormitory. Eunice encouraged one of the dorm girls—Lilly to help lead and teach the bible during bible studies or prayer meetings. I was glad that I was able to share with Lilly on ways to teach and/or study the bible by S.O.A.P method as well as Discovery Bible Study Method. May God give Lilly and those He has placed teachers amongst them the strength to continue to teach the rest of the dorm girls the bible.

Even though my trip to Nias has since ended, I was certain that our team of 6 had planted seeds of love, faith, joy, peace and encouragement etc in those we came in contact with. This may be a small mission's trip but it certainly brought out the faith we all had with the Great One in Heavens Above. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." I Corinthians 3: 6  
May God continue to water these seeds which were planted in these Christians!



### **Personal Reflections – Chen Ting**



- Wati & Chen Ting

Initially, going to Nias was something I had actually not looked forward to; my earlier missionary trips were to Tuao, and I wanted to go back there because of the relationships I formed there. But after the first trip to Nias, new relationships were formed, and Nias, in a sense, fuelled further my passion for linguistics and gave me more reason to master the English Language, and also the need to not just learn about the Bible but master it.

Learning about the Bible is one thing, but when you have to teach it, to share the Word, there are many things that you have to be extremely sure of, because to share the Word is a heavy

responsibility because other people's spiritual lives can either be enriched by what you share, or they could be stumbled by carelessly spoken words. Also, going to Nias forced me to be aware of aspects of my behaviour, because what speaks louder about your faith than the way you live your life? Who am I to tell others about having a better relationship with God if my own relationship with Him is on the rocks?

On this trip, I felt so much more prepared for it as compared to the last trip, because now I had an idea of what to expect, plus I was sure that I learnt more Bahasa Indonesia as compared to the last trip. Until, of course, I stepped into Medan and couldn't catch a single word of what they were saying even though I had been learning Bahasa Indonesia since January. Obviously, copying what was written on the board during lessons does not ever equal to listening and speaking the language, and sadly my urge to learn Bahasa Indonesia only ever arises when I am in a state of helplessness to speak the language. Since in Singapore that state never arises, the urge never arises and thus my brother's reminders to "go and learn your Bahasa." usually go ignored. That is why I said going to Nias forced me to look at aspects of my behaviour, such as the extremely procrastinating side of me.

So, to all future interns going to Nias, please go and learn your Bahasa. I might sound like I'm joking here, but once you get there and your mental processes slow down from the exciting plane rides there and you realize God doesn't bestow tongues of fire nowadays but rather wants you to learn the language by hard work, you will understand the importance of being able to communicate in the language of people you wish to make friends with, and most importantly, to share the Word of God with.

Entering the dormitory again was really good, seeing familiar faces and the prospect of being able to get to know them much better as compared to the last trip. Free time was in abundance this trip, so that meant more opportunity to talk and do random activities rather than having programme after programme and in the end we don't know anything about each other as when we first came. I like free time. A lot. And yet having so much of it on a mission trip is strange, because now I had to think of possible things we could do to bond and possible things to talk about as compared to other missionary trips, where everything is already planned out. And with the language barrier, the number of possible things to do and talk about shrinks quite a bit.

Take for example, the game we played on the first day. The last trip, we played Blow Wind Blow, which was quite a success because they managed to understand it. However, this trip, the new game, Captains on a Deck, was literally lost in translation.



- lost.

But either way, both games ended up with the same result, which was laughter and amusement. I know for sure that I laughed quite a bit. Though there are limited things for us to do together, God has a way for us to bond in ways beyond language. And on both trips, it has never failed to amaze me after the trip how we managed to form bonds in the first place, despite the difference in culture and the language.

As I was saying earlier, I love free time very much. Why? Because it gave me the opportunity to come up with a new Bible lesson, to think of new English lessons to fit the students needs, and to

bond with the people there in ways we could not foresee, and were to me the most memorable parts of the entire trip.

Before anyone thinks that “AIYO even Bible lesson also plan last minute” let me clear myself and say that I did not. I had initially planned a devotion lesson on the topic of suffering, or more specifically, answering the question “Why is there so much suffering in the world?” which I had dreamt about on the last trip, but that’s a different story. However, all that changed on the first day when we were talking to Ceri. As we were talking to Ceri, I asked him why all the girls in the dormitory were baptized, which in turn led to a discussion on the issue of baptism within the girls’ dormitory.

Just a few days earlier, Ed Wharton’s lesson on Acts gave us many insights to the issue of baptism and the Holy Spirit we had never learnt before. Later, in our room, Clarice, Eunice and I were saying how we finally saw why we all had to learn all that we learnt in Ed Wharton’s lesson, and in a sense you could say that it was an “Ohhh” moment. I have had many little “Ohhh” moments recently, and I’m glad that nowadays I’m more aware of the way God works and it always reminds me of the A4 puzzle picture that Uncle Adrian was telling us about at Kota Tinggi. God has the big puzzle, and though I won’t be able to see all of it I’m glad that I actually am able to connect 2 pieces together, though of course it’s probably only 2 out of 9999999999999999 pieces of a very big puzzle. So since it was more spiritually helpful for the dormitory girls, I started to plan out the lesson on baptism, and boy you had no idea how many times I had the desire to ship Ed Wharton over to Indonesia to help me write out my lesson. The lesson with the girls went well, and I’m glad that as compared to the last time they seem more interested and keener to hear about the Word. One of the girls, Selfin, asked a really good question that even I had not thought of asking, and thankfully God managed to direct me to the appropriate verse to tell her.

The random conversations and bonding opportunities were points of this trip that I will never forget. On this trip we managed to see sides of people we never saw before and do things with them we did not get a chance to the previous trip. From Day 2 onwards, we managed to do things we never planned and we never foresaw. We had the chance to go shopping with two of the girls, Wati and Lilys, and at the same time buy the stuff we needed for VBS. I managed to talk quite a bit with Wati, her plans for the future, her love life, her family, and though there were many times that I wished I could talk about something more spiritually based, after a while I realized that, in order for the conversation to reach that stage, it was necessary to know about their everyday life first. For how can you pray for or advise them on how to live their life if you don’t even know what’s happening in their life?

And that opportunity to share God’s Word came with the release of the Class 3 results on Day 5, where we could pray for all the girls and give them that small bit of encouragement. All the girls except one had passed, and it was sort of a surprise to me because she was a really hard-working girl. I am exceedingly grateful to God for that opportunity to comfort her, and at that moment I was really glad that language actually did not hinder me from saying what I wanted to say. Partially because of the fact that I had prepared some of the stuff I thought I would need to say at dinner, so I was real glad that I took time off to write down the verses and stuff. She took her retest for that one subject that pulled her down on May 10 and I sincerely hope that God will give her the chance to go to university, because it would be such a waste for her knowledge of other languages to be forgotten if she goes back to the village.



Many other random events that I won’t forget was the opportunity to play Twister with the guys in church, Felix, Sokhi and Osa2, the conversation where we were discussing a lot of cold jokes and puzzles with them, and in the girls dormitory where we played Frisbee within the dormitory, the night

where some of the girls went completely insane laughing non-stop and managed to get the chance to introduce our friend "Mimi" to them, and that one strange day where Clarice and I decided to go to the beach to play with the sand and everybody that was in church joined in, hence discovering that many of them have many talents, sand building being one of them. One of them, Osa2, made a very realistic crocodile with its mouth open, which I regretfully did not take a photo of. They, on top of that, have insane jumping power, and Daniel and two of the other guys, Sokhi and Osa2, proudly showed off their jumping prowess. And Eunice collaborated with another guy, Finus, to bury my slipper in the sand. Totally unanticipated, but exceedingly fun. And straight after that we went for English lessons.

The English lessons are something that I do enjoy somewhat, though I dislike teaching very much. Their good attitude towards learning English does help very much. There are more kids willing to learn English from outside the dormitories and our church, so the English Lessons are an opportunity to show others outside our care for them though they might not be part of the church as well as to talk to them. One of the girls, after the lesson, was talking to me after my half of the lesson one day. At first, I wanted to just make small chit-chat, and later go and help with the lesson, because wasn't that what we were supposed to do at that moment? Until I remembered that missionary trips are for the people, and always were supposed to be focused on the people, and if it means talking and getting to know somebody better despite the set programme, then it would be better to talk to them. I was glad I did, though we were interrupted halfway by my brother who needed us to facilitate conversation practice among small groups of students. My group of students were extremely noisy and funny, and though they only mastered like greetings and stuff like that in the lesson and made a lot of noise and did irrelevant stuff I decided not to burst their happy bubble, because while I would have loved to make them just focus solely on studying the English Language, I remembered that, through memories of my horrendously boring Chinese lessons, instilling fun in learning the language first is more important than having them master all the technical stuff. So I laughed together with them, and had fun too!

This trip, I am really grateful to God for all the opportunities to talk to the girls and the guys there, especially that last night where I got to write a few letters of encouragement in Bahasa Indonesia (one paragraph one hour!) to some of the girls, and I really do hope that I have another opportunity to go to Nias again and talk to the girls that I did not get a chance to before and to know the ones I know much better. Though I could only talk to them for a grand total of 24 days, including the previous trip, they are my friends as much as my friends here in Singapore.

### **Personal Reflections – Chen Yi**



*- How did Pak Halawa get that RJC t-shirt? Haha.*

This trip started out really bumpily for me. Five days prior to the trip, I fell sick with a throat infection. I felt really down because I know how it feels like to be sick on the mission field. This illness contained echoes of my past two trips to this same destination where I fell ill in the middle of the trips, and took a substantial amount of time to heal upon my arrival back to Singapore. Needless to say, I wanted desperately to be well.

The night before I left for the trip, I was still not well – I had to see the doctor again for another three days' worth of antibiotics. The next morning as we left, I still felt emotionally down and unsure

of what was ahead. Would I recover within the three days the doctor stipulated? How was I to lead a team with ill health?

As we touched down in Gunung Sitoli, the main city of Nias, I spotted two of the dormitory students, Felix and Osa<sup>1</sup> even before we entered the airport. As we from Singapore greeted the Nias brethren who met us at the airport, all my heavy feelings seemed to melt away. I was so glad to be able to meet and catch up with familiar friends again.

That night, I gave my first devotion in Bahasa Indonesia in church. It was quite a breakthrough for me, despite having to read it very slowly and tripping over many of the longer words. After the devotion, some of the dormitory students came up to thank me for the devotion. It seemed like they appreciated my effort. That night as I reflected on the day's happenings, it occurred to me that sore throat was almost like the thorn in the flesh Paul talks about in 2 Cor 12:6 – 10. The sore throat was given to me so that I would not be proud of what I had achieved. I realized that it was God working through me despite my unclear Bahasa and mispronunciations, and that I must give Him the glory. Indeed, God's power is made perfect in my weakness.

As the days went by, I slowly got better and made a full recovery whilst on the trip, thank God. There are many events that took place on the trip, but those that stand out to me the most are those informal moments with some of the dormitory students where, despite the language barrier, we gained insights into each others' lives. The interesting thing about having a more informal programme is that each one of the team members' experiences was different, because we all interacted with different people and in different ways. I had many learning points from the trip, but I think I only have space here to talk about just two.

Some of the conversations I had with Suma, one of the dormitory students, stood out to me quite a bit this trip. Please forgive me if I get the details of our conversations or the situations wrong – my Bahasa Indonesia has improved, but it still is not that great – I may have misunderstood some of what was said. Suma is a bright 3<sup>rd</sup> year high school student, who was very forthcoming the last trip we were there in January. However, he did not seem so forthcoming at first this trip (maybe because he had forgotten most of his English). All the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students had just taken their national exams in March, and received their results while we were there. After I found out that he passed, I sat down with him on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the trip and asked him about his plans now that he had received his results. He did not give me an answer. Maybe it was because his family did not have enough money to send him to university. In Nias, it is necessary to have a university degree in order to secure a job. Some students who graduate from high school end up going back to their villages to work as farmers because they are not able to go to university.

While we were there, some of the students were approached and told that they would receive sponsorships for university education from sponsors in the USA. Suma was among those chosen. After that day, Suma's mood seemed to take a turn for the better. Perhaps it was because he now had an opportunity to further his education. In Singapore, we often take for granted the opportunities to be able to further our studies and the meritocratic system that offers equal opportunities for all. Indeed, we need to value the opportunities opened to us, work hard, and use what we have received to bless others. The sponsorships awarded to the dormitory students are not 100% confirmed – they still need to secure their places at the universities first. Still, it gives hope to those who would have otherwise not have been able to further their education, and also opens opportunities for these students to be trained further in their faith as they continue to interact with the Christian community in Gunung Sitoli.

Another memorable conversation I had was with Osa2 (Osa-dua – there are two Osas in the church, haha). Osa2 is a reserved guy who does not speak much English. He was chosen by the church leadership to be one of the care takers of the church because they saw good values and strong faith in him. This trip, I managed to talk quite a bit with him as compared with the previous trips because I can speak slightly more Bahasa Indonesia now. On the last night, he came up to me and told me that he would pray for me. As Bahasa Indonesia does not have clear indicators of tense, I thought that he wanted to pray at that moment. However, after clarification, I found out that (I think) he told me that he would be praying for me even as I am going to enter university. I was touched by his words and I assured him that I would pray for him as well even as he awaits confirmation of his further studies (he too had been offered a sponsorship).

Sometimes, we do not say the important things we want to say to our loved ones until the last minute. This trip, our conversations were significantly laced with spiritual thoughts because we knew that we were only going to see these dormitory students for a limited amount of time and wanted to say all that we could to encourage them as Christian brethren before we left. However, in Singapore where we see our Christian brethren or close friends who are non-Christians day, in day out, how often do we say what really matters: about salvation, about the Christian faith? Do we need to wait till the moment we part ways permanently to say those things? It is not easy to say what really matters when there is no urgency for it, but it will be something I will work towards in my daily life – to say what really matters before it is too late to do so.

Overall, I thank God for a good trip which was uplifting and memorable. Even though the closeness of the friendships that we have made with the people of Nias may fade over time (it's tough for them to use Facebook as internet usage is expensive), the one who binds us together does not change – *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* – Heb 13:8. Who knows when God may bring us together again? If we hold fast to our faith, it will surely be a joyful meeting.

It has been an incredible journey of three trips to Nias in the past 5 months for me, from struggling to speak to the Nias people in complete sentences, to being able to gain a small insight into their lives. In all, I have to recognize that all my work there is all for God's glory. However, the more we give of ourselves, the more God blesses us. Indeed, the blessings that God has showered upon me have been many – among them are the friendships forged, the understanding of the meaning of the Indonesian praise songs that I did not have before, and the common love I see that binds us all – all these I hide in my heart dearly and for these give utmost praise and glory to God.

### **Personal Reflections – Eunice Ong**



- Eunice with Misi

The more trips made, the less significant each one becomes; details less noticeable, need less felt, my heart less easily touched. It is the same as trying something new, for example riding a motorcycle. When one hears the start of the engine and imagine the excitement of being able to ride on something that can go 50km/h open-air, adrenaline starts to pump – I want to try it! After getting on it and being driven for a round (at a safe, slow and steady speed), the adventurous spirit stirs – let's go faster! Several fast rounds later, the unsatisfied heart wins over the conscious mind –

Hey, why don't I drive it! (I thought of this due to sepeda motor being the widely used form of transport in Nias.)

Mission trips or for this case, internships, especially the first ones can be a good fire-starter for the spirit. I can still remember the emotions that struck me and the many lessons I learnt from my first mission trip. However, as the second and third trip comes, such powerful experience seem to die down little by little almost like I am getting "immune" to some form of effect. One cannot heavily rely on mission trips or such to be a much needed form of spiritual booster.

I must say that my first mission trip has been a very important stepping stone to my Christian journey. The importance comes in what you do with the fire lit by the particular trip. It constitutes to the true growth in spiritual walk and faith. Personally, I want to keep the good habits formed during the period of service and continue it back here. One of which is living as a missionary. When out in the field, I find myself full of purpose and with the urgency to target someone to talk to about God or to encourage and share about the matters of the faith each day. Mission work is not just out there, mission field consists of everywhere which has at least a person not saved.

The need to bring back with me the life in Nias is the biggest calling I got from this trip. An incident was when I spent some time during one of the nights, chatting with a few of the girls at the porch of Anggrek A. They asked if the other girls who went there on the first trip still remember them. Another occasion was when Mama (the affectionate term the girls use to call the wife of the supervisor of Anggrek A) told me to go back to Singapore and learn Indonesian so that we can have a have a real good chit-chat session together when I return to Nias.

It is not about having emotional attachment with the life or the people in the places we go to but rather not simply ending it all there when we return home. I think that it is very easy that once we leave to return to the comforts of our lives here, it is as though we adapt back into our normal lives as before. Where is that sense of urgency to serve and meet needs? *Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

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