

# Indonesia's Green School a 'seed in nature'

By Australia Network Jakarta correspondent Gavin Fang

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**The past few months have seen the global economic crisis push the issue of climate change into the background.**

But for one school in Indonesia, protecting the environment is the very reason it is open.

It's called Green School, and is an experiment of sorts in training the next generation to be stewards of the planet.

Hidden within the jungle in central Bali, just by looking at it you can tell it isn't your average place of learning.

Instead of concrete classrooms, open air bamboo buildings sit nestled within the trees.

It's all the creation of jewellery designer John Hardy and his wife Cynthia.

"Green School is a seed, a school centred community in nature in Bali, the idea is sustainability, the idea is a minimal environmental impact, the idea is a small carbon footprint," Mr Hardy said.

"It probably has the smallest carbon footprint of any school ever built."

Construction on the school began 18 months ago and is still to be finished.

The school's central building, called Heart of School, is being built almost entirely of bamboo.

In fact just about every part of this school is either bamboo or mud brick.

There are bio-friendly toilets and school lunches are made from food harvested on the campus.

Mr and Mrs Hardy's ideas go beyond just the physical architecture.

## Holistic approach

The couple believe that children are the key to saving the environment and it starts with their education.

"I believe that children need to experience the physicality of greenness, teaching green in an unsustainable concrete box may not be all that effective," Mr Hardy said.

"We felt that it might be possible to take a new step combining holistic education and an environmental model."



*Experiment: Children during a class at Green School (greenschool.org)*

- [Video: Gavin Fang visits Indonesia's Green School, where pupils study climate change and the environment \(ABC AP APNC\)](#)

More than 100 students from 17 different countries, including 20 Indonesian scholarship holders, are now studying at Green School - from tiny kindergarten kids to precocious high schoolers.

Eugene Wallensky moved his daughters from Australia to go to Green School.

"I think it was the recognition that we are all dealing with a host of environmental issues that really do need a slightly different way of being tackled, and fundamental to that is through the education of our kids," he said.

"That really was the hook, it was about coming to a school where there was an obvious connection between the school, the infrastructure, and the environment, and that was really very appealing to us."

Green School's philosophy is in part based on some of the controversial ideas of 19th century thinker Rudolph Steiner, who believed learning should combine elements of the artistic, practical and theoretical.

The school also draws from American Professor Howard Gardner's theories that intelligence isn't just something that can be measured by IQ tests but is made up of many different abilities, like being talented at music.

Director Ronald Stones says in practice that means producing generations of people who think about things differently and are willing to look at things in different light.

"It's getting a blend, its combining the essential skills are going to need to get through the system, particularly in English, Maths and science, all the way through from the youngest kids right through and then blending in this green curriculum, so evolving a curriculum from nature studies, to ecology to sustainability that flow," he said.

## Indonesian education

Many Indonesians are lucky to even get a basic education.

Almost half don't finish high school, often because there's no place for them to go.

The Government's goal is for nine years minimum education for all children but international schools favoured by expatriates, like Green School, are out of reach of all but a few Indonesians.

But Mr Stones says Green School can play a part in improving the national education system.

"Part of my dream is having a teachers' professional development centre on this site, not just for international teachers, but Indonesian teachers coming not necessarily to learn green courses but to be in this environment... ask the questions, and say, 'We could do something like that'," he said.

If Green School seems a bit unconventional that's probably because it is.

The school admits its teaching philosophies have yet to be tested.

But it hopes that its curriculum will evolve to be in line with the International Baccalaureate program, which is now widely accepted as an entrance qualification for university.

And the proof of whether the ideas here work will be whether the children the school turns out succeed.

"I like it because its so different to any other school in the world and I like that they have a different way of teaching you and you learn something that you don't learn in other places," one student, Mati said.

"Everyone is really friendly and its learning in a really chilled way," another student, Daisy said.

"And all the buildings are with bamboo and this is so cool," Gika said.

Green school is already an ambitious project, but founder Mr Hardy is not slowing down.

The school has big plans, including finding a way to harness the nearby river to power the whole campus.

And it wants to expand with new schools both in Indonesia and in other countries to expose a whole generation of children to its green message.

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