

## **Environmental Awareness, Community Collaboration and Art in Eastern Bali**

Bali, Indonesia

San Francisco Art Institute

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<http://www.projectbali.com/>

**Summary:** The central goal of this project was to raise awareness among the residents of two rural villages (Banjar Tatiapi and Banjar Sala) about the harmful environmental impacts of their current systems of waste disposal, burning and dumping plastic rubbish. We conducted an educational component in local elementary schools, incorporating collaborative art projects and lessons about proper waste disposal practices. We led community-wide clean-up days in the villages. Lastly, we worked with village representatives in Banjar Tatiapi, along with local rubbish-collection and recycling organization, Eco Bali, to develop a plan to reduce improper waste disposal in Banjar Tatiapi. Banjar Tatiapi had a history of illegally dumping waste on land in Banjar Sala, causing continuing conflict between the two villages. In educating villagers about waste disposal methods and developing a plan for managing Banjar Tatiapi's waste, our hope was to both improve environmental conditions and to promote more peaceful relations between these neighboring villages.

**Project Experience Details:** The scale and scope of our project in Banjar Sala and in Banjar Tatiapi depended upon the willingness of the village leadership to meet with us and to openly discuss their rubbish disposal situation. Gaining access to the Banjar leaders was not a simple or direct process. To meet with village leaders, we had to first gain the support of a local community member who was willing to act as our liaison and translator. While our efforts to make connections in Banjar Tatiapi were successful, similar efforts in Banjar Sala yielded disappointing results. Unfortunately, the leadership of Banjar Sala remained unresponsive to Della Afidick's multiple requests to meet with us, citing other business or ceremonial duties as higher priorities. Banjar Tatiapi's Banjar leader was concerned about the impact of plastic pollution on future generations, agreed to meet with us. The meeting took place in the village leader's compound and involved Agung Widara, a respected local villager, the village leader and his wife. Our project goals were in alignment with the leadership's intentions to find better ways to manage waste disposal. During the meeting, we agreed to purchase reusable, cloth bags and rubbish bins for the village and research the cost of Eco Bali regularly collecting rubbish and recycling in the village. The village leader and his wife agreed to plan how to make the rubbish collection sustainable after our seed money was spent.

We worked directly with elementary school students in Banjar Tatiapi by collaborating with ABC Foundation teachers. We taught an interactive lesson on the impacts of non-organic trash (plastic), and had discussions about what the children should and should not do with plastic trash. We led a trash clean-up event around the Banjar Tatiapi school grounds. On our last day of work in the school, we reviewed earlier lessons and led an art project in which the children decorated reusable canvas bags and a large rubbish bin that we had bought for the school. We were able to surmount language and cultural barriers only with the help of two very skilled teachers and collaborators.

While our work with the community of Banjar Tatiapi has proved to be successful overall, procuring the promised trash removal service for the village has been challenging. During our first meeting with Eco Bali, representatives Paola and Ketut drove an hour and a half to meet us in person and to investigate the village conditions. During this initial meeting, we all agreed that providing Banjar Tatiapi with some alternative system for rubbish disposal might help abate litter build-up in the village, as well as deter further illegal dumping on Banjar Sala's land. In addition to our request to supply rubbish bins and service for Banjar Tatiapi, Paola recommended that we pay Eco Bali to lead several educational events to help with "socialization" of these new waste disposal practices. Paola stated that the sustainability of the program would be dependent upon our having a local villager who would act as liaison with Eco Bali after we left the country. Fortunately, Agung Widara, had offered to be our liaison. We agreed to write up a contract for non-organic waste removal from Banjar Tatiapi, while Eco Bali agreed to email us a projected budget and timeline for the services we discussed.

**What Worked Well:** Communicating directly – face to face – with community members was essential to moving our project forward. Also critical to our success were the inroads that we already had

in the community, relationships with people who are longtime residents and respected community members. Darren Leaver and Laura Englund-Krusee, owners of Villa Agung Khalia in Banjar Sala, provided discounted accommodations and hired drivers, which was essential to travel from the rural villages. With their backing, plus the support of Chelsea Thompson, influential village contacts, were willing to advocate for our program. With our various skills and aptitudes combined, and with the help of many supporters in the local community, we managed to make significant headway on our project in a very limited amount of time. We learned that the surest way to catalyze change is to support and encourage efforts already brewing in the local community.

**What Did Not Work:** We were never granted a face-to-face meeting with the leadership of Banjar Sala. Without the energetic support of village leadership or other influential locals, it is difficult to effect change in the community-oriented culture of Bali. Our timeline of three weeks for the project was ambitious – we could have easily used three months to work. Perhaps additional time (and continued persistence) would have allowed us to reach the leadership in Banjar Sala and to better address both villages' needs. After drafting and sending our contract to Eco Bali, we have experienced long delays and postponement of service.

**Who Benefitted from Our Project:** Banjar Tatiapi, a rural village, located outside of Ubud, Bali, Indonesia, has a community of approximately 200 families, a population of about 775 people. Even though we could only directly help Banjar Tatiapi, Banjar Sala (the neighboring village with a similar demographic) may also be affected by the work we did if Banjar Tatiapi changes its waste disposal habits and stops dumping rubbish onto Banjar Sala's land, next to the river which both communities utilize. Coastal residents of Bali may also be affected by changes made in these inland villages, since plastic dumped in interior waterways often washes out to the ocean during the rainy season, polluting the beaches and sea water.

**The Long Term Impact:** Bali has a serious problem with plastic litter. Raising awareness about plastic waste dumping in villages like Banjar Tatiapi will help to decrease Bali's plastic problem by changing how people think about and handle their trash. Since downstream pollution is a major source of conflict between neighboring villages like Banjar Tatiapi and Banjar Sala, educating people about proper disposal of plastics and other non-organic waste will also help to create more peaceful relations between villagers sharing waterways.

**Future For Our Project:** We are hopeful that our project may be sustainable over time, as a result of the following favorable conditions: We have partnered with Eco Bali, a recycling organization capable of providing consistent trash removal program well into the future. The village leadership and community in Banjar Tatiapi are concerned about the welfare of the younger generation and are actively engaged in addressing plastic pollution. Banjar Tatiapi's leadership is willing to impose a small monthly fee on community members in order to sustain a regular recycling service program. We anticipate that positive changes in Banjar Tatiapi, it will influence other communities, changing how the Balinese think about and deal with the plastic refuse.

**What Peace Means to Us:** Peace is achieved in communities when there is a willingness to acknowledge conditions that create dissension, and when the community addresses those conditions in a forthright manner, as well as, take action to change the conditions which are creating dissension. We believe a healthy environment is paramount to creating peace in any community. Our project contributes to peace between two communities, Banjar Tatiapi and Banjar Sala, Bali, Indonesia, by raising awareness of improper waste disposal practices. This project changed how we view the world, and our place in it. Our experience taught us that people all over the world want to relate to one another – face to face – and can come to an understanding despite age, language and cultural differences. We came to understand that a person's idea has the potential to be a catalyst for change anywhere in the world. More importantly, we learned that being a catalyst is not enough to make change, it takes support of the local community for change to actually occur.

Our project in Bali ventured to prompt communities to change dangerous disposal practices and found a community looking for support to invest in an environmental program to sustain generations to come. Peace is created through shared intentions, and the aspirations of many; it really does take a village to nurture peace.

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*Ahna, Julia and Chelsea participate in a community clean-up with villagers in Tatiapi*



*Chelsea, Ahna and Tatik, a local teacher in Tatiapi, lead a lesson on waste disposal*