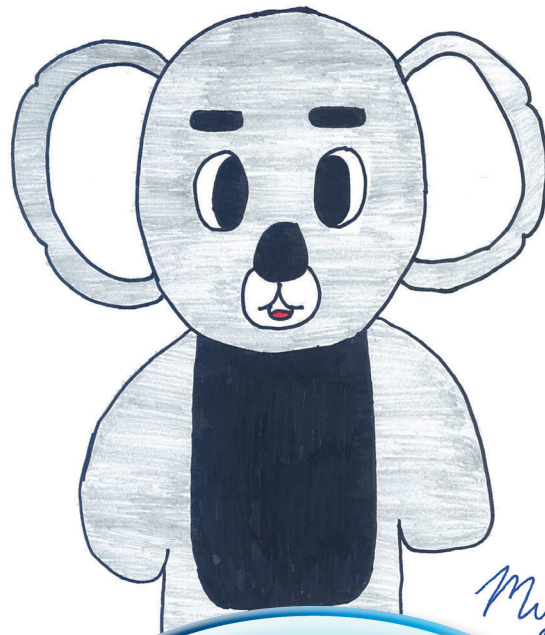


LIDYA PUSPITA DEWI

- A SOLITARY KOALA -

A SOLITARY KOALA

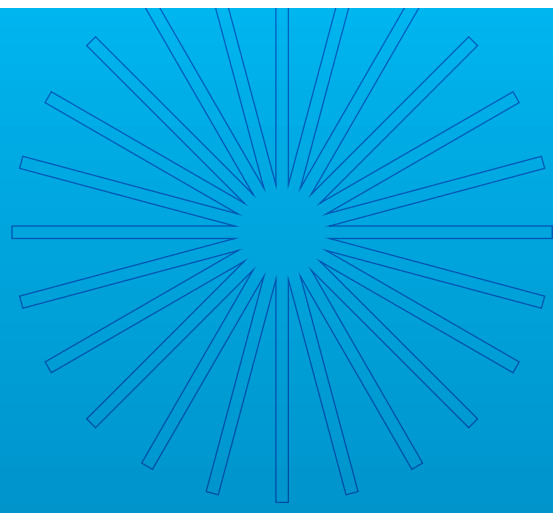
A Short Story By Lidya Puspita Dewi.



*My Name
"Kio"*

The 2026
WORDS
Storytelling & Storybook Competition
MY COMMUNITY





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Foreword

The seventeen stories presented in this book came from a collaborative process between students and their teachers— both their home institution teacher (co-teacher) and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) serving in their schools. At the heart of the collaborative process is the desire to foster understanding and to bridge differences. The schools where they taught were selected through a collaborative process between AMINEF, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to host the ETAs. Indeed, everything about this program underlines cooperation between all parties involved.

After a long selection and preparation process, the ETAs served in Indonesia for eight months. They came from various states in the US, from New York to California, Vermont to Louisiana - some from urban areas, others more rural. Together, they represent the rich landscape of places and cultures in America. Likewise, in Indonesia, the ETAs were exposed to and experienced life in various places and cultures. They co-taught English in various areas, spreading from Padang, Jambi, Lampung, Kulon Progo, Kudus, Sidoarjo, Praya, Palangkaraya, Makassar, and Kendari.

Over the eight months the ETAs, co-teachers, and students, in essence, serve as cultural ambassadors to one another. They forged friendships beyond the classroom walls and invested their time and energy in the communities. And this year's theme for the WORDS Storybook competition is indeed "My Community".

The stories you are about to read here were written by the stars of each school. The authors won a local competition organized by the ETAs and the co-teachers. They then worked intensively on their books and on how to best narrate the stories. In April, the students, co-teachers, and ETAs were invited to Jakarta to celebrate their journey – from beginning to learn English to becoming authors and, subsequently, storytellers.

The students performed confidently in front of a panel of four prominent judges who are all Fulbrighters from Indonesia and the US: Ahmad Fuadi, an author of best-selling novels including "Negeri 5 Menara" and a prominent public speaker; Anna Grundström, a performing artist and independent researcher based in Brooklyn, New York; Azalia Muchransyah, filmmaker, scholar, and lecturer at BINUS University; and Douglas Ramage, AMINEF Board Member and founding Managing Director of Bower-GroupAsia Indonesia.

The third place went to Clarintha Glory Amungin Allokendek from SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus with "Hannah The One-Man Team" whose story reminded us of the importance of collaboration with others. Putri Permata Sari from SMK 9 Padang's story "The Pursuit of Happiness", won second place. It is a beautiful story about self-acceptance and creating a community of your own.

In first place was Florencia Kirana Wilman from SMK 6 Padang, with her story "The Day Coffee Called Us Home." Ms. Wilman presented a powerful reminder that, amid disasters and challenges, communities can work together and find solutions. Her story showed that sometimes what the community needs is one person to plow the way, helping each other, and others will follow.

The WORDS Competition is a celebration for all: the students, the ETAs, and the co-teachers. It is a celebration of a new, and hopefully lasting, connection among people. And AMINEF is proud to have been part of these connections.

Dr. Sandra Hamid

Executive Director, AMINEF

About the WORDS Competition

WORDS is a national English-language competition that brings together one student from each Fulbright ETA host school. Launched as a speech and talent contest in 2007, it evolved into a storytelling and storybook competition in 2018.

Finalists first win their school-level competition, which Fulbright ETAs organize in collaboration with the co-teachers. ETAs support students through brainstorming sessions, workshops, and performance feedback.

A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10th and 11th graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.



A SOLITARY KOALA

A Short Story By Lidya Puspita Dewi.



Once upon a time, there lived a koala named Kio in the forest. He lives alone, no one accompanies Kio. He had always felt that living alone was the safest, and didn't want anyone around him. He doesn't want any friends, basically he believes he can do everything himself.

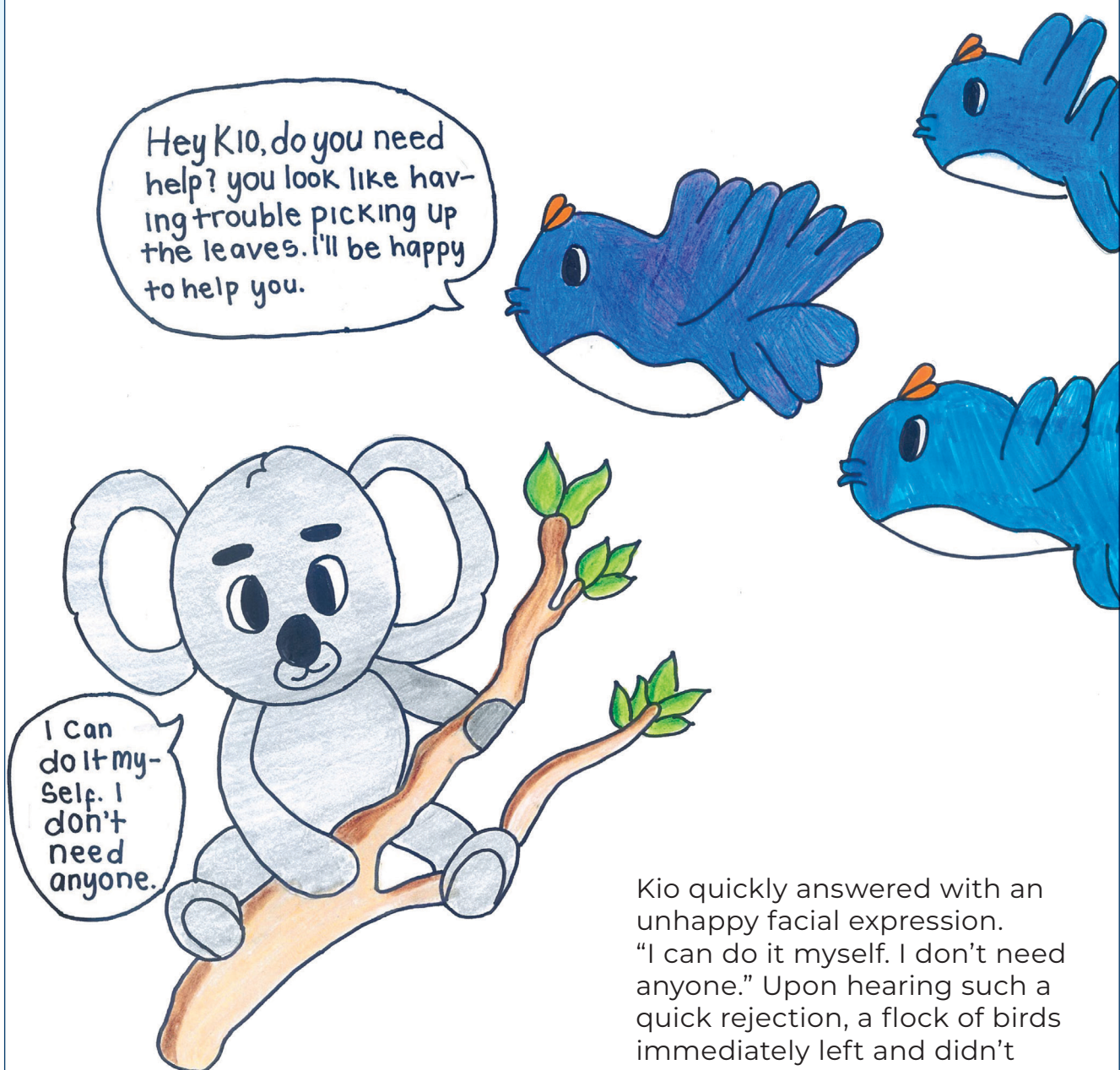


Therefore, all forest residents are reluctant to be close to Kio. In the forest, the Kio is nicknamed "A Solitary Koala."

One day, Kio was difficulty picking up leaves on a high branch.

At the time, a flock of birds saw Kio who was in trouble.

Even though they knew Kio was known for not wanting anyone around him, the flock of birds still approached Kio. One of the birds named Tom said, "Hey Kio, do you need help? You look like you're having trouble picking up the leaves. I'll be happy to help you."



Kio quickly answered with an unhappy facial expression. "I can do it myself. I don't need anyone." Upon hearing such a quick rejection, a flock of birds immediately left and didn't leave a single word behind.

That night, there was a big rainstorm. The tree where Kio lives breaks and Kio falls to the ground, trapped between branches. At first, Kio stubbornly wanted to get rid of the twigs that were above his body, but no matter how much he tried, the twigs couldn't get away from him. After the rainstorm stopped, Kio tried to ask for help.

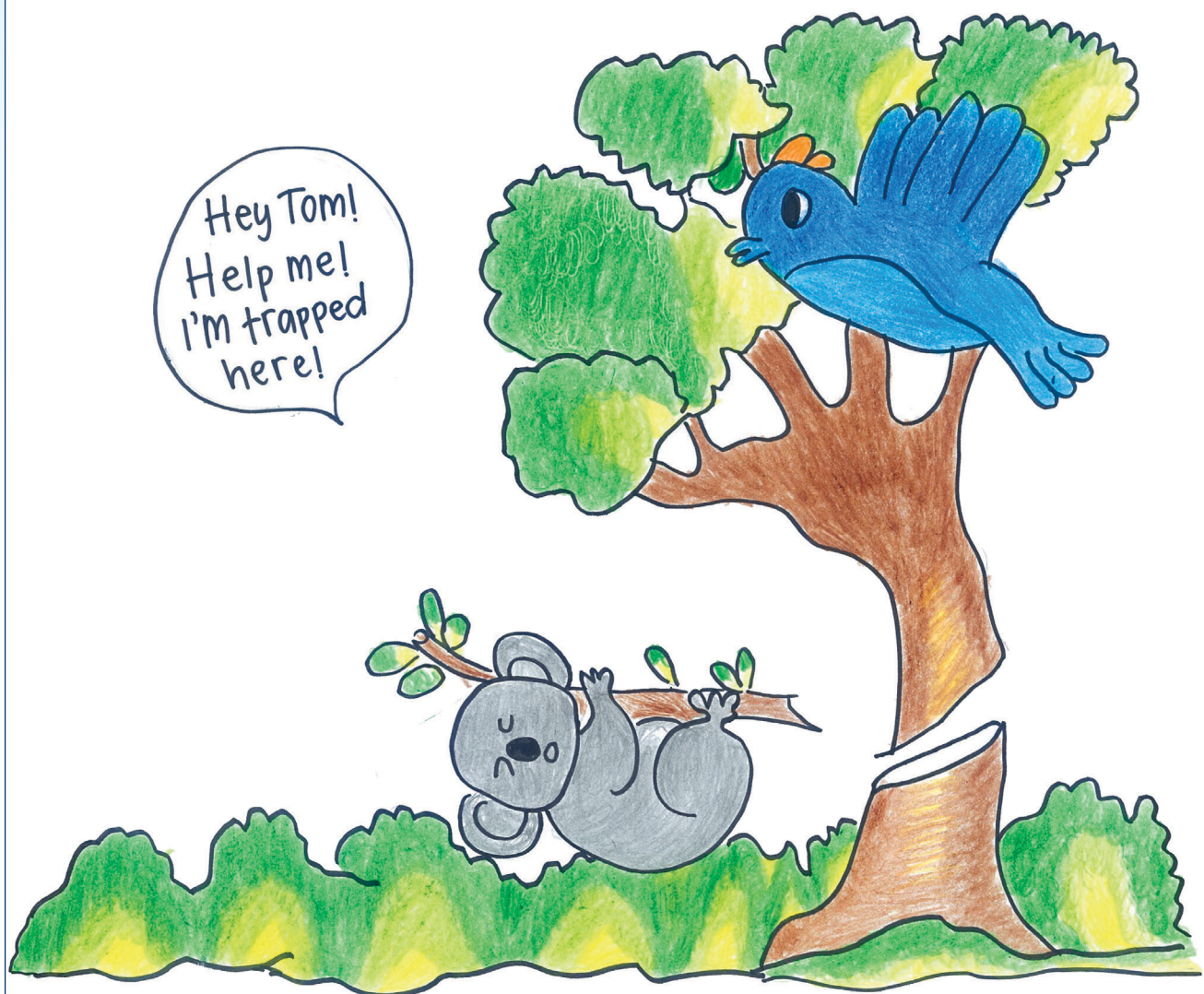
"Help! Help! Please someone help me, I can't stand it anymore!"
But no matter how loud Kio shouted for help, still none of the forest residents came to help him.



Only then he realized...because all this time he rejected everyone, no one was close to him, and now he was truly alone.

In the morning, Kio woke up from his stupor. Kio's body hurt so much, he couldn't move his body anymore. With little hope left, Kio heard the sound of birds flapping. Kio quickly shouted for help. "Hey Tom! Help me!

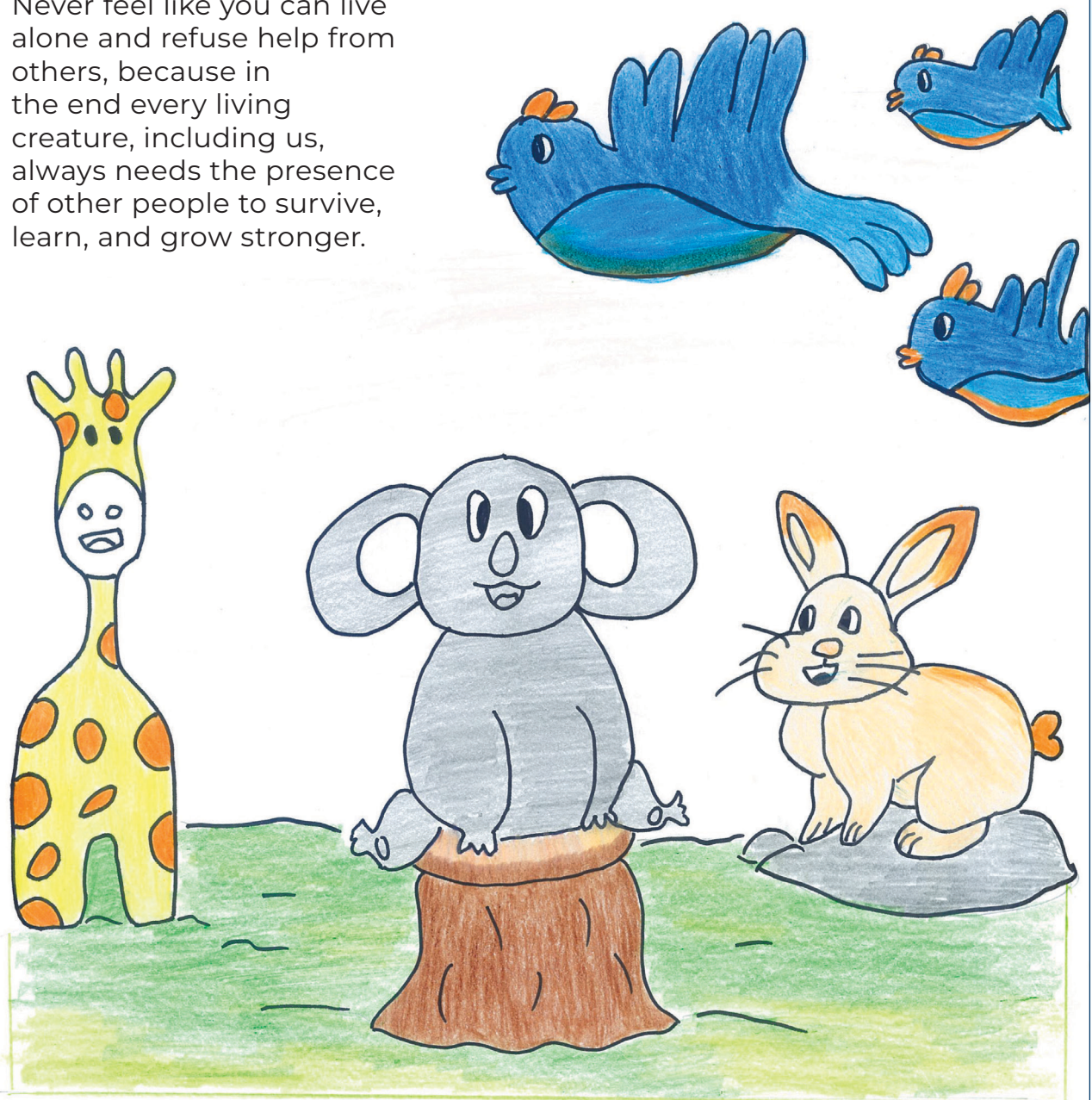
I'm trapped here!" With deep worry, Tom approached Kio, then immediately called the other animals. After getting out safely, Kio finally said with a face full of regret, "Thank you everyone, I know all this time I have been unkind to you, now I'm very sorry and aware of all my mistakes."



Tom answered Kio's words. "Kio, in this world no one can be alone forever. All creatures need help. I hope that from today you will be friends with everyone and not be a solitary koala anymore."

After that incident, Kio began to socialize with all the animals in the forest. Kio realized that there was nothing wrong with him being friends with other animals. He was grateful that the forest residents accepted Kio as their friend. Life in the forest becomes simpler, and there are no solitary koalas anymore.

Moral of the story:
Never feel like you can live alone and refuse help from others, because in the end every living creature, including us, always needs the presence of other people to survive, learn, and grow stronger.



About the Author

Lidya Puspita Dewi
SMAN 1 Kalianda



Hello everyone! My name is Lidya Puspita Dewi, but most people call me Lidya. I am 16 years old. I was born in Lampung Selatan on July 29, 2009. Currently, I am an 11th-grade student at SMAN 1 Kalianda.

A fun fact about me: I really love pastel colors, especially pink and purple. I also enjoy watching k-drama, horror or thriller movies on Netflix. Chemistry is one of my favorite subjects, and I love exploring new things. I dream of becoming a successful person in the future and achieving my goals with the best possible results.

About AMINEF

The American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) is the binational Fulbright Commission for Indonesia. AMINEF's many educational exchange programs have increased mutual understanding between the United States and Indonesia and strengthened the ties that unite our two countries.

Since 1952, more than 3,500 Indonesians and 1,400 Americans have participated in exchanges. Annually, 80-100 Indonesians travel to the US through Fulbright grants for degree study, teaching, research, or non-degree professional fellowships. Similarly, up to 60 Americans receive Fulbright support to contribute their expertise in teaching, research, or as Specialists, offering insights to Indonesian institutions.

For detailed information on degree scholarships and non-degree fellowships available to Indonesians and Americans, visit the AMINEF website at www.aminef.or.id.

About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, one of the US State Department-funded Fulbright programs in many countries worldwide, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas.

The program helps improve international students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the US while increasing the US student's language skills and knowledge of the many host countries worldwide.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (SMA, SMK, and Madrasah) that assist local English teachers. The program has been running for over two decades, since 2004, affecting thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago. AMINEF works closely with the Indonesian Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Religious Affairs to administer the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia.






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