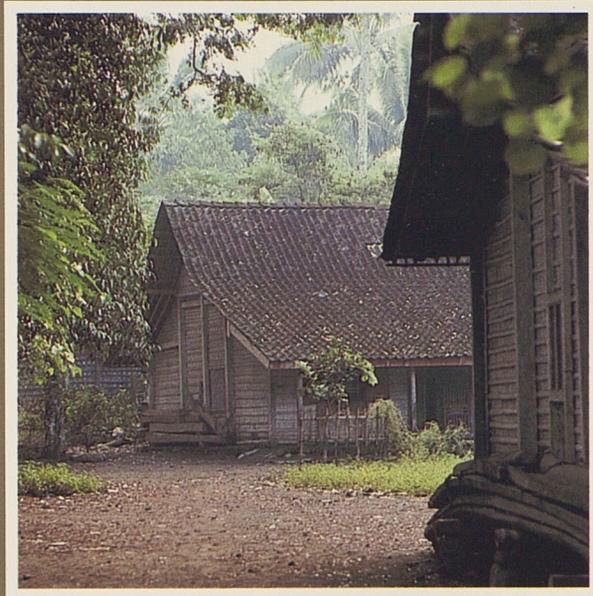


PONDOK PESANTREN PABELAN  
CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA  
ONGOING SINCE 1965







The students of the *pesantren* are schooled in the building trades, and have built many of the school's and village's structures.





Food preparation and storage for the village and school.



The library together with the plaza in front are the centre of the pesantren.



PONDOK PESANTREN PABELAN. Client: Hamam Dja'far, Kyai; Habib Chirzin, Deputy; Planners/Designers: Amin Arraihana, Fanani; LP3ES, Abdurrahman Wahid; Builders: People of the Pesantren.<sup>1</sup>

For more than five centuries traditional religious boarding schools have played a major role in the Islamic system of education in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> Independent of the government, today's *pesantrens* educate an estimated four million students or eighteen percent of school enrollment.<sup>3</sup> Concentrated in rural areas, *pesantrens* exert an influence far stronger than their numbers would suggest, not only in religious education but in teaching practical skills for community development. The Pondok Pesantren has distinguished itself in the teaching of contemporary building skills to its students and the surrounding community.

*Development of the Pesantrens.* *Pesantrens* are individualistic, each headed by a *kyai*, who is a charismatic leader and a learned teacher. His training varies; typically he is a graduate of another *pesantren*, often having had further religious study. A *kyai* begins by gathering in his own home a number of students (*santris*), to whom he provides religious instruction. Most *pesantrens* today have expanded from this individual instruction to include a broader general curriculum. Since *pesantrens* do not have to comply with government prescribed curricula, the amount of religious instruction and the nature of the secular education, including the sciences, vocational training, and instruction in agriculture, vary widely.

The background of students educated at the *pesantrens* falls into three groups. There are the children of the religious elite, and since these may go on to become *pesantren* leaders or religious scholars, their study emphasises religion. Then there are the children of the local village farmers and small traders, who attend the *pesantren* free of charge. The third group are children of village families of moderate means, children of urban traders, or children of civil servants. Members of these groups are likely to follow their parents' professions after acquiring basic skills at a *pesantren*. But individual education is not the main goal. The *pesantren's* aim is to train a cadre to serve the

1. Located in Central Java, the Pondok Pesantren Pabelan, is one in a chain of educational institutions throughout Java.



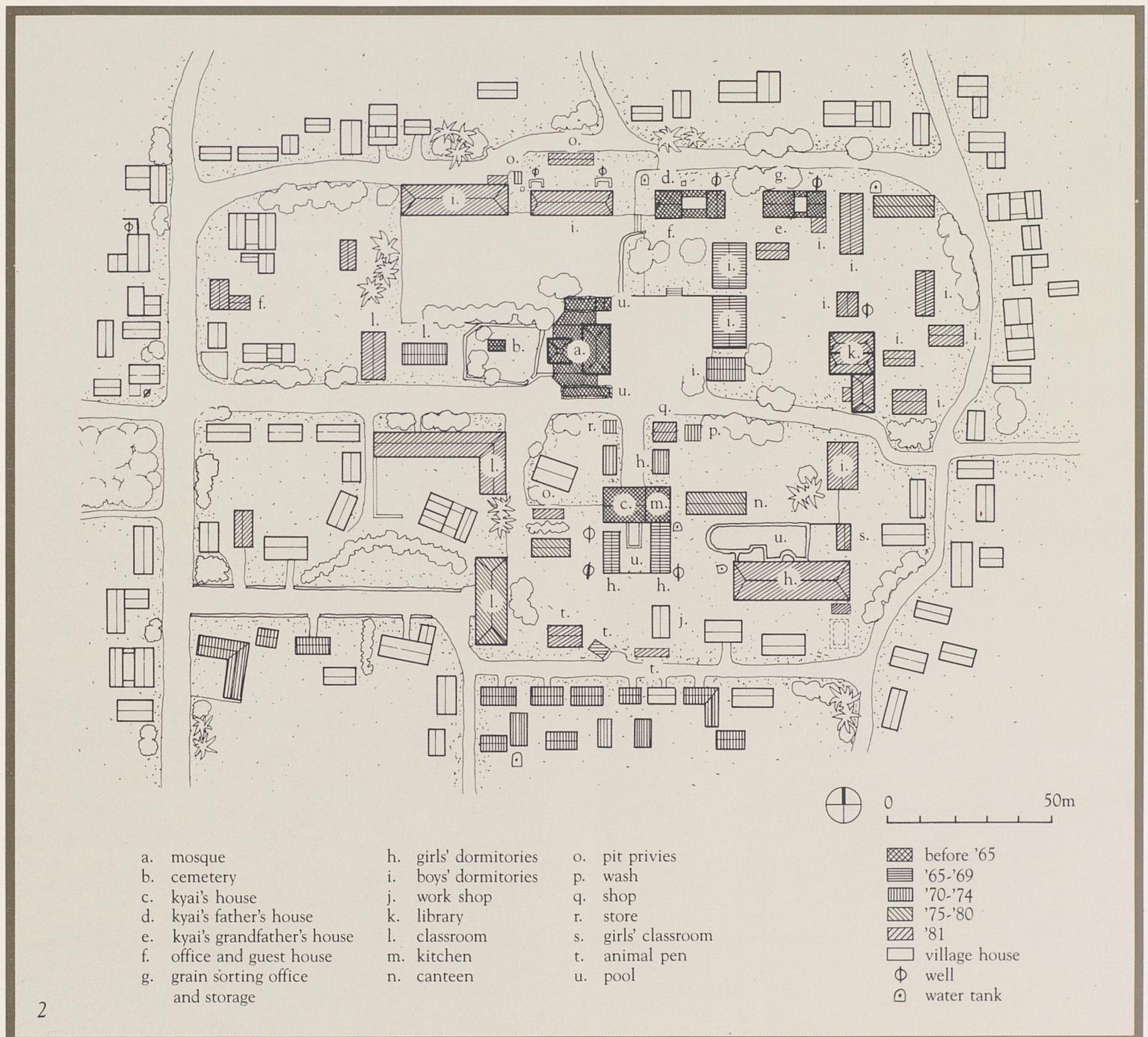
rural development needs of the Islamic community. And just as the strength of the *kyai* comes in the community recognition of his role as model, so too the strength of the *pesantren* lies in the degree to which it embodies the values of the community around it. For the *pesantren* is part of the community. Its primary function is community service, and as such it has actually become an informal institution for rural community development.

The Pondok Pesantren Pabelan<sup>4</sup> is just such an institution. Its success as a community development institution is evident in the level of community involvement in its activities. The *pesantren* has concentrated on training programmes that develop needed skills in agriculture and health care, and a particularly notable programme in building. All this is carried out in a spirit of cooperation and directly benefits the villagers as well as the *pesantren* members.

2. Site plan of pesantren and village.

*Pabelan and the Pesantren.* The village of Pabelan is in Central Java, a region densely populated and heavily cultivated; an area of volcanic mountains, numerous streams, and dense jungle growth nurtured by the heavy rains and nearly constant warm temperatures. Pabelan is about 40 kilometres inland to the east of Yogyakarta, near the town of Muntilan and along a branch of the Kali Progo River. Most villagers are small-scale farmers. Their houses, simple rectangular wood-frame structures, cluster along the village streets. The *pesantren* structures are concentrated in the midst of the village within a five hectare area, and village houses sit alongside *pesantren* buildings. The bond between the two is strong because their aspirations, social, economic, and cultural, are linked.

Pondok Pesantren Pabelan was begun in 1965 by Kyai Hamam Dja'far, a skilled farmer and a graduate of Gontor, a *pesantren* noted for its training of teachers. Dja'far's first students were from the village, all transfers from the formal government schooling. His facilities were limited to a traditional



mosque, two houses belonging to Dja'far's family, and a third small structure, plus 0.25 hectare of house yard. Most of the thirty-five students continued to live in the village houses, but would gather daily with their teacher for instruction which combined Koranic studies with training in agriculture. Financing for the *pesantren* came from the proceeds of Dja'far's family farm and the sale of volcanic sand and stone as building materials.

Students from outside Pabelan began to join the *pesantren* in 1970, living in the *kyai's* home. By 1978 the *pesantren* had grown to 971 students (668 males and 303 females) taught by sixty teachers (forty-eight males and twelve females), overseen by the *kyai's* deputy Habib Chirzin. The students come from throughout the Indonesian archipelago, seventy-five of them from the village of Pabelan. The teachers tend to be graduates of the *pesantren* at either Pabelan or Gontor. The curriculum is divided into six levels and includes instruction in Arabic and English, reflecting the influence of Gontor, which is also noted for its language programme.

With the help of community resources, the *pesantren* facilities have gradually expanded. The facilities developed without an actual plan, but according to need. There are today more than forty structures (several public buildings, twenty-two classrooms, sixteen dormitories, and various service buildings and economic enterprises) built by members of the *pesantren* with the assistance of builders from the village.<sup>5</sup>

The old mosque marks the centre of the village and the *pesantren*. The mosque and the large sandy square it faces serve as the major meeting place for the villagers and *pesantren* members. To the north of the square are the *pesantren* office

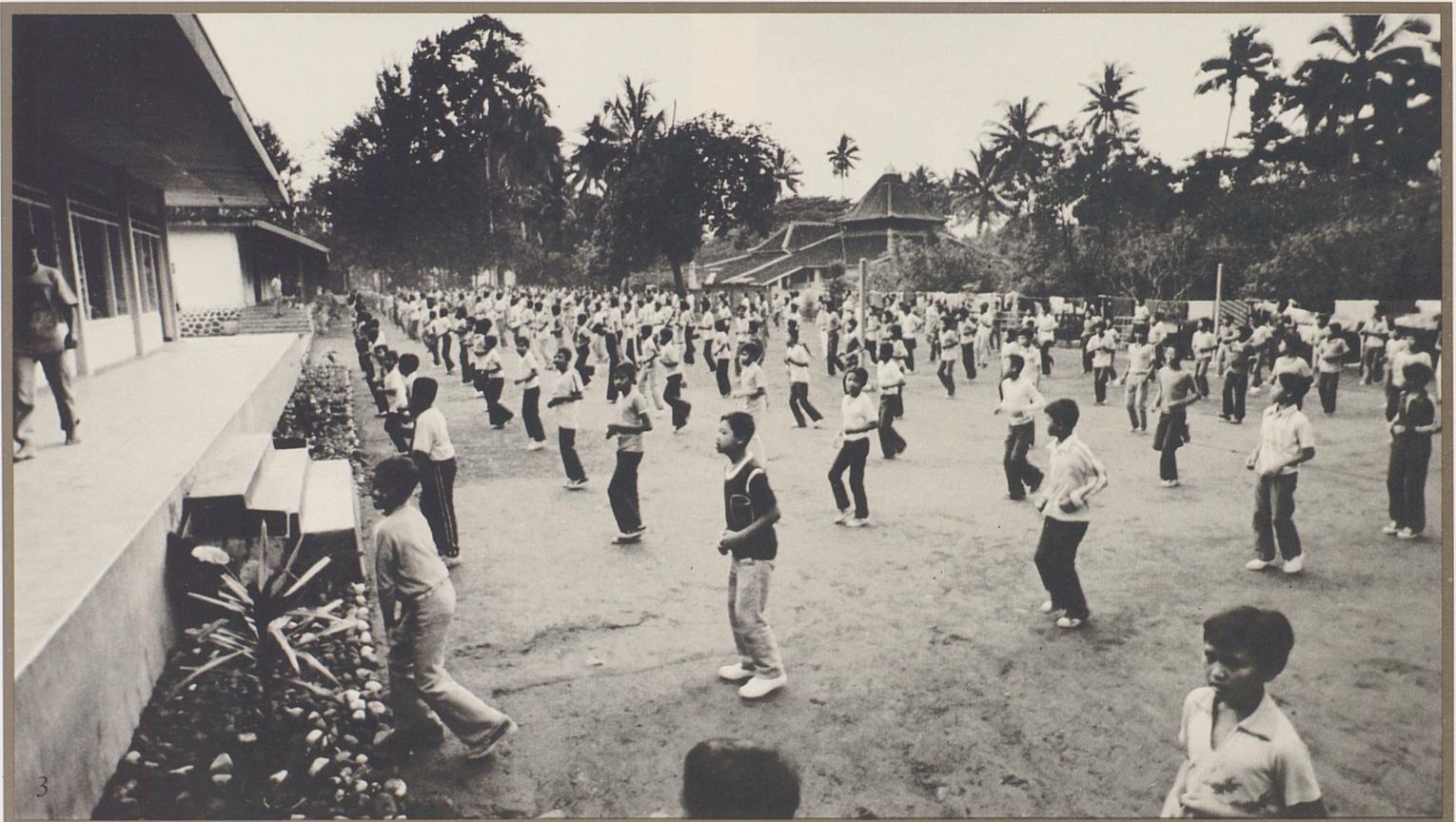
3. Morning exercises in the *pesantren* square are part of the carefully balanced but tightly packed daily schedule.

and guest house. To the south is the *kyai's* house. These were the original *pesantren* structures. The mosque is over sixty years old, considered particularly old in a region where timber structures have a short life, continually worn by the heavy rains and high humidity. The mosque consists of the traditional three ascending spaces, indicated in the roof heights, and reflecting increasing sacredness as they rise. The outer porch (*serambie*) is used as a classroom and a place for debates and public meetings. The inner chamber (*ruang dalam*) is used for prayer. The highest innermost area (*mustoko*) is the storage place for the *pesantren* valuables and holy books.

The first buildings added in the late 1960s were dormitories to the east of the square. When enrollment grew in 1970, some additional dormitories, classrooms, and storage facilities, were built, all located along the central village road which passes through the *pesantren*.

Construction activity increased considerably in 1974 with the addition of more classrooms, dormitories, canteens, and a cooperative shop. The boys' dormitories are clustered in two groups, one to the northeast and a second to the north of the mosque and cemetery. The girls' dormitories are to the southeast, close to the *kyai's* home, and grouped around a pool. The classrooms are concentrated along the western portion of the site. The workshop and animal pens are found at the southern edge of the *pesantren*. Canteens, kitchens, washstands, and lavatories are scattered throughout the site. A library and meeting hall built in 1976, used by both the villagers and the *pesantren*, stands alongside the village road, just to the east of the main square.

The *pesantren* buildings are grouped together defining open spaces, in clusters similar to those of the village houses. Throughout the site, low walls of rough volcanic stone form terraces and further delineate these outside open spaces. The



areas are communal, and function as playgrounds for Girl Guide and Boy Scout activities and for sports, particularly badminton and table tennis.

Outside the five-hectare area are ten fishponds, built by the *pesantren*, and a small piece of agricultural land.

The *kyai* has long since ceased providing the main financing for the *pesantren*. Today the major source of income is student fees. Each student able to do so pays a monthly fee for food, lodging, and tuition.<sup>6</sup> Added to this are income from the sale of rice and tobacco produced on the student farm,<sup>7</sup> income generated from the fishponds, and income from the sale of volcanic stone and sand. Village donations, difficult to quantify, are collected every Thursday and come in the form of cash or rice.

*Daily Activities.* The goal of all *pesantren* members is to learn to live the Muslim way of life, based on Muslim teachings and Muslim law, looking to the *kyai* as a model.

The *pesantren* students keep a rigorous schedule centred around the five daily prayers. They rise at 4:00 A.M. for morning prayer. By 5:00 A.M. the *pesantren* is a flurry of activity with students sweeping the grounds and clearing away refuse. Until breakfast at 7:00 there is time for sports or, for the younger students, reading the Koran. Formal classes begin promptly at 7:30 and continue until 1:00 when they break for noon prayer and lunch. Afternoon classes in Arabic and English meet from 2:00 until afternoon prayer at 3:30. At 4:00 an hour and a half of sports begins, followed by Maghrib prayer. Dinner and evening prayer begin at 7:00. There is one last hour of guided study in the evening before retiring at 9:30. Sunday and Thursday evenings are set aside for public speaking (in Bahasa, Arabic, and English). On Thursdays, two hours of lesson time are devoted to vocational training<sup>8</sup> and

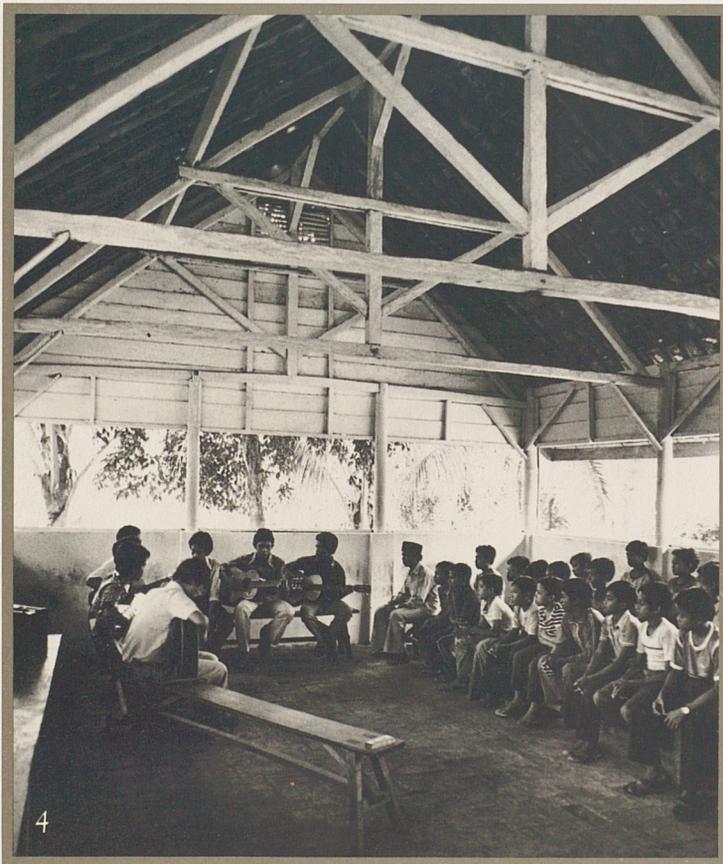
social work; the afternoon is set aside for Boy Scout and Girl Guide training. Time is found for theatrical performances, music, folk singing, poetry reading, and painting. Adherence to such a strict schedule is intended to produce a disciplined student. At the same time, a spirit of mutual aid pervades all the *pesantren* activities.

The *pesantren* is self-governing and financially self-reliant. The daily administration of the *pesantren* is carried out by a two-level system: the Pesantren Association, which includes the villagers, the teachers, and the students; and the student organisation (also including the teachers). The student government is open to students from the second year onwards. It consists of a five-member Executive Committee, elected annually, and subcommittees which oversee the various *pesantren* activities. The student government decides the day-to-day affairs, calculates project expenses, and plans fund raising. Both the daily routine tasks and special activities are carried out by the student organisation without requiring the involvement of the *kyai* or his deputy.

*Training in Building.* The *pesantren* offers students and villagers training in carpentry, masonry, and tile laying—skills put directly to use as the *pesantren* expands and builds needed structures with readily available materials. For example, in 1975 the decision was made to build a library and meeting hall and

4. Classroom built by the *pesantren* students.

5. The mosque at prayer time. The mosque is the oldest building within the *pesantren*.



to use the actual construction process as a training programme in building to benefit both the *pesantren* members and villagers. A Jakarta-based research organisation, LP3ES, assisted in setting up the programme. Two young architects, one still a student, were responsible for the design of the building. To oversee the construction and the associated training programme, two representatives from the Ministry of Industry were invited to the *pesantren*.

Beginning in early 1975, twenty students and twenty villagers took part in the nine-month instruction programme. The programme was divided into three-month phases: the initial selection and treatment of timber and the construction of the foundation and plinth, the erection of the timber frame and truss, and the construction of the brick walls and tile roofs. At the end of nine months the two instructors left and the trainees continued to work. The building was completed in October of 1976 and opened in November. Buildings constructed after this date reflect the high standard of skills developed during the training programme.

*Community Development Projects.* In keeping with the spirit of mutual aid and dedication to community service, a number of community development efforts were undertaken by the *pesantren* to benefit the village as a whole. In 1978, using funds from a government grant from the Department of People's Welfare, the *pesantren* began a village home-improvement programme. During the period forty houses were improved, involving three sections of the village. Members of the *pesantren* helped to organise the villagers into construction teams, each consisting of five households. The working groups were directed by councils which decided which houses to repair. The decisions were not necessarily made on the basis of need, but on the desire of the owner and his ability to supply matching funds. Any expenses beyond the 10,000 rupiahs contributed by the *pesantren* were borne by the owner. Construction was in stages, work being done on five houses at a time. Dirt floors were replaced with

stone foundations and cement floors, walls were reconstructed to sill level, windows were installed, roofs were replaced, and areas around houses were paved and stone retaining walls constructed to prevent flooding.

The same working groups took part in a road-building and retaining wall/flood control project. Working groups would carry stones in chainlike fashion up from the river. Masons assisted, charging only half their normal rate. The *pesantren* contributed the needed cement. Families contributed, based on their distance from the road and size of their garden plot. The *pesantren* also built a hydraulic pump for water supply.

The *pesantren* is involved in a number of nonbuilding development projects, among them a health service staffed by a cadre of forty students and forty villagers, and a credit scheme which allows villagers to buy goats and chickens from the *pesantren*, repaying the loan from the income. A number of demonstration plots were cultivated to show villagers what can and cannot be grown in the region. Using the meeting hall as a training centre, the *pesantren* provides the village with counselling on housing, architecture, and settlement of land; agriculture and cattle breeding; and community health care. The *pesantren* continues to try to improve the quality of service and to extend the area it serves.

Shortly after its completion, the library/meeting hall was used to house a six-month-long community-development training project, held under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. The twenty-four participants came from eight different *pesantrens* located throughout Indonesia. The *pesantren* has since hosted several training programmes, workshops, and seminars attended by members of other *pesantrens* and rural development groups.

As a self-financed and self-governing institution, the *pesantren* is itself a model for the community. It relies on economic use of materials, use of existing resources, materials, and technologies, and extending those skills through training. The training, involving the villagers as well as *pesantren* members, becomes a key part in the process of community development, aiding both the village of Pabelan and the villages to which the graduates return.

6. The village and school have cooperated in the management of water systems. A washing area is shown here.

