

# NEWSLETTER

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## 'GOTONG ROYONG UTRECHT' FOUNDATION

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### 1. From the board

It's over: the Gotong Royong Utrecht foundation has closed its doors. The decision we took three years ago has been implemented. After phasing out our activities, the moment arrived to travel to Yogyakarta one last time to say goodbye to the participants, volunteers, and board members of our local partner. We had already said goodbye to Bali (specifically the Widhya Asih children's home in Singaraja) at the end of 2023. Now, in July 2025, it was Java's turn.

We did not stop because we were less successful or because the work was finished. Nor because you, our sponsors, were less dedicated to the projects or to us. Quite the opposite! We could have continued for years to come. But we had to answer the question that arose a few years ago: "Do we want to and can we continue, and if so, will we?"



The three Musketeers



Ibu Murdijati, the driving force in Yogyakarta

For years, we were ahead of the curve with our projects: daycare, medical care and medication, scholarships, and the MCKs (toilet and bath houses). But by now, both the government and private (commercial) initiatives have recognized these areas of concern and offered limited solutions. The urgency has therefore decreased.

Medical care also became somewhat more accessible to seniors, at least in theory. Our senior groups have "naturally" shrunk, though the project welcomed new recruits. The waiting lists of the past have disappeared in recent years. We should have actively "promoted our care, but that didn't suit us. That would be turning the world upside down. This gave us food for thought.

Moreover, a large part of our original sponsor group is often no longer with us or has lost their focus on abroad. And young people simply have a different attitude towards fundraising and long-term commitment with social care projects, making planning long-term projects much more difficult.

The members of the local board of BSP Sejahtera Mulia (established in Yogyakarta at our request in 2002) have also aged 23 years in the meantime. At the time, the local board consisted of women in their 60s (except for the two younger members: Bu Amaliah and Bu Daryati, also the main coordinators), all of whom came from the network of its two most influential members, Ibu Murdijati Gardjito and Bu Soehendro Rediowati. They are now both 83 and should, and want to, step aside. But they are unable to do so due to the lack of suitable successors. This isn't a result of poor succession policy, but rather a consequence of the stratification of society in Yogyakarta and the fact that the emerging middle class has less focus on social work. Against the backdrop of economic growth in Indonesia, we anticipated this and decided to end our support.



The three supporting physicians



Amaliah, pillar of support in Yogya

## 2. Farewell

Partir, c'est mourir un peu ("pergi berarti mati sedikit"). And that's how it was, for both sides. Although it's probably less difficult for the one leaving than for the one staying behind. Not only because of the end of the support, but also because of not seeing each other anymore. We said goodbye to people (board members, volunteers and participating seniors) who we have been in contact with for all those 23 years, which was touching.

The local people, led by Ibu Murdijati, had made it a real farewell tour of the projects. And for the final closing meeting, all former board members and coordinators were invited to "our" location: Rumah Kita.

We met all the seniors at the six locations throughout the city where our monthly meetings have been held for years. All but one had made the effort to come; quite a few were brought by family members on a becak (bicycle/motorcycle taxi) or on the back of a



moped because they were too weak or had difficulty walking, but wanted to be there. The woman who couldn't make it was in bed with a broken leg and arm after a fall in her home. We visited her at home and she sang to us (a must-see on our [You Tube](#) channel).

All six seniors' meetings were very lively, with singing and laughter. Speeches were also given, sometimes with tears and sometimes with breaking voices, but above all with deep, warm looks in the eyes and remarkably strong handshakes at the end. Besides receiving their last package of supplemental food to take home, each senior received a blanket from the chairman, which, according to Ibu Murdijati, symbolized "keeping yourself warm in times of need, covering yourself to provide some comfort not only for the body but also for the soul ...and then, of course, to remember Gotong Royong with gratitude."

One special gathering was organized for the scholarships. The invited guests consisted of the senior high school or vocational school (SMA or SMK) pupils who had taken their final exams last June and a group of "alumni" who, after secondary school, were able to continue their studies at a university of applied sciences or university: Biology, Conservatory of Music, or Economics. Some had already graduated: Chemistry, Forestry, or Pharmacy.

Our first successful student was also there: Adi. His twin brother, who is no less successful, works as a manager on a mining project in West Papua and could not attend. They come from a poor family where the father was absent. When we visited them in 2003 and saw how they lived (bamboo wicker walls and a paved floor), we had no doubts about whether they could participate in the scholarship project. Both of them received scholarships from us from their first year of primary school through their SMK exams (that's 12 years in total). Adi was then hired at a canning factory in Bandung and trained as a manager through internal training and evening classes. Both men are now 32, married, and they have built a beautiful stone family home for their mother. His mother, now an old friend of ours, also came along with her first grandchild. She glowed. Here too there were many long speeches. The classical guitar student (Fahmi) played a few beautiful compositions in between.



Adi and his family



Fahmi



One of the senior's groups with volunteers

After two weeks, the final meeting was there. This time no longer with participants, but with current and former local board members and coordinators, the suppliers of the food parcels and medicines, and the daycare centre staff. The six doctors who had volunteered to conduct the monthly medical examinations for the seniors, were also invited. Over 40 people attended.

The location was the central open space (the pendopo, a large covered veranda) of Rumah Kita, "our" daycare center, which has been operating independently for several years now. In 2005 we were able to purchase an old wooden Joglo (a classic Central Javanese wooden building) near Semarang, which we rebuilt and connected to the daycare centre's classrooms. By removing the wooden side panels an open, covered space was created: the pendopo. Officially, this Joglo has always remained the property of Gotong Royong. Now, during the meeting, a moment was chosen to transfer the Joglo to the Sejahtera Mulia Foundation, and a nameplate was unveiled: Joglo Gotong Royong.



This final meeting was a speech relay race, with the baton being passed on at least 10 times. It was particularly nice that the man who had supervised the construction of several MCKs (toilet and bath houses) in a certain area outside Yogyakarta in 2005 and 2006 was also present and reported that "his" houses were still in use and had already been repainted several times.



Of course Bapak Goosen, Uncle Wil, or Pak William (co-founder of our Foundation) also made several appearances in the thank-you speeches. He was a pleasant presence throughout the entire journey through and around Yogya; he was also very pleased with how things went and how they ended.

If one sentence from our speeches in Yogya needs to be mentioned, it's this one: *We realize we were able to give much to the Yogyakarta community, but let it be clear that we received at least as much in return from you, for which we are deeply grateful!*

**And to you, dear sponsors, we want to express how wonderful it was to be able to do this work with you. Thank you for allowing us to be your intermediary, and thank you for your tremendous trust, also on behalf of all the seniors and students who have benefited from your generosity.**





