

JIS Alum Promotes Hope in Paradise

Before the highly acclaimed Bali: Hope in Paradise documentary film of the Bali bombing's aftermath was presented at the 2004 New York Independent Film and Video Festival (where it won Best International Documentary), JIS alum Tina Ardie helped organize a showing of the film in Jakarta. We caught up with Tina and the film's director/producer, Jane Walters, to ask about the film's success and impact. But first a little background...



PM Howard (center in white shirt) met with Sarah and Saftar, two children who lost their mother to the Bali bombing, with an Aussie Rules football team playing in Bali in support of the victims. As *Hope in Paradise* explains, the meeting began a series of events that forced the Australian government to allow the two children in the country to be re-united with their father.

Out of the economic, social and spiritual ashes of the Bali bombing of October, 2002, emerged a story of hope and courage. *Hope in Paradise* is the powerful story of 21-year-old Asriana 'Sri' Kebon, a Balinese princess, whose mother is Australian, who devoted herself to helping the Balinese widows and children of those

killed or maimed in the bombing. By raising money and building a training and education center for their future, Sri's tireless efforts have made a real difference to some who had little hope at all.

In the film, Balinese widows tell their stories of heartbreak, struggle and

hope. In a Hindu mass cremation, we follow one family's emotional journey as they farewell their breadwinner. Being Balinese, their spiritual healing is as important as their physical welfare and so the film takes viewers on a pilgrimage to some of the island's most significant and beautiful temples.



Sri, (second from right), offering prayers for those killed by the bombings

Sri was also working part-time in the courtroom as an interpreter when the bombers were brought to justice. In a chilling death-row face-to-face interview with one of the bombers, Amrozi, Sri questions him about the killing of innocent people, including Muslims. He reveals his true psychopathic colors with no remorse for his vicious crime.

Also documented is her rescue and fostering of two young children who lost their mother in the blast, and her ultimately triumphant struggle against political bureaucracy to have them reunited with their father in an emotional reunion.

Produced by Padi Films (Jakarta/Bali) and narrated by Asha Gill of Discovery Channel, with a theme song kindly donated by Sting, *Hope in Paradise* is ultimately a story of hope, courage and the triumph of the human spirit. The story of a young, unassuming woman whose altruism has made a difference to people who otherwise might have had little hope at all.

Tina and Jane, please bring us up to date on how Hope in Paradise continues to be received and its impact on efforts to rebuild the lives of so many affected by the bombing?

Since its premier screening in NY, the documentary is continuing to be well received by audiences mostly in Asia. Most people feel strongly about the opportunity to hear the story from a Balinese perspective. The documentary has also been shown at the 1st EBS (Educational Broadcasting Service) in Korea to compete in the Challenging Asia competition category. It won the Humanitarian Award at the Bali International Film Festival and was invited to screen at the 2005 Jakarta International Film Festival (JIFF). The documentary continues to raise support, dialogue and attention to the Balinese victims.

In the film, we see Geoff Thwaites telling the moving story of how the loss of his son in the bombing led to the formation of the charity organization 'Zero-to-One'. It was Sri's involvement with Zero-to-One that brought her into contact with families whose lives had been shattered. Can you tell us more about Zero-to-One and Sri's subsequent establishment of Sri Kandhi, to help those Balinese left behind by the bombing?

Sri's connection to Australian Geoff Thwaites (founder of the victims of terrorism charity, Zero-to-One) was a fortuitous start. Sri's work with Zero-to-One began to soothe the spiritual

and economic grief of the Balinese widows. She has since founded Sri Kandhi, a charity for the empowerment of any disadvantaged Balinese women, having been exposed to the lack of local support for unwed mothers, battered women, and widows. Hundreds of underprivileged women have been through this training center since its inception.

Two young children, whose Balinese mother was killed in the blast, became one of the focuses of the film. Is there any contact with them after they were reunited with their Iranian father who at the time was in Australian immigration detention? How are they faring?

The father and the two children, Sarah and Saftar, are living with their father in Melbourne. They are extremely happy and are adjusting well to their new country and home. They came to Bali during the 2nd anniversary of the bombing and spent time together, went to the bomb site and continue to heal from the loss and impact of their deceased mother. The family remains in contact with Jane.

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Sri, (far right, rear) with some of the widows her Sri Kandhi Foundation is assisting.