

Can we help Erpan, a boy who has proven his worth!

ERPAN

Tangkiling, Central Kalimantan

Like many of the poorest Javanese families, Erpan's parents joined a government transmigration program to migrate from Java to Kalimantan on the promise of a block of land to farm. This 'Promised Land' turned out to be nothing more than an infertile patch of peat land where nothing could be grown. Erpan was born during this time, and his family later moved north from Kapuas to Tangkiling with nothing, except the hope to start a better life.

In Tangkiling they started off moving around and living in people's houses. Every time moving house meant a new school for Erpan. Although this was hard, he was still able to achieve the highest ranking as number one in his class when he was in Fourth grade. When Erpan was 13, his family finally were able to farm a small piece of land.

Erpan's parents were people of the land; they were farmers. They planted corn, cucumber, long beans, and eggplant. From very early on in life, Erpan would come home from school and go straight to help his parents. The land they farmed didn't belong to his family; they simply borrowed it from a person in the city. They sold their produce to make a living. Erpan never complained while helping his parents on the farm and as their child, he knew it was his duty to work and help them. Eventually the land was sold by the owner in the city, and Erpan's family had nowhere to plant their vegetables anymore. When Erpan was in junior high school his father and mother were forced in to rock laboring; a back breaking job chiseling away at a large granite outcrop near Rungan Sari.

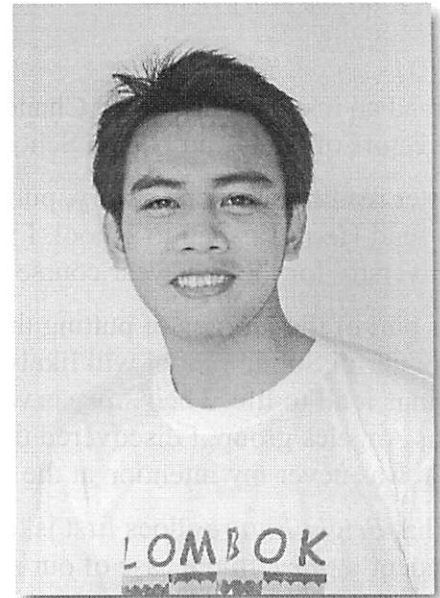
When Erpan came back from school he and his little brother would help their parents mining the rocks on the hills. Until this day, Erpan still helps his father on the rocks when his has the day off work.

Erpan's eldest brother graduated high school, and got a scholarship to work in the government in the health department, a real blessing for their family. But the second brother broke his arm by falling off a bicycle in junior high school. Because of this he stopped going to school and never went back and instead worked with his parent to help support his family. Because of his brothers help, Erpan's family were able to buy the small piece of land they live on. Until now, his brother is still a laborer like his father. His sister also didn't finish high school and got married when he was 17, quite late in those days.

Erpan decided to move to Kapuas for his high school education because the high school in Tangkiling was not a good one. His parents wanted him to stay in Tangkiling but he wanted a good education even though he didn't know if he would be able to continue on to further education when he was finished.

He returned to Tangkiling when he graduated, with a dream of going to university, but there was no money for his family to spare. Erpan started laboring breaking rocks with his brother. After a few months of this, he knew that that was not what he wanted for his life. He convinced his parent to let him do a computer course for one year, and thankfully his parents were just able to support him.

With this course, Erpan was able to get a job at a Subud foundation called YUM (Yayasan Usaha Mulia) and now works there as a librarian. Although he is not slaving away mining rocks or working as a laborer on a construction site, he cannot afford to go to university as he also has to help support his parents.



When Erpan started working in YUM and met different people from around the world and became passionate about English, he decided to do an English course in Palangka Raya, and every month he would use most of his salary on that, and any leftover money he would give to his parents. Because Erpan was really passionate about learning English and enjoyed it, at the end of four months his English skills were reasonably good.

Two years ago someone came to the foundation from overseas, saw the potential Erpan had and promised to pay for him to go to university. Everything was final; he was going to university, his dream was coming true. Erpan had done all the research about where to go and was going to apply once the money had been sent. The lady returned to her country for a holiday and he and Erpan were still exchanging emails right up to the deadline for registering for the course. But the money didn't come, and Erpan never heard back from her.

Of course Erpan was disappointed. Something important, his life's dream had been promised to him, and then simply taken away. But he didn't blame anyone for this, and didn't hold any grudges. He accepted it and moved on. Now he just looks at the positive side, and believes that with God's help there will be another way.

Erpan's dream is to find a good job so he can help his parents. They are getting old and can't work as rock laborers forever. He wants to thank them. He wants them to have a peaceful old age.

If Erpan does find the help to go to university he could start this September, studying Economics at a university on the Saturdays and Sundays, so as not to interfere with his normal working schedule.

Thank you for reading this. It means a lot to create a brighter future ☺

By Chandra MacDonald
Rungan Sari, Central Kalimantan
2011

Postscript

Chandra asked Erpan about some pictures and much to our amazement, he said he and his family have no pictures whatsoever. No photos of births, deaths, weddings... nothing at all. It was really hard for Chandra and I to imagine how you could go through life and not even have one photo of your childhood. Just a small point like that, something we take for granted, shows how different our lives are to those who have lived without.

Chandra went and took some pictures of him with his parents and also got some pictures of him from YUM at work. YUM has many projects in the villages and it looks like in one of the pictures they were going upriver to deliver books or school supplies to one of the remote schools. YUM has a small telecenter at their office which they use to give basic computer training to children and youths in the surrounding villages. Erpan helps with this as well as in the library.

Can the San Diego group send Erpan to school? \$few/month does it!

I recently started a new SDI program quite by accident. It's called Bright Futures, and you'll see why as you read the story below.

I read an inspiring article by Chandra McDonald, the teenage daughter of Rashidah McDonald, one of the directors of Bina Cita Utama School (BCU) in central Kalimantan.

After reading Chandra's story, published in *Subud Voice*, we started fundraising in the Los Angeles group to send Herni Listiani to school. I was amazed that within a few weeks we had raised enough to send his to university for the four-year course.

As part of the journey of putting this initiative together, I discovered that the young people at this wonderful Subud school will likely be the future leaders of Kalimantan. I discovered that their *story* is what brings it all to life. Their *story* is what captured the imagination and commitment of the members of the Los Angeles group. I discovered that others at SDI came to believe in and support the project, even though that was never my intention at the beginning. *Bright Futures* is now an official program at SDI.

What *Bright Futures* does first is to *identify* a promising student. Next we ask a writer to tell us the student's *story*. In the case of our second student, Erpan, Chandra McDonald has also told his story. We then identify a prospective sponsor -- a Subud group. We visit the group and tell the story, asking the group to raise the funds to send a promising student on to higher education.

I would like to visit the San Diego group and talk to you all about our second story. Erpan is a boy who dreams of going to university. Of course, coming from such a very poor background, there is not the remotest chance that this dream could be realized. Many have to work to help support their families. But we have been told that they can go to school as well as supporting themselves. Herni is already proving this.

Bright Futures has started in Kalimantan. It seems that to study full time at the University of Palangka Raya costs relatively little, even when one includes the tuition fees, books and other costs in Palangka Raya. Later, we hope to expand the program to other Subud schools in countries like India, Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, etc. All of these kids in our schools are in a very similar situation. They are poor, and all have an equally poor chance of ever going further in their education. They will all want their stories to be told.

We will show you our slide presentation. We'll talk to you all. We'll leave you with printed materials for each member of the group. And we hope to identify somebody in the group who is sufficiently inspired by our story that they will become the coordinator. Trust me, this is enormously rewarding. And to back this initiative with real commitment, Levana has agreed to put up the first \$600.

Please let me know which date in the next three weeks would be best. It should be a time when most of the members are there, and when we can have 30 to 45 minutes for presentation and Q&A.

Hanafi Fraval

Jul 26, 2011

Erpan could keep working at the school (because he is also helping his father in support of his family) and to study economics. The courses they offer part time are in the evenings and on weekends and are in the areas of accounting and administration and designed for those people that work during the day. This option seems like it would work better for his family and for the school because he still needs and income, and as he is already at YUM, any skills he can gain in this area would benefit YUM and also increase his possibilities for promotion and higher salary.

Well it turns out that Rashidah McDonald, a board member at the school, says \$850 a year would allow his to do a course at a private institution, which may take three or four years to complete.

Would that be too much for our group? It's \$71/month. To kick things off, we'll cover \$150/year (\$12.50/month). That leaves \$700/year (\$59/month) for the rest of the group, although we have to add something for bank transaction fees.

Nobody has yet mentioned any of this to Erpan, as we don't want to disappoint his if it isn't a possibility. If SD group agrees, then Rashidah would speak to him and confirm that this is what he would like to do. Also, the money would go through SDIA's account and then the money is given to Erpan each semester when due and he brings back the receipt of payment. With the really poor, it's too much of a temptation to give them money all at once, especially when there are so many other pressing needs. This has worked well in the past. (Originally, the McDonalds were worried that parents would try to take the money off the child, as they were in such a desperate situation.)

Please let me know if you are willing to help this promising young man through College.

Thank you for your kindness.

Love

Hanafi and Levana Fraval

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Contribution: \$/month: _____ \$ lump sum: _____ Via bank? Y/N

Via Credit card? Y/N

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