

Eunice Ong



Sunrise in Nias

On 31st May, I woke up to find myself sensitive to my surroundings - my home. Ironically, from the moment I took off my slippers to enter the house the night before, the touch of the clean white floor tiles against my feet immediately told me: this is different, get used to it. I suppose more of the same small bursts of 'Oh! Different!' will continue till I actually recover from this post-Nias syndrome. No squatting toilets without door, no free alarm clock (noisy rooster and Muslim prayers) at 5am, no opening of eyes to see beautiful brightening of the sky from my bed, no waking up

immediately to pray that God help me speak to the locals, no spending a full day around people I want to know better, no eating of nasi 3 meals a day, etc.

I really thank God for allowing the trip to have affected me so deeply that now I need time to adapt back to life back here. Then again, it is not adapting but a renewal of lifestyle from what God has taught me in Nias. It is amazing how a simple eight days, given fully into God's hands, easily the past 19 years in Singapore. Reminds me of how I had taken to comparing our small 4 members team with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. Faced with about 25 girls and 70 guys staying at the dormitories in Nias, only a handful able to speak sufficient English to communicate, the miracle Jesus did for the 5000 people was the only thing that helped calm me down and prepare my heart for the trip. Sure enough, God showed Himself to be far beyond what we can acknowledge, expect or determine.



Departure on the first morning

It was probably due to our small numbers that we fit in so comfortably amongst them. Often, the girls spoke in Bahasa Nias (their local tongue) to each other even when I was sitting with them. They probably also found it easier to approach and crowd around Chen Ting and I to get to know us better; they did more talking and sharing in Bahasa Indonesia with just the two of us at the dormitory and we were able to understand them quite sufficiently (with LOTS of help from the dictionary). The size of this Nias team restricted us from organizing large-scale activities such as gospel rallies or VBS. Yet, God freed up all the planning and preparation for something even better!



Eunice & Chen Ting cooked for the girls!

There were many small yet personal moments. My struggle to teach them English as they struggled to understand my lousy Bahasa Indonesia; talking about our lives till late into the night; keeping awake and rushing to finish homework with them till 2am in the morning; learning spiritual songs for Sunday school or in their local language; waking up early to hang out the washing on the rooftop; cooking and then enjoying breakfast and dinner together; travelling around in a van whilst singing pop Indo songs; praying together at night before

going to sleep... Of course there were several times where I felt so tired and drained I had to pray for God's strength for me to be just there with the youths whenever possible. All opportunities count as long as it is given to God, regardless of how small they are in our eyes.

To conclude, I want to share an encouragement from a good church friend before we left for Nias. It is this which helped me build up courage to step out of our room

into the girls' dormitory every morning. "1 Thessalonians 2:8 *Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.*" Instead of popping up in many random places to simply drop of the Bible, Paul really cared about the people he visited. He visited them, and when he couldn't he sent others to do the visiting, and on top of that he sent them letters. He gave them a portion of his life. For the sake of the salvation of their souls. Likewise, I also pray that more would consider this section of God's field which needs harvesters too! Do not be discouraged by the language difficulties, by the difference in environment, by any other worries. After all, Jesus did use just 5 loaves and 2 fishes, given up willingly by the small boy, to fill up the lives of so many people who are waiting for just that small individual act. ☺



Chen Yi

Real People, Real Struggles

This being my fourth trip to Nias, I spent most of the time building on existing friendships and learning more about the work at Nias. A common recurring theme as I talked to the dormitory students and the leaders of the church at Nias was this: these are real people with real struggles.

I thank God, Matthew from Wangsa Maju came along - he helped me to see many perspectives of the Nias people that I did not get to see last year. One of the early

conversations we had with the dormitory students was about boy-girl relationships. Nias is becoming more modernized, and parents are increasingly allowing their children to choose their life partners. However, with this freedom also come worries about finding one. This group of guys were willing to put off starting a relationship till after graduation from university, which shows just how much they value their opportunity to receive an education.



*The team with Osa (center)
& Finus (2nd from right)*

The people of Nias have their fair share of struggles. Osa is one of the students on scholarship to study at the nursing college in Nias. His course is not easy; he only gets to come out of the nursing college dormitory once every two weeks to attend the church of Christ in the city. By October, it would have been a year since he has seen his family. Recently, his father suffered a stroke, and is now bedridden. Despite the anxiety Osa is experiencing, he continues to press on in his course. Osa is, to me, a great testament that there are faithful Christians in every part of the world.

Sokhi is the dormitory student who speaks English the best. He has many deep insights. One night, he told me about the problems of corruption and inequity that Indonesians face. Sokhi also worries about finding a job in the city after he graduates, as teachers are not always hired based on their competency.

Sokhi also shares the same problem with Suma, where both from villages without a church of Christ. Suma tried to explain doctrinal issues to the protestant church in his village but they did not agree. Suma has a simple faith. Six years ago, his father passed away, leaving a needy family. Suma prayed that if he could get into this dormitory in Gunung Sitoli, he would become a member of the church. Suma is now one of the leaders of the youth there. Who knows, one day Suma and Sokhi may be called to begin churches of Christ in their own villages.



*Chen Ting with Sokhi (left)
& Suma*

Nias is lacking adequate healthcare facilities. We got to experience this firsthand when a girl was involved in a motorcycle accident on the way back from the children's home. There is no ambulance service; we had to bring her to the hospital in the church van. The first hospital we brought her to did not even have space for her to stay the night. Fortunately the general hospital we brought her to allowed her to stay and did an x-ray scan for her head. The hospital charges came to about 230,000 rupiah (\$35), which may

not seem like a lot to us, but would have been beyond what many in Nias could afford. Thank God that her head injury is not serious and that she is recovering smoothly.

My final wish for the church at PP is for more of us to go over to Nias and to see what I have seen, hear what I have heard, and feel what I have felt. No amount of words could capture my experiences and friendships with the Nias people; you have to go and truly experience God's grace and providence for yourself. I encourage the next batch of interns to take up the challenge of learning Bahasa Indonesia and making a few trips to Nias. For those studying at NUS or NTU, I encourage you to take Bahasa Indonesia/Melayu electives. You will probably never have the time or opportunity to learn this language again. However, this skill will carry on with you for life. Even if you cannot speak Bahasa at all, do not be afraid to go to Nias. There are now more than 5 students studying English at the university, and they are able to converse with you in English. It is but my simple wish to share with all of you this treasure that I have found in the people of Nias, who share a common faith with us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



Matthew Chin

First of all, I want to specially thank to PPCOC for inviting me on this mission trip. This trip has benefitted me a lot and has opened my eyes to how I can serve the Lord in any situation. Recently, my spiritual level dipped due to my workload and personal issues in my life. In this trip, I have learned how to serve God in a humble way because I do not really understand Bahasa Indonesia. Even though I know Bahasa Melayu, it does not seem to help much

in Nias; I needed a lot of translation from the guys there. On this trip, I have personally felt how the Lord has blessed us in every situation, especially the flight to Nias. I heard from Chen Yi that the flight would be delayed due to the weather and was surprised we waited for only less than an hour.

I cannot imagine that going to Nias, we would be having 3 meals with rice a day. I believe I will be anti-rice for a while.

These people can survive on 6 hours' sleep every day. I found out that they sleep at 11pm and wake up at 5am. The main difference when I am in Nias and Malaysia: I hardly find a long quiet time with the Lord in Malaysia but in Nias I have spent at least 1 hour with Him every morning.



I received a culture shock in Nias - the boys will always sit on the floor when we are there to talk to them, while we sit on the chairs. I believe they are paying respect to us because we are guests to them. This situation has never happened in Malaysia before. I believe I have much to learn from them. These people are really pop-stars - all of them can sing

very well, especially in church. They can sing all the verses of their songs of praise from memory and this impressed me a lot.

On this trip I personally felt that the Lord was with me all the time; whenever I needed help there was someone ready to help me and I felt the situation was all under His control. Even in the middle of the mission trip, a student met with an accident but I felt that our team was so loving and caring to pray for the student and even the person who was responsible for the accident.

Overall, I personally feel that this mission trip has given me a good lesson not to cast blame in any situation because He is in control of everything. Pray to Him and He will answer your prayer.

After coming back to Malaysia I believe that I will encourage WMCOC to start a mission trip to Nias and feel what PPCOC youth have been in Nias. I believe I will share my experience in Nias to the youth and encourage them in their faith in the Lord.

Response from Dennis Cady

I have just finished reading Chen Yi's observations and recommendations, and the reports of those who went this trip. With tears in my eyes I want to say as I've said before: Thank you for going. Thank you for caring about the young people in Nias, especially in the dorms. Thank you for your help with English. Thank you for your Christian examples and for talking openly with them about your faith. You can do things for them some of the rest of us can't do. Your parents and other members of the Pasir Panjang church cannot fully appreciate the value your trips are to us. Please keep going and praying.