

**Douglas Russell Dilts (Ed.D. 1989)**  
(January 12, 1952 - October 15, 2011)

Russ Dilts passed away suddenly on Saturday, October 15, 2011, while in the field working on a community development initiative in Bener Mariah, Takengon, Aceh. Russ spent more than 30 years in Indonesia leading development initiatives ranging from adult education to farmer extension to community-based natural resources management. He was known and loved by his friends and colleagues for his unique ability to inspire us to achieve more than we thought possible of ourselves. Russ was firmly committed to the rights and dignity of all people, and his work provided voice to millions of farmers and rural poor to organize and achieve a better life.



Douglas Russel Dilts grew-up in Augusta, Georgia, and graduated from Stanford University in 1974. He first came to Indonesia with Stanford's Volunteers in Asia program. He served first as a volunteer and then as VIA's Indonesia organizer. He then worked in Indonesia and Thailand with World Education. In the 1980s, while completing his doctorate in International Education at the University of Massachusetts, he was actively engaged in Indonesia's emerging NGO movement.

Russ then developed, led and managed the UN-FAO's largest field training program that reached rural farmers across 12 Asian countries through Farmer Field Schools on ecological agriculture. The [Farmer Field School](#) approach is now being applied in over 80 countries. More than 2,000,000 farmers learned ecological agricultural practices leading to greater yields and reduced reliance on pesticides through farmer field schools. These 'schools without walls' created a paradigm shift in agriculture extension, empowering farmers as trainers, researchers and leaders.

This work is being continued through [FIELD](#), which he co-founded in 2002 with his friends and colleagues. Most recently, Russ was the Regional Coordinator for USAID's Environmental Services Program in North Sumatra.

Russ married Wahyu Setyowati in Solo in 1985, and together they raised 5 children, Bayu Indra Kusuma Dilts, Bima Desap Ardianatal Dilts, Bondan Ageng Paramitha Sari Dilts, Bagas Yudhistira Dilts, and Bagas Punto Dewo Dilts. Russ is also survived by his two sisters, Barbara and Martha. He was buried in San Diego Hills Cemetery, Karawang, West Java.

Some personal reflections from his friend **John Pontius (Ed.D. 1989)** who lives and works in Indonesia.



*Russ was in Takengang, Aceh, a mountainous region in south-central Aceh. This was Saturday, mid-day and there was some free time. He and a colleague set off to climb a hill to catch a view. Russ, would not walk up a hill, and this was a steep one, he attacked any challenge. His colleague failed the challenge, but Russ won out, then his heart failed him.*

*Russ had been doing intensive fitness for the last several years, this included running 5 kilometers 3 times a week. He was in good shape, so this comes as a shock.*

*Russ and I have been share owners in a boat for over 10 years together, we fished, did fitness played golf, drank, worked and read the books of our days. The picture shows Russ on a recent fishing trip. Russ was very proud of that fish. We caught two like that on the same day. I caught the first one so Russ was trying hard. We were in multiple conversations. Those conversations are at an end.*

Those who would like to send condolences to the family may do so through John Pontius ([<ponijo.pontius@gmail.com>](mailto:ponijo.pontius@gmail.com))