

NEWSLETTER

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'GOTONG ROYONG UTRECHT' FOUNDATION

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Covid-19 Indonesia Special

1. From the board

First of all we hope this newsletter finds you well. We wish you strength in these uncertain times and express our hope that you and your loved ones may stay free of the virus.



We keep in touch with Indonesia from a distance. We trust that the local volunteers led by Ibu Murdijati Gardjito have good access to information and know how to deal with the situation. Although in Indonesia – as elsewhere - there is a lot of fake news and well-intentioned nonsense.

Board member René visited Yogyakarta at the end of February and the beginning of March. Only a month ago but a world of difference, both here and there. At the time there were no signs of the virus taking over and we could still make a bus trip with 150 seniors talking, singing and eating together.

Just before 'social distancing' was introduced in the Netherlands, we had a board meeting in Utrecht. We formally approved the 2019 financial statements. We spent more money on the projects in the past year than in the previous years and we received less money than we spent, thus our reserves have shrunk. Nevertheless our foundation is still financially solid. The statements are published on our website.

2. 'Corona locale' Indonesia

In Indonesia, the virus arrived late. First only foreign tourists were infected, but now the dissemination of the virus among Indonesians is a fact. Most of those affected are in the metropolis of Jakarta. But the numbers are not (yet) large. On March 31 the official number of deceased was less than 150. Even in Bali, the big tourist magnet, the number of sick people is still small and only a few people have died from the virus. One can doubt whether these figures reflect reality, because there has been little testing so far. Serious developments in the number of cases are expected over the next three weeks. As of April 1, a state of emergency has been declared in Jakarta and Bali to be able to take all kinds of stricter measures without the intervention of parliament.

In Indonesia most of the well-known measures have been taken: washing the hands, staying at home, not socializing. In Indonesia the authorities love 'fogging' with ghostbusters-like portable devices that spread vapour with pesticide in it. Only this time they are not after mosquitoes that can spread malaria, but after an invisible virus. This requires heavier equipment. In Yogyakarta, for example, you nowadays see tanker trucks with nebulizers that spray around large amounts of disinfectant on everything (solicited and unsolicited).

3. The virus and our projects

I Corona and the children and students

The schools and universities are closed and students across the country receive their homework via WhatsApp or email. Not all of them own a laptop or a computer, far from it, but apparently a lot can be done via the mobile phone and possibly still in local internet cafes.

We received a request from one of the children's homes to be allowed to buy two smartphones because now five children share one mobile phone to send their homework back to school. In the Amlapura home all children are present and they do not leave the grounds. In the Singaraja children's home only the children who do not have internet access in their family's houses stay at the home. The reason of this difference in policy has not become clear to us. It seems to us that the children are safer in some sort of quarantine in the children's homes (both with large secluded gardens) than in places without supervision.

The scholarship children in Yogyakarta are mostly at home. Education takes place via Google Classroom or via WhatsApp. This would not have been possible in the past. But nowadays everyone is online, both young and old. WhatsApp, Snapchat and Instagram are very popular. And email? That is old-fashioned and slow, they don't use that medium any more.

II Corona and the Rumah Kita nursery

Three weeks ago everything was fine. The number of children in daycare and nursery school had slightly grown and the pressure on operating costs seemed to be easing. Now they are in trouble because the children are no longer allowed to come and the source of income has disappeared. The tutors provide online instruction and guidance and there will be parents who will continue to pay some money. But the majority of the parents cannot pay anything,

because their mostly 'grey' incomes are lost and there is no government aid like in the Netherlands. Nevertheless the caretaker and four tutors who are employed by Rumah Kita need to be paid. There was talk of a 50% reduction in the tutors' salaries. We don't think this is a good idea; good employment practices are also highly valued in Indonesia. We will act to support.

III Corona and the seniors

Seniors are vulnerable to the virus and to isolation, so extra attention is important. Until last month, the seniors in our groups received additional food, medical examinations and medicines during group meetings. Now these sessions are prohibited. In the coming weeks a 'pick-up schedule' will be organized at the locations where they usually meet. The volunteers have been instructed to ensure that the guidelines for the prevention of contamination are enforced. If seniors are not allowed or do not dare come, the volunteers will deliver the medicines (in accordance with the most recent medical condition of the person involved) and the package with additional food to their homes.

As is always the case with disasters in Indonesia, the prices of medicines and food have risen considerably. That is one of the 'blessings' of the free market. Of course it is not an option to make our support packages smaller. We are now talking to Ibu Kusmayanti (the senior support coordinator) and Ibu Murdijati Gardjito to find out what it takes to keep the packages at the same level.

4. Extra corona gifts

Because of these developments, extra gifts are more than welcome at our bank account in Holland: NL74ABNA084.21.36.932 (for the attention of Stichting Gotong Royong - Utrecht). For people who want to donate and who are living outside Holland, please contact us by email so that we can find a proper method of transaction for your donation.

