

The Widow's Project—Newark Volunteer Joins International Women Build in Bali, Indonesia

By Carol D Manning;



Bali—it sounds like a tourist paradise and it is. But when I signed up for a Habitat International Global Village Women Build in Bali, Indonesia, I knew that I would be working in a rural area, but little else. Our worksite was atop a mountain on a coffee/clove plantation—a 45 minute drive from the nearest town where we were quartered. Our crew consisted of 20 women volunteers, two brave men, and one of the Habitat International Women Build leaders.

We were there to build two houses as part of Habitat Indonesia's Widow's Project, specifically designed to provide housing for widows. The need is great since property rights in Bali are patrilineal (follows the men in the family). When the husband of our widow died she was no longer entitled to live in their home on the plantation. Thus she needed to move in with one of her children—but their home was even smaller than the one she had. Our widow was 70 and lived high above our build site beside her son's house. She effortlessly walked up and down that hill every day. For us it was a challenging, steep climb as we visited her house the first day. We all breathed a sigh of relief when we learned that we only had to do that once!

The Habitat house we built is made of cement block and consisted of two small rooms plus a toilet room—one room for our widow and the other for her son and his family of two children and a pregnant wife. The son, wife and widow worked beside us. The widow could carry more cement buckets than some of us (me!) and the pregnant daughter-in-law moved heavy cement bags as if they were 10 pound bags of rice. The second house was one room as the other widow's family has adequate housing next door.



As we were building the homes a second NGO organization was working in coordination with Habitat Indonesia to provide fresh, safe water to 31 families in the area. The logic behind this is simple: Habitat's mission is to provide decent, affordable, & safe housing, so safe water is a must. An existing spring near the top of the mountain was the locale of a new 'mini-water plant' that collects fresh water and distributes it downhill to the families through a series of pipes. We were lucky to be there when the local families gathered to dedicate the facility through a traditional Hindu ceremony and shared with us a delicious celebratory feast.

Editors Note; Carol Manning is an active Volunteer with Habitat Newark. She works regularly with the Carpenter's Club, has traveled to work on a number of builds with other Habitat Newark Volunteers and in addition works with Women Build and on the Marketing and PR Committee. This is an account of her recent trip as a Habitat International volunteer.

