



INVISIBLE PEOPLE

POVERTY AND EMPOWERMENT
IN INDONESIA

presented by PNPM Mandiri —
Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment

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Invisible People: Poverty and Empowerment in Indonesia

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JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

What makes for a just society? Most people would agree that a just society treats its people with respect and dignity. In a just society, opportunities, resources, rights, and obligations are distributed fairly to each member of that society. And most people would agree that the true measure of a society's fairness is not how it treats its wealthiest, its most powerful, or its most favored individuals, but how it treats those people and communities who have been less favored; those who lack the ability to lead their country, to dominate its markets or captain its industries. The measure of a just society is how it treats its poor, marginalized, and vulnerable citizens.

Indonesia's diversity creates special challenges to any notion of social justice. Treating all people with respect and dignity is not an easy task when each group thinks that its vision of what is just and fair is the right one. Sukarno's Guided Democracy and then Suharto's New Order government proclaimed Pancasila to be the country's sole national ideology to cut through the problem of each group claiming that its vision of language, ethnicity, or religion entitled it to a special status. However, alternative ideologies claiming to represent special, privileged interests continued to make claims throughout the New Order period – as indeed they do today.

Indonesia's founders thought long and carefully about questions of justice and diversity. At the level of ideology, the Indonesian Constitution explicitly guarantees all Indonesians equal rights as citizens of the nation. But as with all countries, there is a gap between the noble sentiments of Indonesia's laws and the practical politics of daily life. Much of Indonesia's political history can be seen as a struggle to find the balance between the power of its founding vision and its failure to resist multiple claims for favored treatment. The challenge of reconciling the country's diversity with its aspirations towards social justice remains the central theme of Indonesian political life.

Development and Invisibility

My participation in this book comes from a decade of work with the World Bank, which was the main donor that financed Indonesia's Kecamatan Development Program. KDP was a rural development project that provided block grants to communities so they could invest in small social and economic projects such as roads, clean water, and irrigation. KDP's "big idea" was that Indonesian communities had their own long, strong traditions of development planning and management. Rather than bypassing local traditions so that international and national agencies could introduce ostensibly modern ways to promote development, KDP laid out a framework for communities to set their own priorities, to manage funds provided for their own development, and to be accountable for the quality of the results of their own endeavors.

In late 2006, KDP was replaced by Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment ("PNPM"), which scaled up the preceding program to encompass the entire country. This expanded program was a central part of a strategy for reducing poverty across the nation. Today, PNPM covers more than 60,000 villages across the country.

Why would a development program lead to questions of social justice? Development has traditionally been about economic growth and welfare, not matters of rights and justice. At best, there have been sporadic attempts to redefine development to include social and economic rights. In general, though, development practitioners stand neutrally apart from issues of rights and justice in all but the most abstract ways. The sharp line dividing the two has served a purpose by shielding development programs from accusations of politicization and unwanted interference. However, in actual practice the line between the two cannot be drawn as sharply as practitioners on both sides of the equation often claim. All too often, efforts to promote "the greatest good for the greatest numbers" through policy reforms and development projects clash with the fundamental rights of people, especially the poor. While there have been some efforts to reconcile the conflict between the two, the tension between development and justice remains pervasive.

PNPM is a good program. It was conceived with the explicit goal of reconciling development projects with community priorities. Its purpose is to help poor villagers across the country become direct actors in development rather than watching outsiders decide whether they need schools more than roads, or clinics more than drinking water. By giving villagers block grants to spend, with some technical assistance to improve planning and engineering, we thought that PNPM could begin to reverse development's history of top-down planning. We hoped that it would sweep up villagers into the national movement of Reformasi by encouraging their democratic participation in decisions that would affect and improve their daily lives.

To a great extent, PNPM has been a success. Villagers like it. They often comment that it's among the few programs that let villagers take control of development. Extensive, well-planned evaluations show that the program has had a positive impact on reducing poverty and raising household incomes.

But not for everybody. The first inkling that something was amiss came during a visit to Aceh during the period of armed conflict. While I was sitting outside a mosque in a small hamlet in Kabupaten Pidie, a group of widows complained to me angrily that the government always seemed to leave them out of its programs, even the good ones. Further inquiry showed that widows, no matter how poor or needy, were not being invited to village discussions at which PNPM project priorities were established. When challenged on this, one village leader

said that there wasn't much of a problem to solve because there weren't any poor widows in the village. He claimed that widows were well looked after by their husband's families. The mostly male community leaders literally could not see that the widows and their children were desperately poor. The widows were voiceless and invisible.

There are large numbers of individuals and groups of people who live on the margins or in the interstices of the formal structures of villages, towns, and cities. It is not surprising that such people form communities of their own, often with their own unique culture, language, and code of conduct. As the stories gathered in this book show, such people are survivors. They adapt, they cope, and they carry on with their lives. If our programs were not doing very much to help them, at least they were not marginalizing them further.

But our discomfort remained. Was it really right for us to bask in PNPM's success when it was becoming increasingly clear to us that entire segments of Indonesia's poor could not join the political process, simply because for one reason or another they were forced to live on society's margins?

Clearly, the rationalization that because "on average" the program was doing well was not convincing, even to ourselves. But rushing in to do something before knowing what we wanted to achieve and how we are going to achieve it is not a very good strategy either. As a general rule, social development succeeds best when it pays close attention to realities on the ground. Understanding the landscape of social organization and exploring its contours means taking the time to sit down and talk to people, to understand their world view and how they see their place in it. This book is the result of a first exploration to find out who these invisible people are, to discuss with them how best to think about issues of development and change as it affects them. It is a prologue.

New Priorities: Building Democratic Institutions

Desperately poor countries such as Indonesia was after Independence really do need to think about "the greatest good for the greatest numbers." Simply getting basic services – clean water, basic medicine, primary education – to large numbers of poor communities surely is the right priority when so many people have so little.

But Indonesia is no longer that country. A political rationale that placed economic development as the most urgent national priority has been replaced by one that sees building the institutions of democracy as the country's top task. The idea that there's a thick wall separating development from issues of politics and rights was never very convincing, but in today's Indonesia it is more and more clear that the dividing line is a myth that blocks rather than aids healthy development. As the Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen has written in

The Idea of Justice, development and justice in a democratic society both come when people are equally able to engage in public discussion and exercise their individual capabilities in the social arena. Development's fundamental purpose, then, is to create conditions that enable people to be seen and their voices to be heard.

What will it take to make issues of rights and justice the core organizing concepts of development, and not just ideals that are good to talk about but don't affect daily practice? Many of the right elements are already present in Indonesia, even if they haven't always been put into practice in ways that could realize their potential. Indonesia's own Constitution, for example, describes development as a national guarantee to its citizens, not as an economic option to be given to whoever can benefit the most. Indonesia's political transformations in the past decade are also producing vast changes in how people express what they want from development. And the latest generation of community-oriented poverty programs such as PNPM is for the first time giving communities an opportunity to become active partners in the development process, rather than passive beneficiaries who watch and wait while development initiatives are conducted on their behalf.

Invisible People shows that a different sort of compact is needed to renew Indonesia's national commitment to end poverty than the mass building programs of the past. If there is one consistent message that comes from the stories collected in this book, it is that people are not sitting idly by complaining about the development programs that have yet to reach them. They have their own points of view, their own thoughts on the choices that they can make, and their own approaches to organizing themselves.

Development needs to move past what James Scott has called "High Modernism" – the model that brings progress to the backward poor through huge projects planned in national and foreign capitals and unrolled like giant carpets across the countryside. Indonesia is too complex a country to stay locked into that model.

There will always be a need for big investments, but now they need to be complemented by programs that match Indonesia's political democracy with economic resources that allow a more diverse range of local groups to work effectively as partners using their own organizational resources, skills, and aptitudes.

The heroes in this book are the many small but dedicated organizations and individuals who work with the poor. But development in Indonesia, with its focus on big government systems and resistance to outsiders, has not found a proper place for these organizations. The tools and mechanisms for them to partner with the more formal development programs are still lacking. For most grassroots organizations, direct cooperation with a development program is more likely to

be the kiss of death than the start of a happy marriage. Many of the community organizers in *Invisible People* work for their community either through small organizations that operate on shoestring budgets or as individuals without any funding at all. Social recognition of the valuable role that these people play has not been very forthcoming. For the most part, they do their work despite rather than because of development programs. Government hostility to non-governmental actors is slowly thawing, but more consistent guidance across the bureaucracy would make such partnerships develop effectively.

Values and Development: Should Society Care?

Invisible People challenges Indonesia. Today's Indonesia is a vibrant democracy, blessed with a growing economy. But Indonesia's rush to modernity and its embrace of material wealth does not come without a price.

Indonesia has fulfilled the vision of its founders. It is increasingly difficult to call Indonesia a truly poor country. Though poverty exists, the means to solve it are well within the grasp of the country's leaders. Today's poverty issues are about improved distribution and better access. For the first time in Indonesia's modern history, poverty is no longer about people not having enough to eat, but about whether all Indonesians can eat well.

But if what holds Indonesia together is no longer the fight for freedom, whether from the Dutch or from hunger, it is increasingly unclear what does hold the country together. Indonesia's leaders still offer the promise of improved material well-being as the vision driving the country forward. For this reason, most of Indonesia's public policy discussions are about how to raise growth, promote entrepreneurs, and develop new markets. But enlightened self-interest and the barely fettered pursuit of profit are causing immense damage to Indonesia's natural and social environment. Large numbers of people are excluded from the benefits of Indonesia's great transformation, many through no fault of their own. All too often, development policy has little to say to them other than "Step aside." Insecurity and perceived unfairness in the distribution of society's benefits without some compensating vision to hold a country together is a recipe for instability, particularly when the reassuring story of constant growth gets shocked by sudden economic reversals.

People pushed out of sight do not cease to exist simply because they are invisible. The lack of a vision for Indonesia broader than one of never-ending growth has made the country susceptible to too many ideologies of intolerance which, for all their rigidity, provide their members with an alternative way to view the world that goes beyond cost-benefit analysis for social policies. Indonesia has deeper, richer traditions than either of these extremes.

Invisible People teaches us how much there is to learn by looking closely at the values that live within Indonesian communities. There surely is no shortage of cruelty, misfortune, and tragedy in this book. But for each tragic story of rejection there is another story of acceptance. For every case of shocking cruelty there is an act of kindness. For each unhappy accident of birth or disease there's a community ready to welcome a new member.

The anthropologist Andrew Beatty, in his lovely and moving ethnography of Banyuwangi, East Java, *A Shadow Falls*, shows clearly that this culture of tolerance does not emerge by itself. The people of a village work hard to ensure that the principle of acceptance stays at the center of their approach to social life through their rituals, through their use of language and other symbols to reinforce public debate, in their curiosity about how others see the world, and in their insistence that all villagers have the right to make up their own minds about what path they wish to follow. But he also shows that a culture of tolerance is fragile, and that under the sharp and divisive pressures of modernization it can be undermined and destroyed.

Loss of community is not pre-ordained. Nor does development need to be the tool of its destruction. The challenge for the country is not to preserve village life like some ancient fossil permanently encased in a solid block of stone, but to think through how the values of tolerance, openness, and inclusion that we see in the stories of *Invisible People* can better enter the national conversation about the just country that Indonesia can become.

SCOTT GUGGENHEIM



*All human beings are in truth akin
All in creation share one origin
When fate allots a member pangs and pains
No ease for other members then remains
If unperturbed another's grief thou canst scan
Thou are not worthy of the name of man*

Sheikh Sa'adi Shirazi (c. 1200-1292)

INVISIBLE PEOPLE

Banda Aceh and Takengon, Aceh

DISABILITY: ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

On December 26, 2004, the deadliest tsunami in recorded history killed almost a quarter of a million people in thirteen countries in less than thirty minutes. More than half of these people died in Aceh, an Indonesian province that had for decades been isolated by a violent and ugly conflict between the separatist movement and the Indonesian armed forces. More than half a million people's homes were destroyed by the waves. Entire communities were wiped off the map.

The destruction of entire towns and villages and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people were followed by the most ambitious reconstruction operation in history. With mottoes such as "Build Back Better," and with access to huge amounts of funding, many of the agencies and organizations involved in reconstruction engaged in varying forms of social engineering. Organizations such as Handicap International lobbied hard for public facilities such as meeting places, schools, and mosques to be rebuilt to allow universal access. This organization pushed for buildings to be designed to meet the needs of "people of all ages, sizes, and abilities." This included the disabled.

According to the 2000 National Survey, the number of people with disabilities living throughout Indonesia was almost 1.5 million, less than 1% of the total population. This compares to a World Health Organization estimate that around the world, approximately 10% of the world's population is significantly disabled. Throughout Indonesia, many factors contribute to this systematic under-reporting of the number of disabled people. Many disabled people are simply not visible. They are often excluded from the everyday life of their communities, they are unemployed, they remain at home, or they are entirely without identity documents and are not registered with government authorities.

In Indonesia, people with disabilities are often excluded from full participation in society by lack of access. People with physical disabilities may have difficulty attending school. Without educational qualifications, they are even less likely to be able to find work. Access to offices, factories, and other workplaces may also be limited. Because people with disabilities can't work when no accommodations are made to their needs, they become poor.

People see the poor in wheelchairs or on crutches, and assume that they are poor because they can't do anything useful. If they can't do anything useful, this line of reasoning goes, then it would be a waste of resources to create special facilities for them. Yet if people can't leave their homes, they can't use public facilities. If people in wheelchairs can't go to parks, shopping centers, or hotels because they don't have ramps, for example, then they won't be seen in public. If they aren't visible in public, most people don't see them. If people don't see people with disabilities, they don't merely assume that they can't do anything useful: they don't see them at all.

The concept of universal access is based on the belief that when appropriate accommodations are made for people with disabilities, the limits on their activities are eliminated or reduced. When the limits on people's activities are eliminated or reduced, they are no longer disabled, because they can participate in a full range of activities in the community in which they live.

Some of the major reconstruction efforts in Aceh paid attention to the plea by such organizations for universal access. UNICEF rebuilt 300 schools and repaired another 200 damaged schools throughout Aceh. These schools were built according to universal design principles and were intended to be accessible for children with disabilities. The United Nations Development Program promised

When disabled people have facilities that allow them to take part in the life of the community, they cease to be disabled.

to facilitate the construction of 400 houses specifically designed to be accessible for people with disabilities.

A few highly visible public buildings, such as the Oman Mosque and the Taman Sari public park in Banda Aceh, were also designed and built to allow universal access. Handicap International involved architects and architecture students from local universities in the design and reconstruction of these buildings. Through their participation in these projects, they became aware that simple adaptations in building design and construction could improve access for people with a range of disabilities.

It is not enough to build accessible buildings and other facilities. Often, people who have been excluded from participation need special care, instruction, and guidance in order to make use of available facilities and to achieve their full potential. For this reason, Handicap International and the small handful of organizations that work with people with physical disabilities in Aceh sponsor the donation of wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs in certain districts to people who need them.

Handicap International is also involved in training and economic empowerment programs. These often dramatically change the lives of those receiving training and guidance. By helping people with disabilities to achieve their full potential, these programs also change the way the rest of the society views them. When enough people become aware that the disabled can make significant contributions, then the community may be prepared to devote the resources required to make it possible for them to make these contributions.



Nurbaidarmi

I'm a paraplegic. I've got no idea how I became this way. When I was at school, I used to love sports. I was the strongest girl in the class. I used to love running. I was always in the school sport competitions. There were times when I fell and hurt myself, but I don't remember the fall that paralyzed me. When I was fourteen, I suddenly had excruciating pain in my back. Then I had a terrible fever. Suddenly, I couldn't move my legs. I couldn't even feel them. It felt like they were dead.

My father took me to the hospital in Banda Aceh. I stayed there for seven days. The doctors didn't know why I wasn't able to move. They sent me to Medan, where the hospitals are better. I was in hospital in Medan for fifteen days. When I was in the hospital, I heard one of the nurses say "She's such a pretty girl. It's too bad she's paralyzed." That was how I found out that I'd broken my spine.

I remember shouting at my father and telling him what the nurse had said. I remember telling him it wasn't true. And then I didn't want to talk to anyone. I couldn't bear it. I remember my father telling me that he'd get me a wheelchair. I didn't want it. I hated my father even for suggesting it.

I just lie on a mattress in my room. I have no control over my bladder. I can't stop myself urinating. I have to change my clothes ten times a day or even more. I've hardly got any meat left on my legs, so my bones always rub straight against the mattress. I get sores all over my body. They often get infected. Sometimes I get sick from the infections.

The most disgusting thing is the rats and insects. They nibble and gnaw on my toes. I can't feel them doing it. I wrap my feet up with cloth so that the rats can't

"I haven't taught at the school for the past three months. The village authorities began repairing the road outside my house. They put stones there to stop the road being washed away. It means that I can't push myself to school in my wheelchair anymore."



get to them, but they chew their way through the cloth. I have to always watch my feet and protect them.

My father told me about a special school in Banda Aceh. It was a school for people with disabilities, but I wasn't interested. I was ashamed of urinating uncontrollably in front of other people. I didn't know that loss of bladder control was a problem that all paraplegics have. No one ever told me that. I thought it was just me. So I didn't want to go to school. I just stayed in my room.

Most of the time, I listened to the radio. I liked reading, too. I read anything that I could get my hands on, magazines, newspapers, books. I liked reading about people in wheelchairs in the paper. I didn't have any disabled friends and I never went out of the house, so that was how I learned about how other people like me coped.

I didn't use a wheelchair for years. As time went by, I began to accept my situation. In 1990, I let my father buy me a wheelchair. There was no path at the front of the house, so I couldn't go anywhere. At least I could sit outside. Sometimes friends or family came to visit me. I started to enjoy being with people again. I started to draw, too. I had plenty of time. I just taught myself how. The kids around here used to watch me drawing and they always asked me to give them drawings. That was how I filled my time.

Things changed after the tsunami. A lot of foreign NGOs and aid organizations came to Banda Aceh after the tsunami. My brother was working in town. He met someone who told him about Handicap International. They had a program to provide wheelchairs to people who needed them. I'll be honest with you: I was very suspicious at first. I'm Acehnese. I'm a Muslim. I didn't want to ask the foreign NGOs for anything. I thought they might want me to become a Christian if they gave me something. But my brother encouraged me.

Some people from the organization came out to meet me. They asked me a lot of questions. They asked me what I wanted to do with my life. They asked me what I wanted to do after I got my wheelchair. They came out to my home more than six times to interview me. My mother asked me: Why don't they just give you a wheelchair? Why do they keep asking all these silly questions?



Right

A self-portrait by Nurbaidarmi.

Following pages

Prior to the "repairs" to the road in front of her house, Nurbaidarmi was able to work in a nearby school.





But the people from Handicap International wanted to know about my house and how I lived there. They offered me a grant to make my house more accessible. They asked me if I needed to have better access to the bathroom. They suggested making the floor flat and widening the door. But I told them that even more important than the bathroom, I wanted somewhere where I could wash my own clothes.

My mother is getting old. She was getting too old to keep on washing the clothes that I'd urinated on. Once she fell over while she was carrying them. I couldn't do anything to help her get up. I was so ashamed. I said if there was money available to reconstruct my house, I wanted to be able to wash my own clothes. The people asked me to draw a plan to show what I wanted. They suggested a few changes to make my plans more practical. They built a low basin outside my room. They also built a paved path so that I could get my chair to the road in front of my house.

The people from the organization told me that if I had a wheelchair, I should think about what I wanted to do after I got it. They asked me if I'd thought about getting a job. I laughed and told them that no one would employ an unqualified woman in a wheelchair. They told me just to imagine that I could do anything I wanted. I didn't take it seriously. I told them I liked playing with children. I liked drawing. I said I'd like to be a teacher.

They told me about an early child care and education course being held by UNESCO, a twenty-five-day course. I still didn't think I could do it. I told them that I was scared that I'd urinate in front of the other students. They told me about diapers for paraplegics. They said if that was the only problem, they'd get the diapers for me.

I was the only disabled person in the course.

There is a play group in the village about a hundred meters from my house. When I finished the course, I started working there as a volunteer teacher. I don't get a salary. Sometimes I get cash gifts from the school authority or from parents. The kids like me. I draw pictures and write stories to go with them. I read the stories to the children. I've never published them. I just give them to the kids in my neighborhood. They are always asking me for them. But I haven't taught at the school for the past three months. The village authorities began repairing the road outside my house. They put stones there to stop the road being washed away. It means that I can't push myself to school in my wheelchair anymore.

Could they have made a special path along the road for me? [*Laughs*] I'd be embarrassed to ask for something like that. They'd have to go to all that trouble just for me. No, you're right, it wouldn't have cost much. They could have just left a strip next to the road without stones.

I've never been to any village planning meetings. Someone would have to carry me. I'd be embarrassed to go and talk to the village head and ask him for a special favor. The head of the playschool and the other teachers didn't realize. I don't think they could have done anything. Anyway, a lot of the kids still come to visit me at my house. I still do my drawings and tell them stories.

Ella

“Now when I fall over, I need someone to help me stand up again. I can’t get up by myself. I’m not embarrassed about that anymore. I believe in myself. I keep on trying.”

When I went to primary school, I couldn’t walk. I could only crawl on my knees. My little brother used to carry me to school on his back and leave me at the classroom. Then I would drag myself along the ground to my desk. Most of the kids at school were OK. Some of them didn’t want to play with me because I was disabled. Some of them were nasty to me. Some of them pushed me from behind after I’d dragged myself up onto my chair, to make me fall off. I never reacted or got angry. I just pulled myself back onto my chair as though nothing had happened.

When I was at primary school, I had very high ambitions. I wanted to be a doctor. But after I finished primary school, my father wouldn’t let me go to high school. He said he was worried that I’d be hit by a car on the road on the way to school. He told me that he was scared I’d hurt myself. I cried and cried, but I couldn’t change his mind.

After I finished school, the social welfare department arranged a sewing course for me, with a group of other disabled people. We were all mixed in together: there were some deaf people, some blind people, and one or two with Down’s syndrome. I finished the course, but it’s very hard to get work with those skills. I can’t work sewing all day. With my condition, my hands hurt too much. It’s too painful.

Ella has muscular dystrophy, a degenerative condition that weakens the muscles.



In 2006, I started doing physiotherapy at the local community health center. Some physiotherapists from Handicap International were working there. I went to the center once a week for five months to do the training. They made me stand up holding a rail. At first my brother used to carry me to the community health center, but then they said I had to get there by myself, even if I had to crawl. After a few months, I could walk with crutches. By the end, I could walk on my own. When I finished, they asked me to walk in front of some doctors. I wasn't shy about it. I was proud that I could walk without crutches.

When I finished my physiotherapy, the people at the program told me that there were some funds available to help me earn a living. They gave me a choice. They said they could send me on a course to finish school or they could provide some capital so I could set up a small kiosk selling dry goods at the front of my house.

I wanted to set up a kiosk. I figured that even if I finished school, it would be very difficult to get a job. So I decided to set up the kiosk. They gave me Rp 775,000. I don't have to pay it back, but they make me keep records of my sales and income. They come around to check to see if I'm still in business. You can see the book here! Sometimes I take in Rp 300,000 in a day, sometimes I only take in Rp 100,000.

Elta earns about Rp 20,000 per day selling non-perishable goods to neighbors. She is the major breadwinner in the family.





Most people with Ella's form of muscular dystrophy die in their late teens or early twenties. At 23, Ella is already considered to be a long-term survivor. Ella is seen here with her family.

I bought that big box of noodles for Rp 28,000. It contains thirty packs of Indomie and I sell them for Rp 1000 each, so I make Rp 2000 if I sell the whole box. It isn't very profitable, but I make enough to buy groceries for the family. Maybe I make about Rp 20,000 per day. My father doesn't work anymore, so most of the family's income comes from my kiosk. The only thing I can't do is go down to the village to restock. My father helps me do that.

One of my biggest problems is that people often want to buy on credit. That means I don't have the cash to restock. Mostly people pay their debts, but sometimes it takes a long time. And now prices are going up. If I had a bit more capital, I'd be able to make sure that I was always stocked up. I'd like to expand the kiosk a bit. I don't want to sell cooked food, it's too risky. If you don't sell it all, you can't keep it for the next day. But I'd like to sell rice, flour, and other foodstuffs. I'd like to pull this wall out to open up the kiosk and have more space.

I'm still healthy. My muscles are wasting away, but if I keep active, I'll stay healthy. I do have some problems. A year or two ago, if I fell over, I could stand up by myself. Now when I fall over, I need someone to help me stand up again. I can't get up by myself. I'm not embarrassed about that anymore. I believe in myself. I keep on trying.

M. Jusup Ariga

I was cutting wood with a circular saw, and the blade broke. It went flying off and hit me in the leg, below the knee. It was severed almost all the way through. It was just hanging on by a piece of skin. Too bad it happened on a Sunday. There were no specialists at the hospital on a Sunday. If I'd been in Medan, perhaps they could have saved it.

The doctor wanted to cut above the knee. I told him he was an idiot. I asked him where he went to medical school. I told him to leave my knee alone and cut below. I'm just a mechanic, but even I knew that I wouldn't be able to walk again if he cut above the knee. So he did it the right way. You can't trust doctors here. Half the time they don't know what they are doing.

After the wound healed, the people at the community health center told me that I could go to Banda Aceh to have a prosthetic leg fitted. I was there for three days while they fitted it. The physiotherapist gave me some exercises to do. When I got back to Takengon, I kept on doing them. The physiotherapist here came to my house several times to make sure I was doing OK. My wife works in the administration of the local school. She's a civil servant, so I was eligible for the health insurance scheme for civil servants and their families. I had to pay for my own transportation and accommodations, but the prosthetic limb, the treatment, and the medicine were all free.

At first the stump rubbed raw and it hurt, but I kept on going. After a while, it toughened up. I can do almost anything that anyone else can do. I still work as a laborer on building sites. The only thing I can't do is climb up scaffolding or onto a roof. But I'm still strong. I still work as a driver, too. I do a lot of different jobs.

If I had the money, I'd like to set up a business as a mechanic. Our house is on the main road, so I could set it up right out front. I just don't have the capital. Sometimes I work at another mechanic's. If I had the money to buy the tools, I'd set up my own business. It would be good for when I get older.

There's another guy in Takengon with a missing leg. He doesn't wear a prosthetic limb. He uses crutches. Maybe he doesn't want to wear the leg. Maybe he thinks it's easier to beg than to work. Maybe people feel sorry for him because he's missing a leg. I'm not like that. I want to go on being independent.

"I don't feel disabled. You can't tell I'm wearing a false leg just by looking at me. I can do almost everything I could before the accident."



With his prosthetic leg, Jusup is able to drive a car, stand and walk freely, and perform many kinds of work.



Samsuar

I fell out of a coconut tree ten years ago. I was going to get married the next day. After I fell from the tree, the girl's family put the wedding off. The woman who was going to be my wife kept on visiting me for the next two years, but I didn't ever get better. In the end, she stopped coming around.

I live in a shed next to the mechanic's workshop. My nephew rents space for a kiosk on the other side of the workshop. He built this shed for me to sleep in, and gives me scraps of food.

I have a wheelchair. It's my third chair. I got it through the hospital. When I went to the hospital, I had a letter from the village head that said I was poor and couldn't afford treatment, so I didn't have to pay for it. If you have a letter, they give you free medicine. They just have two types of medicine. There's one if you have a headache and one if you have a stomachache. It's better to buy your own medicine.

I can get out of my shed by myself. I can get my wheelchair over those rocks. In the afternoon, I go to the bus terminal. I don't beg, but sometimes people give me money. Sometimes I just find money that people have dropped in the street.

Before I had this chair, I used to drag myself along the ground using sticks. You see the wounds on my feet? That's because I can't feel anything in my legs. Sometimes I cut myself, and I don't feel it until I see myself bleeding. Sometimes my feet get blistered from the hot road. I've had the sores on this foot for years. Sometimes they get better, but they never completely heal. They are getting better now that I have my wheelchair.

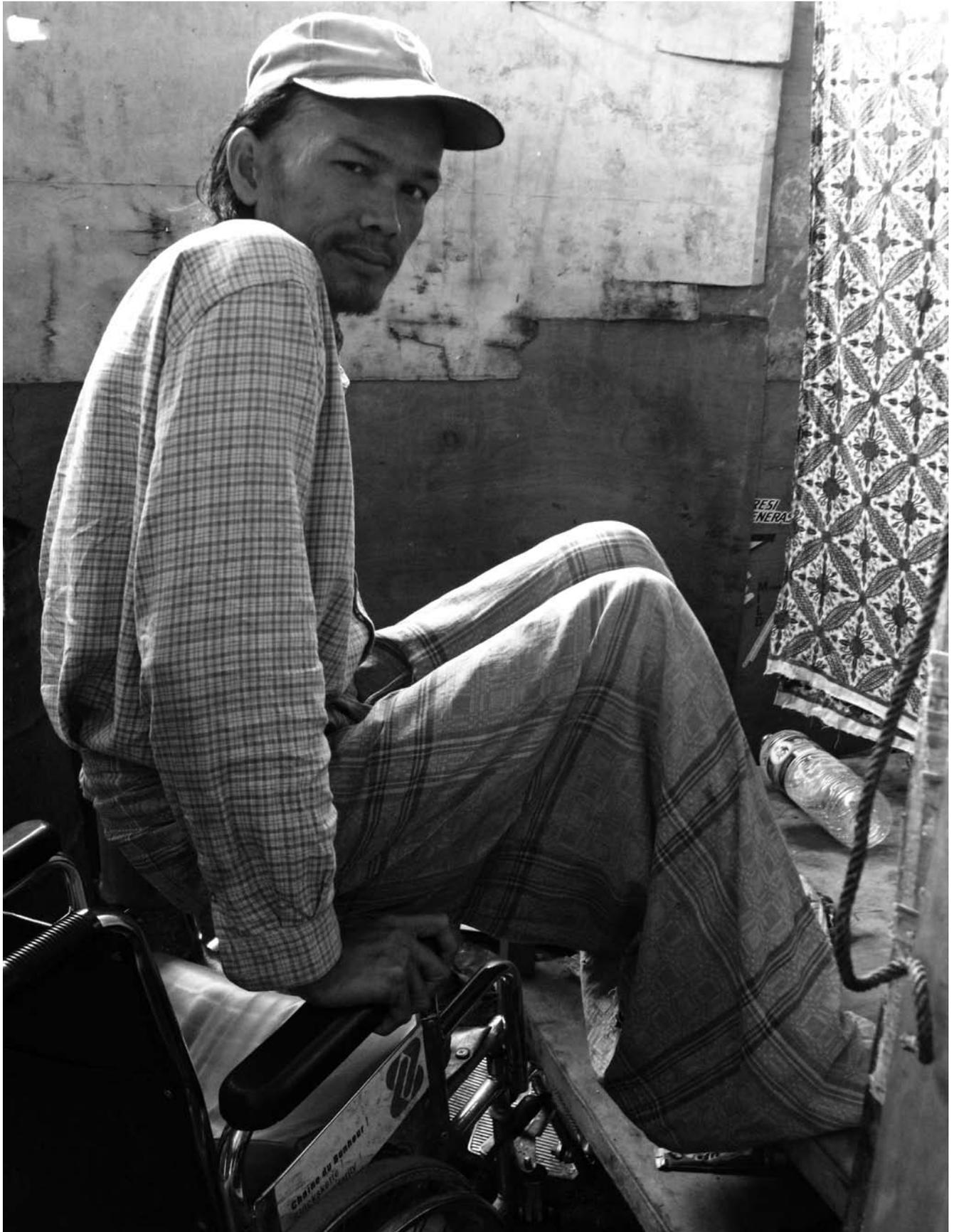
"You see the wounds on my feet?

Sometimes my feet get blistered from the hot road. I've had sores on this foot for years. Sometimes they get better, but they never completely heal."

Below

Samsuar lives in a reconstructed packing case on vacant land.





Atambua, West Timor

MALNUTRITION: LAYERS OF POVERTY

The long-term impact of malnutrition on human development can be devastating. When children are badly nourished for their first two years, it has an impact on their health, educational achievement, and productivity for the rest of their lives. Regional and national governments of Indonesia, assisted by development agencies, have dedicated a large amount of resources to overcoming the problem of malnutrition. While programs implemented by these agencies have helped, many of the poorest people still don't get enough of the right food to eat.

Through the community health system, health workers encourage sound nutrition and promote other healthy practices in the community, such as immunization and vitamin A supplementation. All mothers of young infants are strongly encouraged to attend monthly meetings led by *kader* [volunteer community health workers] and midwives. At these meetings, babies are weighed and measured. Information on hand-washing, immunization programs, and nutrition is also disseminated. Mothers are encouraged to breastfeed infants and provide young children with nutritious foods available locally. When children suffering from malnutrition are diagnosed, the health system sometimes provides supplementary food or other assistance to the parents. In the worst cases, a child may be referred to inpatient facilities for treatment.

However, not everyone is equally well placed to benefit from the support this system provides. Some people are barely able to comprehend the information it provides. In Nusa Tenggara Timur and other parts of Indonesia, many people, particularly women, have never attended school and can not read or write. In some cases, they may not be able to speak Indonesian, which is the language in which all health information provided by the government is prepared. With midwives and health workers often coming from other islands or districts, poorly educated women may be barely able to understand what they are saying to them.

In a place where most people are poor, there can be a huge difference between owning a tiny plot of land and owning nothing at all. When a family owns some land, one parent, often the mother, may be able to stay with her children for most of the day. She may be able to take them with her while she works in a garden near her house. When a family owns no land and is entirely dependent on wages from agricultural labor, all adults and even older children are often compelled to seek work year round, often far from the home – which means that there are no adults to supervise the feeding of children.

Poverty can be exacerbated by not having family and friends around. Often, when people are indigenous to an area, they have an extended network of people to support them. Even when both parents in a household have to work for wages in the fields, those who have this sort of network are much more privileged than those without it. An established household whose members have relatives in the district may be able to keep an elderly grandparent or another member of the family in residence. Refugees, newcomers to a district, and displaced people often have no one to look after their children.

Some people are just too poor to take advantage of programs intended to assist the poor. Even when health care is provided free of charge, it may still be too expensive. It may simply cost too much for a family to travel by bus to a town with a clinic. They may not be able to afford to take time off work to accompany a child. Even if they are provided with supplementary food for their children, they may not be able to make sure that these children eat it in the right amounts at the right time.

The health workers in Indonesia's villages are usually diligent, but their resources are limited. It is clear that caregivers often concentrate their energies on those whom they feel will respond best. When a family seems simply unable to follow their advice or take part in their programs, in the end, they may give up and concentrate on the many others who also need assistance and support.

Nusa Tenggara Timur is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. Children here are often too skinny and too short for their age. Worm infestation, anemia, coughing, and diarrhea are also common among babies and young children.



Celestra Koy

My son's name is Antonius. He's three years old. He's gone down to 6.7 kilos now. When he got out of the hospital for children with severe acute malnutrition, he was up to 9.7 kilos. He was there for about two weeks. Before he went in, he was coughing and had diarrhea. When he came out, his cheeks were fat and he could walk well. But he's lost weight again, and the diarrhea has returned.

He was taken to the hospital because a community health worker often comes past here on his bike. The health worker visited my house and told me to take the boy to the hospital. He told me the other day that if he gets any worse, I have to take him back again. It's difficult. The hospital is free, but the transport there is expensive. Last time, the health worker gave me some of his own money to help me pay for the bus fares.

I've had four children. One died. Now I take my children to be weighed on Mothers and Infants Day at the community health center once a month. They never give me advice or information about feeding my baby. There isn't any information about family planning or anything like that. They just weigh the young children and write down the data.

Once they gave me some special PlumpyNut biscuits for Antonius. But as soon as I gave them to him, his diarrhea got worse, so I stopped. I think he's allergic to them.

I work in fields about an hour's walk from here. My husband works in the fields, too. I get paid Rp 20,000 a day. I can't take Antonius with me when I work. I leave him with his older sister to look after him. She's eight years old. She doesn't go to school. We can't afford to send her. The older sister makes sure the younger ones eat.

I cook rice or crushed corn and leave it on the table for the kids to eat. I buy a kilo of rice a day for me, my husband, and the three children. The cheapest rice costs Rp 5000 per kilogram. Corn is cheaper. We buy corn when we don't have enough money for rice. Sometimes we have vegetables with the rice, but today it's just plain rice with salt. Yesterday we just had plain rice, too. We don't have enough land to keep a vegetable garden, but the neighbors let us grow some vegetables on the edge of their land.

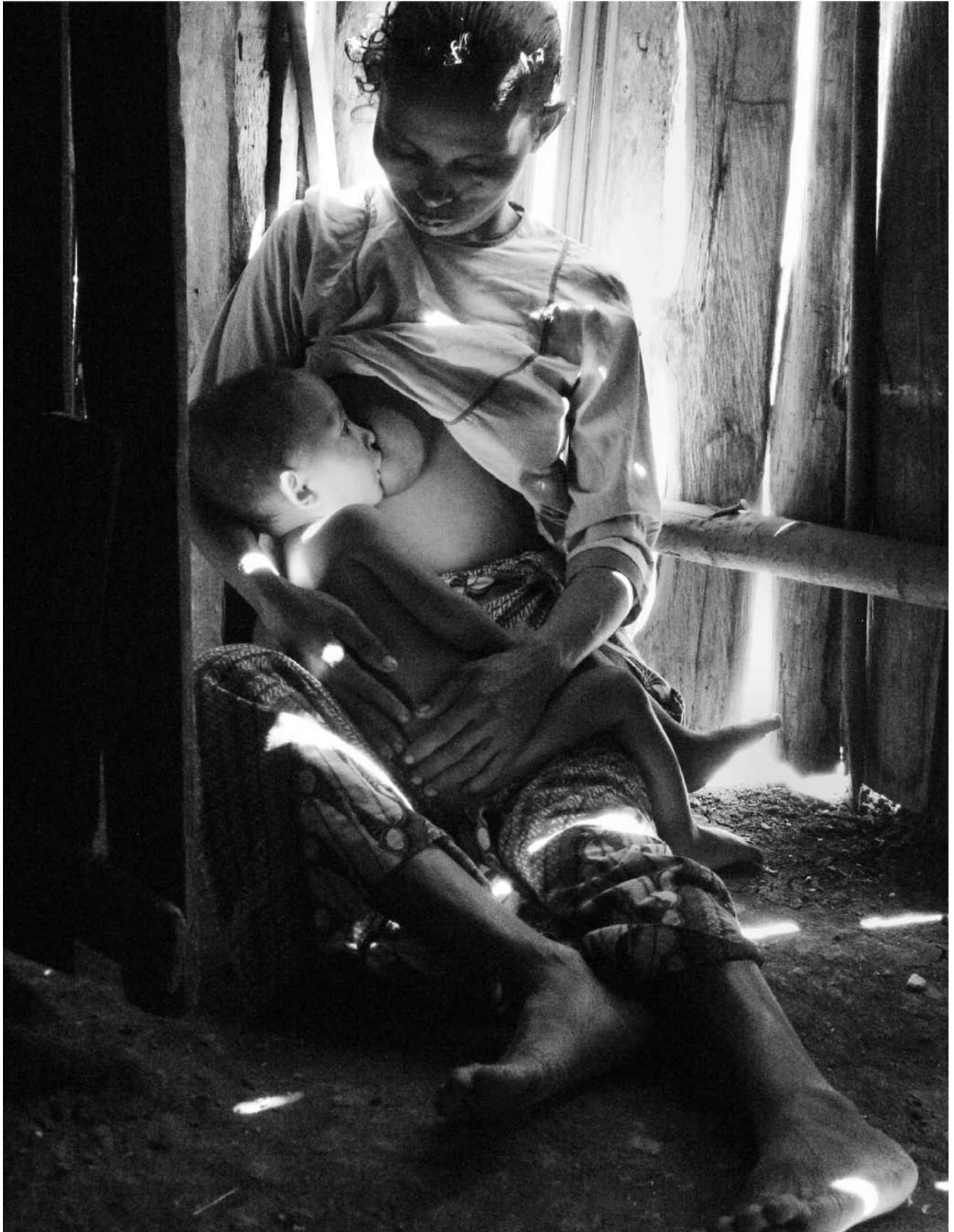
When Antonius was just born, I breastfed him. I took him to the fields with me then. I took his older sister along with me to look after him while I was working and took breaks to feed him. When he was four months old, I began to leave him at home. I breastfed him in the morning and then left him a bottle of sweet tea. His sister made sure that he drank it. Then I breastfed him again when I got home. Once or twice the community health center gave me some milk for the baby, but they say they don't have funds for it now.

I'm originally from Timor-Leste. I came here as a refugee in 1999 with my family. They all went back a few years ago. My husband is from here, so I stayed here, too. I've never been back to Timor-Leste. You need a passport, and it costs too much. I'd like to see my family again. At home, we speak Tetum or Marrai. I went to primary school for a few years, so I can speak Indonesian. I can't read it or write it, though.

What would I like the government to do for us? I don't know. We need rice and milk.

“What would I like the government to do for us? I don't know. We need rice and milk.”

Celestra Koy breastfeeding her son. When she is working, she leaves him a bottle of sweet tea.



Dealing With Malnutrition

The Pos Gizi or Community Kitchen

In her interview, Ibu Agatha refers to the community kitchen program, or *pos gizi*, for underweight, malnourished children in Uabau, Laenmanen. This program was established by a highly motivated midwife named Maria K'lau. Mothers and other caregivers of malnourished children bring whatever food they have available in their houses to the *pos gizi*. The food is cooked communally and distributed to the children, who eat under the supervision of the *kader*, or community volunteer health workers. With the contributions of foodstuffs from different households, the children receive a more varied diet than if they ate at home. Also, if one household has an acute shortage on a particular day, the shortfall can be covered by another household with a surplus.

Usually the *pos gizi* program is conducted for twelve consecutive days each month, with a limit of twelve children in each cycle. Children are encouraged to remain in the program until they "graduate" – that is, until their weight for age rises into the acceptable range.

The communal kitchen has been very successful in this particular village, probably because of Maria K'lau's exceptional dedication and enthusiasm. Around 80% of children who take part put on enough weight to graduate within two months. However, it has not been easy to replicate the system on a wide scale. Throughout the district of Belu, out of 36 communal kitchens that have been established, only 14 are still operating.

Women with young children throughout Indonesia attend monthly sessions with health workers, where the weight of the children is monitored.





One of the difficulties of keeping these communal kitchens going is that they require the *kader* to provide their services for several hours on twelve days each month with practically no remuneration. *Kader* receive a monthly allowance of Rp 45,000 per month, barely enough to cover their transportation costs.

PlumpyNut biscuits

In her interview, Celestra Koy refers to PlumpyNut biscuits, which are provided to community health centers through a UNICEF-sponsored program promoting the concept of Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM). Under this system, cases of malnutrition that might previously have been treated at inpatient facilities are treated “within the community.” In practice, this means that highly nutritional PlumpyNut biscuits are provided to parents whose children are identified as suffering from a defined degree of malnutrition. These biscuits are meant to be consumed under the loose supervision of the *kader*, in cooperation with other health workers. According to UNICEF, 75% of malnourished children who are provided with these biscuits achieve sustained weight gain and fulfill the criteria for discharge within three to five weeks. Celestra Koy’s child was one of the 25% who did not benefit to this extent.

Agatha Ni'is

My boy is two years old. He's a little bit underweight, but he's gotten fatter since I've been going with him to the community kitchen program. When I first started taking him a few months ago, he was 8.2 kilograms. Now he's 8.7 kilograms.

Everyone in the community kitchen program just brings whatever food they have in the house. We cook it together and share it amongst the children. Before the kids eat, we get in a circle and sing a song about washing hands, while each kid washes their hands with soap and then dries them properly. It just makes it a bit of fun, so they remember and do it at home themselves. I bring a few eggs and vegetables. The mothers just bring whatever they grow in the garden. The only thing that we eat that we don't grow ourselves is rice. The land around here is too dry to be good for rice, so most people grow corn. If nobody brings rice, we use corn instead.

It doesn't matter if some families can't contribute as much as others, so long as everyone tries to do their best. The women don't look and judge other women's contributions, but some people are embarrassed if they can't bring anything at all. Usually, at the very least, they can bring a couple of sweet potatoes. But women are proud if they can bring something special: a few women pooled together once to contribute a chicken as a special treat. We divided it amongst twelve children, but they all got a taste. We don't often eat meat. Eggs are the main source of protein. Today, each kid is getting one quarter of an egg.

The community kitchen runs for two weeks every month. The maximum number of children in each cycle is twelve. Ibu Mary, the midwife, says that if we have more than twelve children in the program at any one time, it will start getting too difficult to organize. Of course, the midwife has to decide who needs the program the most. It is true that some of the very poorest women have trouble bringing their children in. They say they can't take the time off work. Still, it's impossible to involve everyone. Even as it is, the program takes a lot of work on the part of the *kader*, the volunteers who help the midwife. They have to come to the kitchen every day the program is running. In other villages, the *kader* just go to meetings once a month. We're lucky to have Ibu Mary. She's very hard working and she encourages the volunteers to work hard, too.

Our family has a small patch of land. We grow corn and green beans and keep a few chickens. We used to have five chickens, but three died. We don't grow enough on our own land to feed the family. My husband works as a laborer, but not every day. He mainly works in the harvest season and if there's a special construction project. I look after the plot of land most days. It's close to home. I can bring the kids or go home and check on them throughout the day. I also do some weaving at home. Sometimes I sell my weaving in the market.

Our family's land is big enough to keep us going. We eat most of what we produce ourselves, but there's a bit of a surplus, which we sell at the market. We use the cash for school fees for our kids. Our oldest child is in the second year of junior high school. She has to stay in Atambua, because there isn't a high school here, only a primary school. So we pay Rp 350,000 at the beginning of the year, then Rp 75,000 for fees each semester and another Rp 75,000 for her dormitory costs. Sending a child to school is expensive, but a good education is one of the most important things.

"Everyone in the community kitchen program just brings whatever food they have in the house. We cook it together and share it amongst the children."

Agatha Ni'is and her son. Slightly underweight for his age, he gained rapidly when he took part in the community kitchen program.



Sarimukti, Garut, West Java

THE AGRICULTURAL LABORERS' SCHOOL

Most of the villagers in the hillside hamlet of Sarimukti in Garut, West Java, are small landholders or landless day-laborers, growing and harvesting cabbages, potatoes, and tomatoes on land belonging to someone else. Depending on their age and gender, they are paid between Rp 8,000 to Rp 15,000 for a day's work in the fields – less than two dollars a day.

Cultivation of the dry, rocky land in the hills is both labor- and capital-intensive. In the area around Sarimukti, vegetable production employs almost 300 workers per day per hectare. The cultivation of land requires significant outlays for fertilizer and pesticides. The price of the day-laborers' crops is extremely unstable. In 2003, the first year that the Sururon School opened, the price of tomatoes fell from Rp 4,500 per kilo in January to Rp 200 per kilo in July.

The distribution of land in the area is uneven, with a small number of larger land holders and state and private companies owning large patches of production and protected forest. In Sarimukti, one family alone owns 56 hectares of land, in a plantation employing 160 workers. On the border of the village are huge stretches of forest claimed by the State Forest Corporation (SFC). Ownership of this land is hotly debated. Since 2000, villages have cleared and cultivated more than 300 hectares of it, claiming traditional and customary rights of ownership, which has brought them into protracted conflict with the corporation.

The dispute reached a climax in August and September of 2003. At this time, the West Java regional police, a mobile brigade unit, the Garut police, the SFC officials, and officials of the Regional Natural Resource Conservation Bureau conducted a joint operation to evict day-laborers from production forests, protected forests, and conservation areas that they had occupied for years. On August 12, 2003, officials armed with rifles, pistols, and local maps set up tents in the areas around Sarimukti. In the evictions and protests that followed, more than 600 local residents were detained.

During the conflict with the SFC, the residents of the areas had organized themselves into local farmers' groups with the support of the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union, an organization advocating land reform and redistribution on large plantations and state forests. In many of the union meetings involving both the farmers from the district and activists from across Garut, an issue that was constantly raised was that local farmers simply didn't have the education and knowledge they needed to organize themselves. They didn't understand legal and official procedures and couldn't read or write official letters. Many were unable to read and write at all.

Before 2003, less than 10% of villagers received a high school education. Sarimukti is located in a relatively remote district, at least half an hour by motorbike from the town where, until 2003, the closest high schools were located. The cost of transportation, books, and uniforms meant attendance at these schools was limited to the richest children in the village. In addition to these obstacles, there were strong social expectations that after puberty, children should start working to earn money for their families. In many cases, the income provided by child agricultural laborers was vital to a family's survival.

At union meetings during the conflict, villagers asked activists to lobby the government to establish more accessible high schools so that poor children could attend school. When this approach seemed unlikely to succeed, the activists suggested that the village establish its own school, in facilities provided by the local pesantren. In 2003, the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union and the villagers established the Madrasah Tsanawiah Sururon.

In 2003, during a conflict over land rights, the small landholders and landless day-laborers in Sarimukti decided they needed a school. Without government support or funding, they worked with a day-laborers' union to establish their own.

Initially, the school occupied ramshackle buildings, with no chairs or tables and virtually no books. Teachers used materials provided by the education department for home study. Many of the teachers at the school were union activists without formal qualifications. Many themselves had only high school or junior high school certificates. In the first few years of operation, some of the volunteer teachers were completing senior school certification through a home study program while they taught students in the junior school.

Established in the context of the land dispute and taught by land-rights activists, the school places a strong emphasis on developing students' abilities to organize themselves and advocate their political rights. Students are encouraged to work together in groups to solve school problems together. They conduct self-evaluations in peer groups. They are encouraged to present complaints and suggestions to their teachers and discuss them frankly.

The Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union unapologetically admits that creating such cadres is a major goal of the school. As head teacher Ridwan Syaefuddin, known as Pak Inceu, says, "The goal of the union is to produce a generation of students who can provide leadership in the village. We don't want the students who graduate to move away to the cities to find jobs. We want them to study and then work to build up their own village." This message is strongly indoctrinated during classes.

Many of the students have responded. The first class graduated from junior high school in 2006. With the support of the union, many went on to attend senior high school in Garut. Most of these students return to Sarimukti to serve as volunteer teachers, even while they are completing their own studies. Others are active in union and land-rights activities. Some have developed plans to create cooperatives and collectives to improve the position of other villagers.

In 2008, following the success of the Madrasah Tsanawiah Sururon, an alternative Agricultural High School was established by the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union and local villagers to allow children to complete senior high school without traveling to Garut.







Siti Halimah

My Last Day of School

I still remember clearly, three years ago
We poor, naïve farmer kids started our days of learning.
Our teachers guide us when we study.
We learn with compassion, commitment, and patience.

Not long after, a storm of violence struck Sarimukti village
The Wanalaga Lodaya Operation.
Half of us stopped going to school
To help lift our parents' economic burden.
A lot of us became laborers,
Scraping for food.
Some went to the city to take care of their younger siblings.
They didn't get to enjoy being at school.
Their future was formless,
Which broke our hearts.
The government didn't care about their future.
They didn't even ask about it.
We, the third grade students, are grateful that we survived
Until now, moments before we say goodbye at this school.

We learned and were introduced to discussion.
We learned to be open-minded and democratic.
In this school we are familiar with evaluation.
When there's a problem we learn how to solve it.
It's priceless for our future.
We still remember how three years ago,
Together with our teachers, we carried sand and rocks
from the Cipandai River to build the basketball court.

We held it on our shoulders, above our laughter.
Our teachers mixed the cement.
With teamwork, our basketball court was finally finished.
At the same time,
We, together with the community, carried sand and rocks from the river
To build roads.

It is even harder to say goodbye when we think about
what will become of us.
Three years ago, if this school weren't here,
maybe we'd have become laborers,
Or gone to the city or gotten married.
Maybe the primary school graduates among us
who couldn't read still wouldn't be able to read today.
If this school weren't here,
we would have to pay a lot of money
To attend the nearest high school –
If we could afford it.
We, our parents, and the community were really helped.
I cannot help but shed a tear
On this farewell night....



With no chairs and few tables, the children of the Sarimukti school sit on the floor while they study.

Ai Anti Srimayanti

I'm proud of my school. Even though the classrooms are flimsy and makeshift, and we have more than fifty students in each class, we have our own school now. We can show the world that even though we are just poor village children, we can finish school and win our certificates. Before this school was built, practically no one went past primary school.

The teachers all come from Garut or from this village. The first generation of students from this school graduated last year. Every single one of them passed their national examinations. Some of them have gone on to study at the Agricultural College in Tasik.

They all come back here to teach on their holidays or when they have free time. The teachers always tell us that no one else is going to make this village a better place for us if we don't do it ourselves. They say that even though it may be hard for us to finish school, we can do it if we try. They know it's difficult. When we tell them we need to leave school to earn money for our families, they understand. They just tell us that we'll be able to do more for our families if we finish school first. If we finish school, we'll be able to come back and help bring the whole village forward. We make a promise that when we graduate, we won't just forget about the village, we'll come back and help the ones who are still left here. That's why the graduates who are going on with their education come back to teach us. They made a promise.

My two favorite subjects are moral education and organizational skills. Pak Inceu teaches organizational skills. He's a very good teacher. I like the way he tells us stories about when he played in a band. He tells us how he organized a group of musicians to get the government to build a hall. He always tells us that if we try to do something by ourselves, we'll never succeed, but if we work together as a group we can accomplish anything we want. If people work together as a group, they are much stronger than if they just work by themselves.

One of the school projects involves a block of land in front of the school. We are using it to try to grow different crops. My father laughs at me and says that I don't have to go to school to learn how to plant vegetables, but it's different. We try crops that no one around here has tried yet, just to see if they grow or not. Maybe we'll be able to use the project to discover new crops that make more money than tomatoes and potatoes. Maybe we'll be able to help the village by teaching them something new. I don't know. We've only just started the project and haven't got anything to show for it yet.

It doesn't cost anything to study here. Still, it's difficult, particularly for girls. I'm lucky. My mother encourages me to go to school. She says if I graduate, at least we'll have one person in the family with a high school certificate. Neither she nor my father finished primary school.

Some of the girls in my class have trouble. Around here, people say there's no point in a girl getting lots of education, as she's just going to end up in the kitchen anyway. I'm fourteen years old now. Almost all the girls that I studied with at primary school are married now. A lot of them already have a baby. Some have two babies. I'm practically the only one that isn't married yet.

I've got six brothers and sisters. I'm often late coming to school because I have to do all the washing and cleaning at home before I come. Sometimes my mother isn't well, so I have to help her. If I'm late, the teachers don't get angry. I tell them why I can't come on time, and they understand.

The teachers here aren't like those at other schools. There isn't a huge difference between them and us. Some of them used to be our seniors in the

“Don't look down on us just because we are poor people from the village. We can achieve just as much as people in the city if you give us the chance.”

Ai Anti Srimayanti takes the lead role in a class, teaching students how to write a formal letter to government authorities and other bodies.



same school. If we tell them about our problems, they understand. The ones who are studying at college in Tasik tell us about life in the big town. When I listen to them, I want to go to college, too. I want to grow up to be like them. I want to go to college and come back here to be a teacher.

I'm not in a hurry to get married or have a family. I want to be a career woman. When I finish my studies, I want to come back to the village to help organize the farmers into cooperatives. I think small farmers in my village are the victims of capitalism. They can't defend themselves because they aren't united. They don't have any bargaining power in the face of capital. At the moment, the small farmers here are completely passive in the face of price fluctuations. If the price of tomatoes goes down, then their income for a whole year may drop to practically nothing. Sometimes, the tomatoes go rotten in the garden because they are hardly worth picking and taking down to the market.

You said you're going to put my story into a book. I'd just like to say one thing to the people who read the book: Don't look down on us just because we are poor people from the village. We can achieve just as much as people in the city if you give us the chance.

In rural areas of West Java most women, including Ai Anti Srimayanti and her classmates, wear headscarves.



Heri Ridwani

“Even though school is free, it’s still very difficult. It’s really difficult for me. I want to finish school, but I don’t want to be a burden on my family.”

I’m fifteen years old. I’m in the third class of junior high school. I’ve got two older brothers and one older sister. None of them went to high school. When they were younger, the Sururon School didn’t exist, so they didn’t have a chance to go to school. Before this school was here, if you wanted to go on to high school, you had to go to Garut. It costs Rp 14,000 to pay someone to take you there and back on a motorbike. That was more than my family could afford.

One of my brothers tried to do the government’s “Packet B” home-study program to get a junior high school equivalency, but he didn’t finish it. He tried to study in the primary school building. One or two of the primary school teachers tried to help him, but they didn’t have much time to spare. In the end, he dropped out. Before the Sururon School, practically no one went on from primary to secondary school. Out of sixty kids in primary school, maybe just two or three went on to high school.

I want to finish school if I can. It’s still really difficult, even though there are no fees now. This school is different from other schools: if we can’t afford to buy a uniform, the teachers tell us not to worry. Pak Inceu told us not to feel ashamed if we aren’t wearing shoes or if our uniform is old and torn. He says what’s in our heads is more important than what we are wearing. The buttons have come off my school shirt, so I came to school in a T-shirt today.

We don’t have any chairs and desks in our classroom. We just sit on the floor.



We have a very large class. There are fifty students in my class and only one teacher. Instead of sitting in rows facing the teacher and the blackboard, we sit in small groups. We are allowed to talk to each other and help each other do our schoolwork. If there's one kid in a group who is good in one subject, then he or she helps the others. My favorite subject is biology. If the other kids in my class are having trouble with their biology lessons, then I go through the problem with them. If a teacher comes late or doesn't turn up, then we usually study by ourselves from our books, with the stronger kids leading the weaker ones.

I really like the biology teacher. He doesn't just come into the classroom and start writing on the whiteboard. He talks to us and encourages us. If we're having problems with school, we can tell him about it. Even if we're having a personal problem, we can talk to him about it. If kids can't come to school because they have to work in the fields or don't have money to buy books, they can talk about it with the teachers. They're like older brothers and sisters.

If we think that a teacher has done something wrong, we can tell them straight to their faces. If a teacher doesn't come to a class, we can raise our hands and ask why they didn't come. If students are embarrassed to put up their hands, they can write down their criticisms on a piece of paper and put it into the suggestion box. Usually, the criticisms are put up on the public notice board. The teachers always talk to us when we make criticisms. The teachers don't give us grades or a ranking, as that makes some students think they're better than the others. In our classes, the smart kids are deliberately separated and mixed in with all the others so that we can all help each other.

We don't get grades, but we do a lot of evaluations by ourselves. The students in each class have monthly evaluations. It's just the students by themselves, without the teacher. We talk about which students are having problems and why. Each class has a chairperson, a treasurer, and a secretary. Then there are section heads: there is an equipment section, a security section, an education section, and a cleaning section. I used to be the class chair, but I'm concentrating on my final exams now. I'm still the head of the educational section, though. We set up that class organization ourselves. The teachers told us to decide for ourselves how we wanted to do it, and to talk about it with them afterwards.

We just did an evaluation yesterday. There is one student who is having trouble. He often doesn't come to school, and when the teacher doesn't come to class, he always goes straight home. Everyone else stays and goes on studying. But if one student goes home, then all the others want to go home, too. It's not good for the class morale. So a few of the students went to his home to talk to him. He says he has a lot of family problems at the moment. He says he's having trouble paying for his books and that his parents don't want him to go to school. I think he's just lazy.

We can borrow books from the school library. I manage to pay for my own uniform and my own books with the money I earn working in the fields. If I have any money left over, I give it to my mother. On Sundays and on other holidays, I work in the fields for Rp 12,000 per day. Sometimes I work after school too, if I have time.

My family supports me, but it's difficult for them. My family has a small patch of land. We grow cauliflower, tomatoes, potatoes, and chilies. Most of the time my mother and father work on our land, but sometimes they work for other people for wages. Women get paid Rp 10,000 a day for working in the fields. Men get paid Rp 15,000. My family doesn't have a lot of extra money.



Dani

I started studying at the Sururon School in 2003, the year that it opened. In 2006, 35 of us sat for the national junior high school examinations. Every single one of us passed. When I graduated, the senior school hadn't opened yet. Together with six other students from my year, I went on to study at the Senior Agricultural High School in Garut. Some of the other students in my year studied elsewhere. Some went to *pesantren*, others got married.

The Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union paid some of my school fees in the first year. My family paid the rest. My father works for a Chevron reforestation project, so our family is a little bit better off than some of the others. Even so, neither of my parents finished high school. They both work on the land. In Garut, I slept on the floor of the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union secretariat with the other students. We usually ate at the secretariat. When we weren't studying, we were involved in union activities, advocacy actions, and land disputes. Sometimes we went to demonstrations and meetings.

Some of the teachers in Garut really looked down on students in the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union. One woman teacher told me that I was still too young to get involved in politics. She told me that I should concentrate on my studies. When I asked for permission to take half a day off to attend a union meeting in the first year, she cried in front of the class. She told all the other teachers I was a troublemaker. It was just like the New Order, when students weren't allowed to organize on campuses. The teachers at the high school in Garut wanted to be treated like gods. They hated the union students for talking back to them. It was like they thought we were getting above ourselves. After the school in the village, we had to adapt to a new way of dealing with teachers.

The teachers' attitudes began to change when we showed them we could achieve good results. At the end of the first year, four of the union students were in the top ten for the year, which meant that they got a full scholarship for the next year's school fees. Ami, who was in the same year as me, came in at the top of the year. The teachers started treating her better after that. In that year, I was elected by the other students to be the chair of the inter-school students committee. I often had to deal with the head of the school and the senior teachers. They were mostly OK with us; it was just a few of the teachers who had a problem. But when they saw that we were being productive, their attitudes changed.

Their attitudes really changed in 2007, after the competition in Kalimantan. Earlier that year, the school head selected a team to take part in an Environmentally Friendly Agriculture competition. Most of the union students were on the team. We prepared a presentation on the use of multiple crops to reduce damage without pesticide. The team from the Garut school won the competition at the district level. We went on to take part in the same competition at the provincial level and then at the national level in Kalimantan. Our school won.

After that, the teachers accepted us completely. Our winning the competition made the school look good.

As part of our presentation, we did a small pilot study in a garden in Garut, but the system has never been implemented in our village. Farmers tend to be scared of new ideas unless they really believe that they'll work. In the future, I'd like to set up a garden for pilot studies in the village. If we could demonstrate that the idea worked, the farmers might try it on their own land.

“One woman teacher told me that I was still too young to get involved in politics. The teachers at the high school hated the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union students for talking back to them.”

Dani often sleeps at the local Sundanese Day-Laborers' office. The union advocates for the rights of poor farmers and landless laborers in the West Java region.



Inceu

I never thought I was going to be a teacher. My father was a primary school teacher. He wanted me to follow in his footsteps, but I always told him I wanted to be an entertainer in a band. And now I'm a teacher, just like he was. When I finished high school, I joined a band. I enrolled in university, but I never attended. I just wanted to play music.

I was a singer in a band in Garut. We never had anywhere to play. Even if people wanted to hold a party and hire a band, the meeting halls were too expensive for anyone here. I joined with a bunch of other musicians to lobby the local government to build a place where bands could practice and play. That was the first time I got involved in organizing people to work together to get what they wanted.

In Garut I got involved with other activists. I became involved in social issues as an advocate for poor farmers. They grew vegetables on their own small plots of land or worked as agricultural day-laborers. Most of them never went past primary school. With other activists, I got involved as an advocate in land disputes. A lot of land titles around here aren't clear, so some small farmers hold an uncertain right to their land. Sometimes land is owned by the government, but it's been farmed for generations.

I worked with an organization of poor farmers called the Sundanese Day-Laborers' Union. One of the issues that always came up at union meetings was education. At meetings, the farmers often felt frustrated that they couldn't read official documents and didn't know how to deal with the government. People felt that their lack of education was an obstacle to moving forward, and they wanted something better for their children. Their lack of education made it difficult for them to organize themselves. There was hardly anyone who could play a leadership role. A few years ago, the position of village head became vacant. It stayed vacant for three years, because there's a regulation that a village head has to have a high school certificate, and there wasn't anyone available with that qualification.

The villagers felt their lack of education as a burden. At the same time, they couldn't afford to send their children to school in town. It was too far away, and transport cost too much. They didn't have the money to buy their children school uniforms. They couldn't afford to lose a strong young member of the family working on their land.

Since the government wasn't responding to the people's needs, the union agreed to work with the community to set up a junior high school and a senior high school. In Sarimukti, the people in the community had worked with the union before. The land uphill from the village belongs to the forestry department, but people from the village have been farming it for generations. They've put a lot of hard work and resources into their farms, but the title to the land is unclear. The union was involved with advocacy for the rights of the farmers on that land. During the process, the union activists got to be close to the managers of the village *pesantren*. The *pesantren* asked the union to help set up a school so that children could get their high school certificates, and offered the use of the *pesantren* buildings and other basic facilities.

Like I said, I never thought I'd be a teacher. I don't have any formal training in education. I wasn't sure that I was suited to it or that I could even do it. We didn't have any books or chairs or tables when we started. There was no money for salaries, so all the teachers were volunteers. Most of us have a high school education at most. At the beginning, in 2003, we used material from the education department's correspondence courses. Later, we acquired a small library of

“Formal qualifications aren't the most important thing. It's far more important that teachers have a passion to help their students.”

books and some blackboards. We got accredited as an educational institution so we could conduct national exams here.

When I began, I realized that formal qualifications aren't the most important thing. It's far more important that teachers have a passion to help their students. They have to work with them to encourage and inspire them. They have to be able to understand where they come from and what their problems are. The volunteers all come from the same background as the students themselves, so there's no distance between the students and the teachers. They know we're just the same as them.

Students here feel that they can criticize their teachers. They do it respectfully, but if they have a complaint, they can bring it up at the school. We encourage the students to complain and argue with the teachers, if they have a good reason. Those are the skills we want to encourage. We want students to be able to work together to organize themselves, so if they have a problem with the school, they can present their case collectively.

The goal of the union is to produce a generation of students who can provide leadership in the village. We don't want the students who graduate to move away to the cities to find jobs. If that happened, the only people left in the village would be babies and old men. We want them to study and then work to build up their own village. The school opened the first grade of junior high school in 2003, so the first generation of students has just made its way through to the end of senior high school. Six of them have gone on to study at agricultural colleges and other institutions, most on full scholarships. They all come back to the village when they can. They all help teach in the school.



Ambon, Maluku

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, COMMUNAL CONFLICT

On January 19, 1999, communal conflict between Muslim and Christian communities broke out on a massive scale in Ambon City, Maluku. In the days that followed, the conflict rapidly spread across the island of Ambon and beyond to a number of other districts in central and southeast Maluku.

By the end of the year, more than 100,000 people had been forced to flee their homes. Previously integrated communities became divided along religious lines. This resulted in large numbers of internally displaced people being unable to return to their previous residences. In addition, thousands of houses and places of worship were destroyed.

By November 2001, in the period when the most extreme acts of violence occurred across the province of Maluku, according to some estimates more than 13,000 people had been killed. Many more were maimed and injured. Large numbers of people participated in, suffered from, or witnessed acts of extreme violence. Many saw family members and friends being killed. Entire communities were driven from their homes and villages.

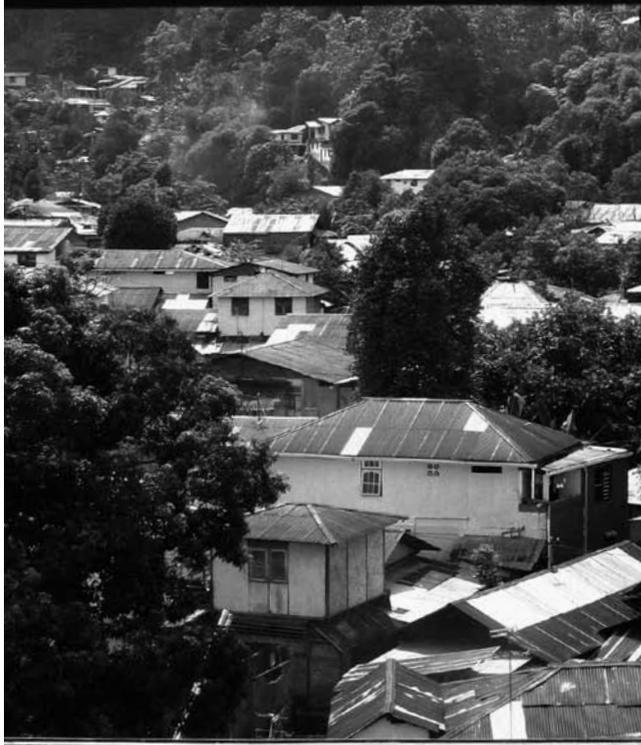
In Ambon, the psychological impact of the conflict has been alleviated by communities working together to deal with practical issues. After the conflict, when the government established a public trauma counseling drop-in center, very few people used the service. People were much more willing to become involved in activities that they considered practical, such as children's playgroups and communal housing projects, or even working together with former enemies to achieve common aims. All these community activities may alleviate psychological trauma.

It is much more difficult to involve the community in dealing with issues it isn't prepared to acknowledge or face. Incest, rape, and domestic violence are all taboo subjects. Women who are beaten, tortured, or abused by their husbands may be isolated from any community support.

When women are not supported by the community, they can learn to help each other. As part of this process, group therapy for women who have had similar experiences is an extremely effective tool. By meeting with other women, women can overcome their feelings of isolation, the sense that they are to blame for the violence and abuse that they have suffered. As well as providing psychological support, the women can assist each other in practical matters related to divorce, housing, and employment.

In conflict zones, ordinary men, women, and children experience the trauma of dealing with extraordinary events.

When the trauma is acknowledged, the community can recognize and deal with it. However, when women suffer violence at the hands of their husbands, society often looks the other way and refuses to see it.



Santi

My husband set fire to me in 2003. I was in the hospital for eight months. He was held in the police station for three months, but he was never charged. The police let him go. They said there weren't any witnesses to prove there was a crime. But he tried to kill me. He picked up a plastic bucket when I was still burning. He put it over my head and held it there. The plastic melted all over my face. He wanted me to die. Of course he wasn't going to kill me in front of witnesses.

Later, my husband said that the stove had exploded. When I was still in the hospital, he came and threatened me. He made me say that that's what happened. When the police took my first statement, that's what I told them. Later, I told them what really happened. But they said it was only my word against my husband's. My husband's father used to be in the Air Force. He is retired now. He gets a pension. The police don't want to get involved in a case with a member of the military.

My husband often used to hit me. He usually beat me when he was drunk. I hated him when he was drunk. If I ever said anything when he came home drunk, he hit me. No, I didn't ever ask for a divorce. My father left my mother when I was young girl. I didn't want to be like my mother. I didn't want to bring up a child without a father, so I never tried to leave my husband.

My boy's name is Rezza. He is eight years old. He is living with my mother-in-law. She lives about one kilometer away. I'd like to look after him myself, but I can't. I can't lift my arms. I can't move my head. I can't eat properly, the food falls out of my mouth. I can't look after my own child.

"My husband came home after midnight. He was drunk. He started smashing things. He hit me and shouted at me. When I answered him, he grabbed a kerosene lamp and poured the kerosene all over me. Then he set fire to me with his cigarette lighter."

Opposite page

Santi meets her son, Rezza, regularly, although since she left her husband, the boy lives with her husband's family.





My mother-in-law is good to me. She often sends me rice. She let me build a house on land that belongs to her. She sometimes sends me money. But she has never talked to me about what her son did. After my husband tried to kill me, he moved back with her. He found himself a new wife. No one in the village punished him for what he did. No one in his family blamed him. In Ambon, it's normal for men to hit their wives if they talk back to them. When I visit my boy, I see my ex-husband fight with his new wife. I heard he's threatened to do to her what he did to me if she doesn't watch herself.

I want an operation. I want to be able to move my arms again. I don't care about the way I look, but I want to be able to look after myself. I want to get a job or run a business. There are a lot of factories in this area. I could get a job in a factory if I could move my arms. I could look after my own child. I wouldn't be dependent on my mother-in-law. The doctors said I'd need to go to Makassar or Surabaya to have an operation. I don't have the money for it.

When I got out of the hospital, I went to the local newspaper to show them what happened. I thought that if they published a story about me, someone would give me the money so I could have an operation. That's how I met Ibu Leli. She was working at the newspaper. Several newspapers published my story, and the deputy mayor promised the local government would pay for my operation. But later, whenever I went to try to see her, her staff said she was busy or sick or in a meeting. In the end, I gave up. I never got anything.

I went to the deputy mayor's office by public transport. I'm not ashamed of the

Santi, horribly disfigured when her husband poured kerosene over her and set her on fire, lives in a hut provided by her former mother-in-law.





way I look. I know that it's not my fault that this happened. I'm not going to let it stop me going out. No one has ever said anything to me about my face. People in the street are mostly kind to me. No one says anything.

Ibu Leli once took me to meet Augustina. She was hurt by a bomb in the conflict. She's got a few scars on her face, but she wasn't nearly as badly disfigured as I am. Even though her face is hardly damaged at all, she's too embarrassed to go out of her house. When I met her, we just talked for a while. She's a nice person. We joked and talked. She shouldn't be so shy.

I want to be independent. I want to be able to earn money to look after myself. And I want somewhere to live. I don't want to be dependent on my mother-in-law. I don't want to live alone. I'd like to live with Leli and Augustina. I'd like to live with women who have been through the same kind of thing that I have, in a place where we could look after and help each other. I'd like to live with other women like me because they would understand.

Augustina Reonhard

Before I was scarred, I used to go out and have fun with my friends. I used to chat with boys. Since the bomb, I don't go out of the house. I've only been out in daylight by myself three or four times since the attack. I can go out at night with my family if I wear long sleeves to cover my arms.

My whole life changed in a split second on December 11, 2001. I was asleep on the motor boat *California*. It was carrying Christian passengers. The Islamist militia put a bomb on the boat. When the bomb exploded, the whole boat was suddenly on fire. I remember that the plastic chair I was sitting on was untouched, but the other chairs next to me had melted. My burns were caused by melting plastic. Everyone was shouting and jumping into the sea. Even though I couldn't swim, I jumped overboard. Somehow, I was washed up onto the shore. The people on the shore helped me get to a hospital in Halong. Later, I was taken to another hospital in Ambon. I was there for several months while they treated my burns.

Physically, I'm fine now except for the scars. I'm perfectly healthy. But I don't want people to see me. I'm ashamed of the way I look. My mother always tells me that I shouldn't feel that way. She says that everyone here will know I was hurt in the conflict. It's true, when I did go out of the house, nobody said anything cruel, but I'm still scared to go out. My face and left arm look hideous. I want to live a normal life, but I just can't bring myself to leave the house. I'm frightened of people I don't know.

I'd really like to be able to go to church again. I've gone two or three times since the bomb. I love praying in church. I love the music. I feel closer to God there. When I went there, everyone was very kind. They knew about what happened to me. I'd like to go to church again, but I don't have a long-sleeved dress to cover my burns.

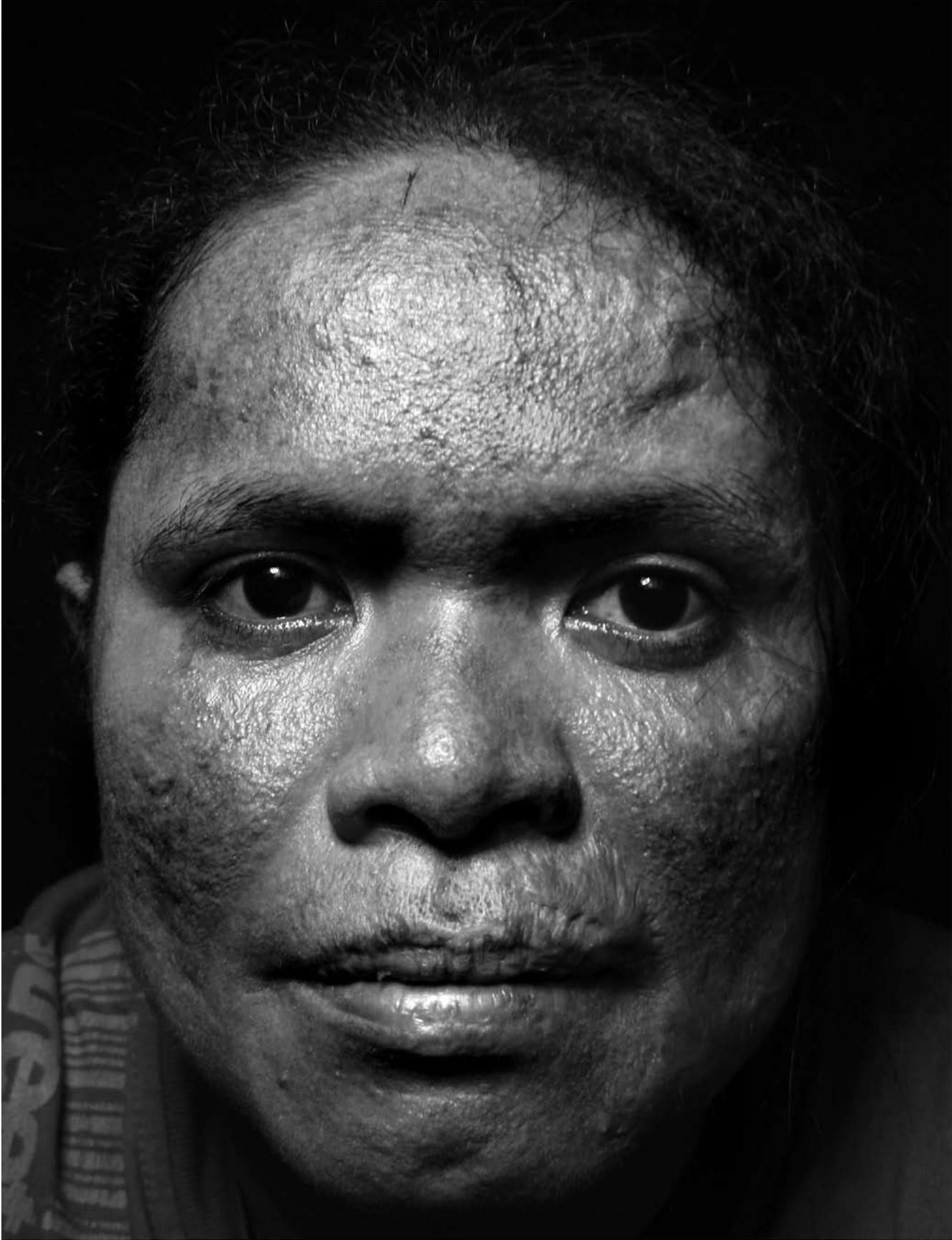
I was trained to be a religious studies teacher. I have a diploma from the Christian college. I'd just graduated before the bomb. I don't seriously consider teaching now. I don't think I could teach with my damaged face. Sometimes I operate a small stall at the front of my house. I sell telephone vouchers. Most of my customers are neighbors. I don't mind dealing with my neighbors because they know who I am. They know why my face is like this.

I am getting braver. After it first happened, I wasn't brave enough to go out at all. Now I can go out sometimes. I hope that one day I'll be able to get over it. I know it's all in my mind. Not long ago, I went out by myself in broad daylight. I went to the Telkomsel office by myself, even though no one there knew me. I wanted to find out how to buy telephone vouchers. I want to set up a business selling telephone vouchers at the front of my house. I'm ashamed that I'm a burden on my mother. I want to earn enough money so that I'm not a burden on her, so I made myself go to the office.

I don't know what anyone can do to help me. I did meet some women from the Pulih Foundation, an organization that provides trauma counseling. They came and talked to me. They told me that my face and arm didn't look bad. They told me about another woman who was burned much worse than I was. They said that she goes out and lives a normal life. She had a boyfriend who married her, even after she was burned. She has children now. I'm the only child in my family who isn't married yet. I don't even think about getting married anymore.

A few times I went out to meet a group of women who were wounded in the conflict. It was a group meeting organized by my friends from PULIH. I felt OK about going out to meet other women who'd been through the same thing. I wasn't ashamed when I was with them.

“When the bomb exploded, the whole boat was suddenly on fire. I remember that the plastic chair I was sitting on was untouched, but the other chairs next to me had melted. My burns were caused by melting plastic.”



Can I forgive the terrorists who blew up the boat? Something strange happened when I was in the hospital. A man was brought in for some reason. He saw me lying in my bed with my burnt face. He came up to me and asked me how it happened. I told him I was on the *California* when it was bombed. He went pale. He walked out of the room without saying another word to me. I found out later that he was one of the men who put the bomb on the boat. He went to jail later for a few years. He's out now.

What would I say to him if he were here now? I wouldn't say a word. I'd just pick up his hand and make him touch my face. I just want him to realize what he did to me.



Top
Augustina selling prepaid telephone card from her kiosk.

Bottom
Augustina is relaxed and at ease with family members, such as these nephews, but she feels that it would be unthinkable for her to get married and have her own children.

Leli Ketipana

“In Jogja, I made contact with some women from organizations to help survivors of domestic violence. Those women helped me get through the worst period in my life. I started going to group counseling sessions.”

Rape? I can't bring myself to call it rape. People would laugh if I said it was rape. He was my boyfriend. But I didn't want it to happen. I wasn't ready to lose my virginity, but I would have been ashamed to call for help. Yes, I know about the new laws that say that it's rape even when a husband has sex with his wife against her will. I think those are good laws. But it's still difficult for me to use that word to describe what happened to me.

After I lost my virginity, I just wanted him to marry me. I'd been brought up to think that a girl isn't worth anything if she loses her virginity before she gets married. The only way that it would be OK was if we got married. I knew that he had other girls. I knew that he was a bastard. But I still wanted him to marry me.

After I let him have sex with me, he lost interest in me. I would have done anything for him to marry me, but he wasn't interested. It was only when another guy became interested in me that he changed again. I met another man, a good, kind man, but I really felt I wasn't good enough for him. When my ex-husband heard that there was someone else, he demanded to know if I'd had sex with him. He even made me take my clothes off so that he could inspect my private parts. I just told him the truth: that I'd never had sex with anyone but him. Even though I'd been close to the other man and liked him, we never had sex.

But I couldn't refuse my ex-husband when he wanted to have sex. I felt that since he'd taken my virginity, he had a right to have sex with me. I still hoped that he'd marry me. He promised that he'd marry me if I got pregnant. He said he didn't want to marry me if I couldn't have children. But when I did finally get pregnant, he told me to get an abortion. We couldn't find a doctor who was willing to do it, so in the end he agreed to marry me. I was relieved. I hoped that after we got married, everything would be OK.

When I had our baby, my ex-husband didn't understand how difficult infants can be. I usually only got a few hours' sleep each night. If I was asleep when the baby started to cry, my ex-husband used to wake me up by pushing me with his foot. He never helped.

Often he stayed out late, hanging out with his friends and drinking. One night when he got in I told him he was drunk. That was the first time he hit me really badly. For a long time after that, I kept quiet around him. I didn't want to make him angry again. Even so, he hit me often. Sometimes after he'd hit me, he was sorry. He brought me my favorite foods and tried to be sweet to me. But it was hard for me to trust him. I never knew when his mood would change again.

When I was breastfeeding my first baby, my nipple was bleeding and bruised. I told my husband that I was in pain. I asked him to please buy a feeding bottle and some baby milk. At the time, he didn't react badly. But the next day, when I got home from a meeting with my professor at the university, he'd taken my daughter and left without saying a word. He was gone for days.

He'd taken my baby to his sister's house. I went there and pleaded with him to give her back so I could look after her. His family blamed me and told me that I was a bad mother and a bad wife. I'd bought my husband food from a stall a few times when I was busy at the university instead of cooking for him myself. His family said I wasn't looking after him. They even said that I'd abandoned my girl.

I was lucky. I managed to finish my university degree even while I was looking after my husband and my children. A lot of women don't finish school. If a woman doesn't finish school and doesn't work, she's completely dependent on her husband. Even though I finished school, I never had a chance to work and earn my own money. That kept me scared. I never thought about leaving my husband.

In the end, my husband left me. He told me he wanted to go to Jogja to do a master's degree. He told me he was leaving before the conflict broke out. He wasn't at home on January 19, when the worst of the communal violence



occurred. I was alone with the children at home, in a village not far from town. Gangs of Islamist militants were sweeping the area. Hundreds of people were killed. I hid with a bunch of our neighbors under a stilt house at the far end of the village. We hid there for about ten hours. I remember my little girl started crying. The other people were scared the militants would hear her. They told us to get out. I didn't say anything. I just stayed where I was. I just put my girl's mouth on my nipple and held her like that to keep her quiet.

By the next day, things had calmed down a bit. We made our way to the police barracks, where it was safe. That was where I found my husband. He said he hadn't enrolled in a university program but was going to go to Jogja to study English and improve his TOEFL score. Even though Ambon wasn't safe for me and my girl, he didn't change his mind about leaving. He sold all the furniture in the house except a bed and a television set to pay for his trip.

When I finally managed to follow him to Jogja, I found him living with another woman. He'd set up a house with her.

In Jogja, I made contact with some women from organizations to help survivors of domestic violence. Those women helped me get through the worst period in my life. I started going to group counseling sessions. A group of women who had been through domestic violence met to share their experiences. I never knew so many women were going through the same things as me. Before I talked with them, I always felt that I was to blame for what went wrong with my husband. I thought it was my fault that my husband hit me. When I spoke with the other women, I began to realize that it wasn't our fault. Listening to other women who had been through the same things as me helped me to believe in myself.

Eventually, I left Jogja and came back to Ambon. I met with some women here from the PULIH Foundation. They became good friends. Actually, I didn't really go through a formal counseling process with them, but they listened to me and helped me while I went through my divorce. They helped me to deal with it. During my divorce, I couldn't sleep. I had terrible nightmares where I saw bodies being thrown down into a deep well.

Women need more than just counseling. For one thing, a lot of women don't see the need to see a psychologist. Even though it might help, most women feel they need practical support, not just someone to talk to. They don't realize that counseling is about how to deal with practical issues. Perhaps priests and *ulama* could play a role, if they were trained better. Perhaps people would be more prepared to talk to them. But at the moment, they don't provide much support.

But counseling isn't enough. The problem is that everyone thinks domestic violence is normal, even the women who go through it. Counseling is good if it changes the way women think about themselves, but you have to change the way the whole community thinks. I don't know how you do that.

One of the biggest problems is that many women with violent husbands have never worked. They don't know how to look after themselves. I know that in some countries they have a welfare system to provide money and housing to single women. I don't know if the government could afford that in Indonesia at the moment. Perhaps the government could provide vocational training programs. Perhaps it could help set up a shelter for women who've been abused, where they can live together and help each other. A shelter would work better if women set it up and ran it themselves. If it was run by the police, it would end up being like a prison.

I've got a small piece of land outside town. One of my dreams is to set up a place there where women could stay and feel safe. We could grow some of our own food and help each other to earn a living. It wouldn't cost much to run. We could earn enough money to support ourselves.

Lingsar, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara

WOMEN'S SAVINGS AND LOANS GROUPS

Lombok is a mostly rural, agrarian society. In the dry highlands, farmers grow corn to feed themselves and tobacco for sale to the cigarette manufacturers. In the lowlands, particularly in the west, where rains are more plentiful and land is more fertile, farmers grow rice, fruit, and vegetables.

In the countryside, agricultural laborers earn between Rp 6000 and Rp 12,000 for a day's work in the fields. At the lower end of the scale, this is equivalent to around sixty cents a day. People who earn less than two dollars per day are said to be facing severe poverty; those earning less than one dollar a day are said to face extreme poverty. Earning as little as 60% of the lower figure, the agricultural laborers of Lingsar are, quite simply, some of the poorest people on Earth. Women in Lingsar generally earn less than men. Widows, single women, and abandoned wives often bring up several children on a daily wage that is barely enough to buy a kilogram of rice and some kerosene. More fortunate families may own some chickens to add an egg or two to the table. Otherwise, the rice is eaten with salt and vegetables grown in kitchen gardens.

Even on such wages, most women will make extraordinary efforts to ensure that their children attend school. Even when school is free, the cost of books, uniforms, pens, and paper can make it prohibitively expensive.

All of the women from Lingsar in the profiles that follow are heads of households. Most of them are bringing up children and sending them to school. They all support themselves and their families either by working as agricultural laborers, tending tiny plots of land, or running small businesses.

In some cases, the establishment of their small businesses was made possible through their participation in savings and credit cooperatives. In Lingsar, these are operated with the support of PEKKA (Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga), "the woman-headed households empowerment program," which was created to help poor female-headed households in rural Indonesia through programs promoting adult education, economic and political empowerment, and community media.

PEKKA savings and credit groups are founded on the basis of self-sufficiency and mutual support within a clearly defined group. However, the ability of these groups to facilitate economic empowerment has been greatly assisted by the allocation of money from the Direct Community Assistance program. These funds facilitate the making of loans to maintain, establish, or expand small businesses by the women participating in the cooperatives. These loans may be considerably larger than would be possible utilizing only the funds gathered through the contributions of group members.

In the period from 2001 to 2004, funds to the value of approximately Rp 5.2 billion were provided to support the provision of business loans to members of 492 established PEKKA savings groups in districts in Aceh, West Java, West Kalimantan, Central Java, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, Southeast Sulawesi, and North Maluku. An additional Rp 5.45 billion was provided to these groups in the period from 2005 to 2008.

The PEKKA program focuses on empowering Indonesian women heads of households. While women are generally poorer than men, divorced, widowed, and single women are the poorest and least visible of all. With women standing to lose property, land rights, and access to earned income after widowhood, divorce, desertion, or male migration, the loss of an adult male is economically devastating to women and children. Across Indonesia, approximately 13% of all households are headed by women who support children, elderly parents, and other members of an extended family.

Widows, single mothers, and abandoned wives in Lingsar often earn as little as sixty cents for a day's hard work in the rice fields. Some of these women have set up savings and loans groups. With their support, some women have created small businesses that allow them to buy land, send their children to school, and live in modest comfort and security.



A PEKKA-sponsored women's group meets to discuss loans and savings programs.

In general, women are more frequently employed in unpaid work, particularly raising families and maintaining the home. Women are more likely than men to work in subsistence agriculture and in the informal sector. In whatever field or location they work, women hold less prestigious positions than men do. In general, women are paid less even when they perform the same tasks.

Women get married at a younger age than men, particularly in rural areas. Partly as a result of early marriages and partly as a result of social attitudes that belittle the importance of education for girls, on average they attend school for fewer years than men. As a result, a significant proportion of poor women in rural areas are functionally illiterate. In many cases, their command of Indonesian, the national language used in most administrative and legal matters, is limited. Particularly in rural areas and among the poor, many marriages and divorces are not legally registered. In these cases, women have very few enforceable legal rights to property registered in their husband's name.





Sakinan

My husband is dead. I've got two children. The older boy is fifteen years old. He's just started senior high school. I work in the rice fields. I get paid Rp 15,000 per day. It's not enough to send my children to school, but my family helps sometimes. I borrowed Rp 300,000 from the savings group to pay for the fees.

I've been in the savings group for one year. I try to save Rp 5000 a month, but if I can't afford that much, then I save Rp 2500. That's the minimum. At the moment, I'm repaying the loan I took out. I'm paying back Rp 25,000 per month.

I've never borrowed money to set up my own business. I'm still scared at the idea of going deeper into debt. If I could borrow some money, I'd buy some young ducks that still lay. I already have eleven ducks. Sometimes I sell the eggs, but I didn't get any today. Ducks aren't very risky. They find their own food in the rice fields.

"If I could borrow some money, I'd buy some young ducks that still lay. I already have eleven ducks. Sometimes I sell the eggs, but I didn't get any today. Ducks aren't very risky. They find their own food in the rice fields."



Laminah

“After I bought the first fish pen, I saved money and borrowed more to buy more pens. I’ve got six now. I’ve managed to save up enough to buy some land to build a house.”

When the women first talked about setting up a savings group, the men in the village laughed. They told us we couldn’t even count. They said we didn’t know the difference between a one thousand rupiah note and a ten thousand rupiah note.

I didn’t believe we could do it myself. I remember when Ibu Reni, the PEKKA facilitator, first came to talk to a group of widows and divorcees in the village. It makes me cry to remember now. When she started speaking, there were more than a hundred women there. She hadn’t even finished speaking, and the women started walking out. They didn’t even take their leave, they just walked out. Everyone thought that the idea of a savings group for women was ridiculous. Sometimes even savings groups for men don’t work, so why would they work for women? By the time Ibu Reni finished, there were maybe seven women left. To tell the truth, I was one of the ones who walked out. The ones who stayed were mostly older women, in their forties. They were the ones who were most motivated to save some money.

There are a lot of widows and divorcees in the village. It’s normal for couples to get married when they are very young. A lot of girls get married when they are fifteen or even younger. I first got married when I was seventeen. It didn’t last long. Then I got married again when I was twenty-two. My husband used to hit me. He had another woman and he never worked. He only worked in the harvest season or on the occasional building project. So I asked for a divorce. We didn’t have any children. Back then, when men divorced their wives, the women didn’t get anything. Usually, the women just took the children and maybe some kitchen utensils. They went back to their parents until they got married again. That’s beginning to change. Now women know that they have the right to half of all the property that a couple accumulates while they are married. When I got divorced from my husband, neither of us had any property anyway, so it didn’t matter.

After I got divorced, I joined one of the PEKKA savings groups. I used to put one or two thousand rupiah into the system every month. At first, I never borrowed any money. I didn’t dare to. You have to show that you can save money before you can borrow anything. You have to save regularly first. Each group has some savings from the contributions of members. If one member doesn’t have enough money to buy rice, then they can borrow a small amount for that. Before the savings group, if women didn’t have enough money to buy rice, they often sold some plates or other items from the kitchen, or they sold some clothes.

If you save regularly and pay back your loans, you can borrow larger amounts. Larger loans are only for business. If the group approves your application, you can borrow more money. The water in Lingsar district is good and there are a lot of rivers. A lot of people in the district raise fish in bamboo cages in the river. Some women borrow money to raise fish, others to become small traders, selling vegetables and fruit. Usually they carry it in pans on their heads and sell it from place to place.

After I was in the group for a bit more than six months, I borrowed several hundred thousand rupiah so that I could do that kind of trade. I was very nervous about it. I don’t even like to owe anyone five or ten thousand rupiah, so I was very nervous about borrowing more than that. But I did make some money by trading. I made enough to pay back the loans, but I still had to keep working as a laborer as well.

I continued to participate with the savings group, too. I also took part in the PEKKA educational program. Only one or two of the women in the group had



even finished primary school. I didn't finish primary school. Neither did my sisters. Some of my brothers went to high school, but none of my sisters did. That's the way things are here. People say it's not important for girls to go to school because they're only going to get married and have kids.

When I joined the savings group, I couldn't even speak Indonesian properly. I could understand it if I heard it, but I couldn't speak it. I learned the alphabet at school, but I never put it into practice. In the educational program, I learned to sign my name properly. There were some booklets in Indonesian about legal rights for women, and we learned to read them. The language isn't too difficult, and the peer teachers explained it as we went along. The facilitator encouraged us to use Indonesian, too. She always speaks Indonesian to us, even though she's from this region herself. After I was in the program for a while, sometimes I took a turn to act as a tutor for women who had just joined. That's the way it works. I was very proud that I could teach other women, even if I hadn't even finished primary school myself.

After I'd been in the savings group for a couple of years, Ibu Reni started pushing me to try a more ambitious business. She encouraged me to take out a loan to raise fish. I was still very nervous about going into debt. But I borrowed two million rupiah to set myself up. The bamboo pen cost Rp 700,000; the rest was for fish stock and food. It takes three months to raise a batch of fish until they are ready to sell. If you are lucky, you can sell the fish you raise from one pen for Rp 1 million, but that's not all profit. You have to deduct the cost of the food. And sometimes some of the fish get sick and die. After I bought the first pen, I saved money and borrowed more to buy more pens. I've got six now. It's hard to say exactly what the profit from it is – maybe one or two million rupiah per month. I've managed to save up enough to buy some land to build a house. It's only fifty square meters, but I bought it myself, from the money I made myself. I didn't inherit it, I bought it with my own money.

I've bought another fish pen together with one of my sisters. I'm always encouraging my sisters and my family to join a savings group and set up their own business. I'm the youngest of all my sisters. I always tell them that if I did it, they can do it too. Sometimes they are nervous about borrowing money. Is it easier for me because I don't have a husband? [Laughs] Maybe! My sisters have to prepare meals for their husbands and children when they get up and then look after the house. They have to look after their husbands and their children first. I can go straight down to my fish pens to look after my fish instead.

Yes, I'd get married again, if I met the right man. But if I don't meet the right one, I'm better off staying single.

What do I need to make my business grow now? What we need most is training in fishery skills from the department of fisheries. The biggest risk is from disease. It usually kills the biggest fish and leaves the smallest ones. You can mix in medicines with the food to prevent it. We need more training to learn how to use the medicines properly. The other thing that would help is if we set up some kind of cooperative to buy fish food directly from the supplier in Surabaya, rather than buying it in the local markets.

I don't have any problem with the men in the village. If I sell the fish in the market, I get the same price as the men do. They don't laugh at the savings group now. Their attitudes have changed. Most of them support us. There's still one *ulama* in the village who doesn't like the savings groups. He says PEKKA teaches women to talk back to their husbands.

The abundant rivers in Lingsar make the cultivation of fish an attractive proposition. Elsewhere in Indonesia, women in PEKKA groups raise chickens and goats or grow fruit and vegetables.

Musinah

You know, I never finished primary school. Before I started taking part in the PEKKA educational program, I didn't even know how to write. I couldn't speak Indonesian properly. Now I teach the other women how to read, too. And I'm the camerawoman for the video that we are making.

We decided to make a video about the educational program. We interviewed a lot of the women who have been taking part. We asked them about their experiences, about the difficulties they've had and how the program has benefited them. When it's finished, we want to show the video at community events to encourage other women to join the program.

I went to Jakarta to attend a one-week training program in how to make a video. On the first day, we learned how to hold the camera. Then we learned how to interview people. Then we went straight out into the field to make a video of some women from a savings group in West Java. It was good, but it wasn't long enough. There's still a lot to learn. I went with two other women who've been involved as volunteer peer facilitators in the PEKKA program for several years. The funding for the training in Jakarta came from the Ministry for Social Welfare.

I've been taking part in the educational program for more than four years. I often work as a tutor. I'm really proud to be able to help teach other women. I'm still learning myself, but I can teach other women who are just starting.

I also do some legal counseling. I talk to women who are having problems with their husbands. Sometimes their husbands are hitting them or acting violently. I listen to them and give them advice. Sometimes we go and talk to

"I'm really proud to be able to help teach other women. I'm still learning myself, but I can teach other women who are just starting."

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Women taking part in a basic reading and writing class taught by peer educators who have themselves previously participated in similar programs.

Right

Musinah teaching a group of women, some as old as sixty, to read and write.







the couple together. We don't do it through confrontation, we try to counsel the couple so the violence stops. If a woman is getting a divorce, then I explain her legal rights. I explain that she has a right to a share of the property accumulated during the marriage.

Men's attitudes are changing. In the beginning, they laughed at us. They asked how a bunch of women who never even finished primary school could know anything about the law. They said we were just making up the laws ourselves. But they are beginning to change now. They are beginning to understand that women have rights, too.

My own husband is dead. I support myself and my children by selling *durian*. I borrowed money from the savings group for capital. Last year, together with other women, I borrowed more than Rp 11 million, but I can pay it back from the profits I make selling *durian*. Before I got involved with PEKKA, I used to work as a laborer on building sites. I carried bamboo poles several kilometers through the rain for Rp 200 per pole. You can only carry three at a time. I was doing well if I made Rp 6000 for more than half a day's work.

Zaitun

“I go to the reading class every week. I’ve been going for a year now. I go every week except in the harvest season. I’m too busy in the fields then. I can read and write now.”

I only joined the savings group a year ago. I put in Rp 2500 each month. I work in the rice fields as a laborer. I get paid Rp 7000 for a half day’s work in the fields, Rp 15,000 if I do the whole day.

I have to look after my children, too. I’ve got four: three boys and one girl. The oldest boy finished high school. Now he works as a driver’s assistant. I finished primary school, but I never went to high school.

I go to the reading class every week. I’ve been going for a year now. I go every week except in the harvest season. I’m too busy in the fields then. I can read and write now. I’ll show you my exercise book. I’ll read something from it. *[She opens her school exercise book and selects a passage to read aloud.]*

I’ll read this section: “Violence against women: What is meant by violence against women. The Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence states that any act against a woman that is intended to cause pain or suffering, whether physical, sexual, or psychological, is considered to be domestic violence and is a violation of the law.”

I know lots of women who have experienced domestic violence. I experienced it myself. My husband used to beat me. Then he divorced me. He didn’t give me anything. I just took the children and went home to my parents. My ex-husband was a public servant, a primary school teacher. He’s got another wife now. I didn’t know anything about the law then. That was before I joined the reading group. He didn’t give me anything when we got divorced, but now he pays for half the children’s school fees. I pay the other half.

Zaitun works on other people’s land as an agricultural laborer. With no one else to look after him, her youngest son often accompanies her to the fields.



Bengkala, North Bali

WHERE EVERYONE SPEAKS DEAF TALK

Bengkala is a small village in North Bali. For more than a century, around 2% of the babies here have been born profoundly deaf. In 2008, out of a total population of 2450, there were 46 profoundly deaf people, known in the village as *kolok*. People who can hear are known as *inget*. Almost everyone here, both *kolok* and *inget*, can speak a sign language known as Kata Kolok, or Deaf Talk.

Kata Kolok is a rich and developed language. Like all developed sign languages, it uses visually transmitted sign patterns to convey meaning. These sign patterns usually involve a combination of hand signals; movements of the hands, arms, or body; and facial expressions. Kata Kolok is not dependent on or derived from Balinese, the spoken language of the village, or any other spoken language. It is only slightly influenced by Indonesian Sign Language. It is a distinct, unique language that has a complex grammar of its own.

Kata Kolok is as expressive and complex as spoken Balinese. It can be used to discuss any topic that anyone in the village would discuss, from the simple and concrete to the highly abstract. *Kolok* and *inget* can engage in lucid, lengthy, complicated discussions on subjects such as agricultural production, market transactions, family life, religious ceremonies, and village affairs. In discussions involving mixed groups of *kolok* and *inget*, the deaf are virtually no social or communicational disadvantage. The *kolok* often take the lead in storytelling and joking.

Ketut Kanta is a volunteer schoolteacher in Bengkala and an advocate for the *kolok* community. He compares the way the *kolok* take part in community life here with the situation in nearby villages where indigenous sign languages are less widely used: "In Suwug, a village about twenty kilometers from Bengkala, the general community doesn't sign. There are three or four deaf people there. They are shy and keep to themselves. They don't take part in village affairs."

At the primary school where Ketut Kanta teaches, Kata Kolok is now used as a medium for instruction. Since 1997, the government has classified the school as an "inclusive school," which means that it serves children of differing abilities, including both deaf and hearing children. When the Indonesian education department suggested that the school accept deaf children from the village, Ketut Kanta and Connie de Vos, a Dutch researcher completing her PhD in linguistics at the Max Planck Institute, lobbied for the use of Kata Kolok as a medium of instruction.

Ketut Kanta said, "First, the children of the village are already fluent in Kata Kolok. That makes it a more effective tool for communication. Second, using Kata Kolok at school will help to preserve the language in the village and keep it alive." Elsewhere, Signed Indonesian is used to teach deaf children, and the Directorate General for Special Education has developed a range of teaching materials that use this language. While the Directorate General insisted that deaf children in Bengkala be taught signed Indonesian as well, they were supportive of the idea of using Kata Kolok.

In the Soeharto era, the educational curriculum was decided at the national level. Very little local variation was permitted. Since the implementation of a policy of regional autonomy, individual schools have much greater freedom to establish their own curriculum. As a result, the school was able to use this unique local language in the classroom.

In 1994, the Indonesian Department of Health estimated that there were up to 600,000 children in Indonesia who were either deaf or significantly hearing-impaired. At the time, there was no broadly accepted Indonesian sign language.

"In a village with a large number of deaf people, the schoolteacher says: 'Kata Kolok is what keeps us together as a single community. In Bengkala, being deaf is not something carried by the *kolok* alone. It's something that belongs to the entire community.'"

With the high cost and lack of awareness of tools such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, as few as 10% of these children attended school. In 1994, in order to facilitate educational opportunities for these children, the Indonesian Department of Education began to develop a standardized sign language that could be used to express Indonesian.

Unlike Kata Kolok, Indonesian Sign Language, or Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia (SIBI), is a manually coded language, created to serve as a word-for-word representation of the spoken language. Each sign represents an Indonesian word, with phrases expressed in the same word order as spoken or written Indonesian. It was created from an amalgam of American Sign Language, existing Indonesian sign languages, and newly created signs.

SIBI is used to teach deaf children at Special Schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa), where all students are deaf or significantly hearing-impaired, or Inclusive Schools (Sekolah Inklusi), where most students have unimpaired hearing but there are special facilities for teaching the deaf. The Department of Education has developed a comprehensive Indonesian Sign Language dictionary using the vocabulary of the Indonesian language syllabus for elementary schools.

The Indonesian Movement for Deaf People's Welfare (GERKATIN, Gerakan untuk Kesejahteraan Tunarungu Indonesia), an umbrella organization that claims 1.8 million members throughout the country, has lobbied to achieve a greater awareness and understanding of Signed Indonesian among deaf people, their families, educators, and the general public. They successfully lobbied for the integration of an interpreter to sign the news simultaneously with the news broadcast on TVRI, the national television station. As a result, the general public has become much more aware of the existence of SIBI.



Like other members of the Bengkulu community, most *kolok* earn a living either as day laborers or by tending gardens and raising livestock.

Kolok Getar

Everyone in Bengkulu speaks Kata Kolok, except for a few newcomers. People who come from outside the village sometimes learn a bit if they deal with the *kolok* a lot, but they don't speak it as well as the people who are born here. Some of the schoolteachers who come from outside the village use it a bit, because they deal with *kolok* children. People who deal with the *kolok* usually pick up some of it. But some of the *inget* use Kata Kolok just as well as the *kolok* themselves, particularly if someone in their immediate family is a *kolok*. There are *kolok* in every single clan in the village, so everyone is related to at least one deaf person.

A *kolok* child could be born in any family, even if both his or her parents are *inget*. A lot of times, a *kolok* man gets married to a *kolok* woman, but not always. There are lots of *kolok* who get married to *inget*, too. If both the parents are deaf, the children are nearly always deaf, too. My wife was *kolok*. We had five children, and they were all deaf. My wife is dead now and so are two of my children. I've still got three children left. They are all grown up and married now, but they still live in Bengkulu.

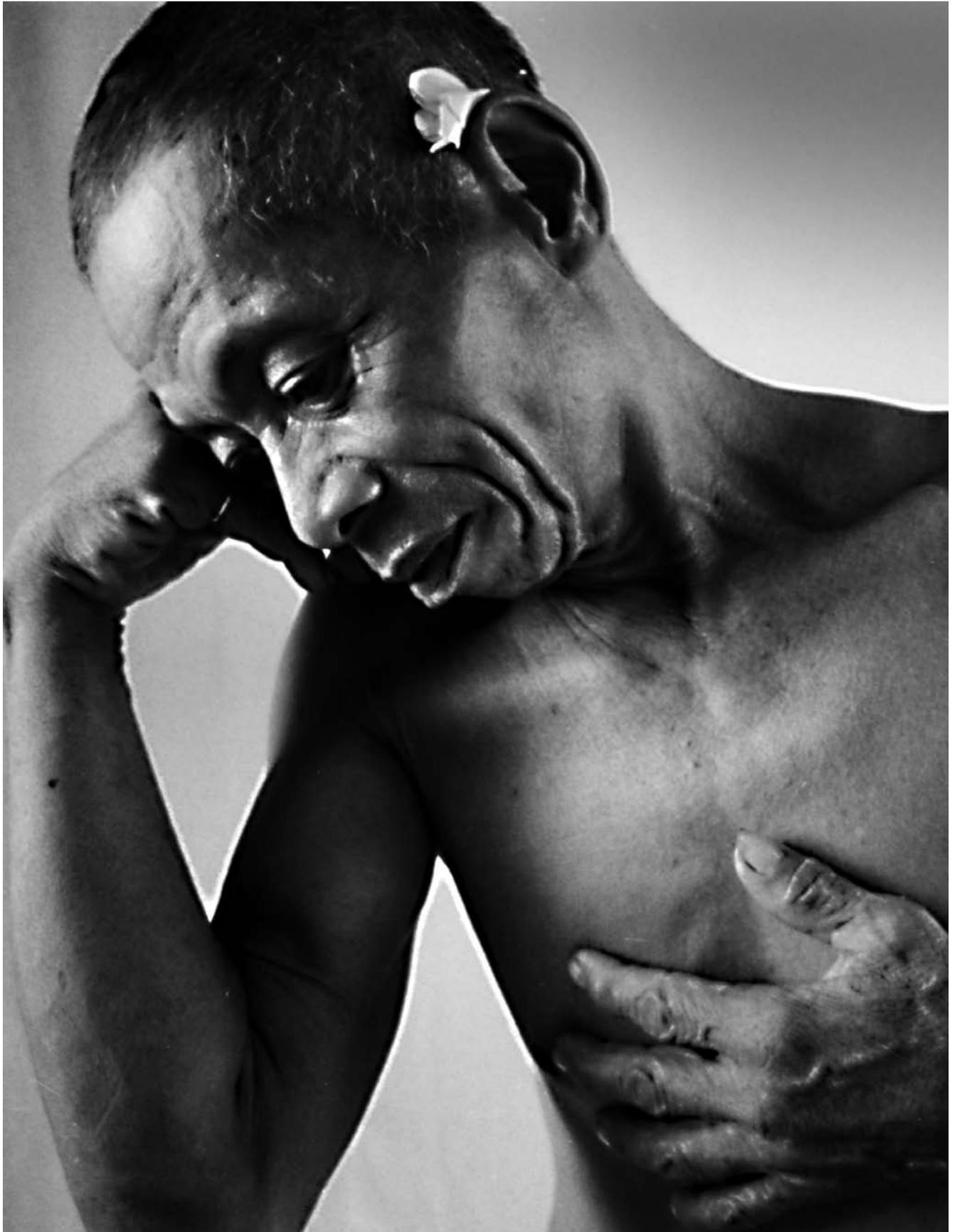
One of my boys died in a motorbike accident. He really wanted a motorbike, so I sold some of the land I inherited from my father. I was the only boy in the family, so I inherited the entire holding. If there's a family with both hearing and deaf boys, though, they both inherit an equal share of the land. There's no legal difference between *kolok* and *inget*.

I didn't really want to sell my land. I told my son, if I sell our land to buy you a bike, what about tomorrow? What is the family going to eat? But my boy thought he'd get a better job if he had a bike. Then he went and got drunk and had a crash and killed himself. I used to own thirty *are* of land. I sold half of it to buy my boy his bike and to fix up our house. Then when my boy killed himself, I had to sell even more land to pay for his cremation and the ceremonies. I've got five *are* left. I grow bananas on it and someone grazes his cow on my land. I feed the cow and look after it for him. When the cow bears calves, we take turns: he keeps the first one, I get the second one.

But I can't survive just by farming my own land. I work as a laborer as well. I do all sorts of work. I get paid exactly the same as an *inget* doing the same kind of work. Everyone around here knows I work hard and I'm reliable. For most jobs, I get paid Rp 25,000 per day. I also look after the village's water system. I get paid a bit more for that, Rp 30,000 per day. It's a very important position: the whole village depends on the piped water. I'm proud of the job I do. The whole village depends on me. The water is piped in from a spring about twelve kilometers away. If the water stops flowing, I track down the problem. It's hard work. The pipes run through all sorts of rough ground. Sometimes they are buried a meter under the sand. Sometimes monkeys break open pipes to get at the water. Sometimes people in neighboring villages do that too. I understand that they need water: I just tell them that if they break the pipe open, they have to seal it up again afterwards. Most of the time they understand. I avoid confrontations. Even if they don't listen, I never hit anyone or go looking for trouble. I try to avoid violence. But people in the area know that you can't mess with a *kolok*.

When I was younger, I was well known as martial artist. Everyone was a bit scared of me. People treated me with respect. At temple festivals and other events, I often served as a *pecalang* [religious security guard]. When the guys get drunk, they can get a bit out of hand. But I always tried to talk to them gently to get them to behave. I didn't usually have to hit anyone. It's not a good thing to hit

"I think it's much better if deaf children go to school in Bengkulu. The kids still learn Kata Kolok, so they can talk to everyone here."



people. Still, sometimes you have to be firm. I remember once at a cockfight, the guy who lost was drunk and wouldn't pay up. I had to follow him and pressure him into paying. The guy who had the money coming to him gave me Rp 50,000 to thank me for making the other guy pay up.

When I was much younger, I used to go around Bali performing martial arts in public for money. I could insert long nails right down my nostrils and pull them out again without hurting myself. People in the crowds gave me money. They didn't give much, just loose change, but I went all over the island. Sometimes I met other deaf people in other places around Bali. I can't communicate very well with them: they don't use Kata Kolok, they use some other type of sign language. Usually, no one else can use it except them and their families, so they can't talk to anyone else. It's different from Bengkala.

In Bengkala, *kolok* are just the same as *inget*. Well, there are a few differences. It's part of the village law that the deaf don't have to pay contributions for festivals and temple ceremonies. It's always been like that. Some of the *inget* are no better off than the *kolok*, but it's part of the village tradition that we don't pay contributions. We still take part in all the religious ceremonies. We have the same rights as the *inget*. When the offerings are divided up, each head of a household gets a share: it's the same whether he's *kolok* or *inget*. The *kolok* often help clean up or with preparing the food and everything else. We contribute that way.

I don't usually go to village meetings unless they have something to do with the water system. But when I do go, no one translates what's being said into Kata Kolok, unless somebody wants to tell me something or ask about the pipes. Usually, after the meeting is over, I ask someone what it was all about, and they tell me. I can't really participate myself. But I think everyone at the meeting is fair, so I don't mind. I think the village authorities look after the *kolok*. If we ask, they always tell us afterwards what decisions were made at the meetings.

Kolok can go to the village school now. When I was young, there was no way a *kolok* could have gone to school! I never even thought about it. No one did back



Kolok Getar and his brother-in-law.



Kolok Getar describing the death of his son and the loss of his land using Kata Kolok, the regional sign language. In this image, he is making the sign for "dead."

then. I taught myself how to write my name, but I never went to school. One or two people from the village went to the school for deaf people in Singaraja, but they don't use Kata Kolok there, they use some other system. You can't talk to anyone in the village with that system. I think it's much better if deaf children go to school in Bengkulu. Here, the kids still learn Kata Kolok, so they can talk to everyone here. Most families can't afford to send a kid to Singaraja. Even if the government pays for them, it means they can't work in the fields after school. And when they come back, they use a different sign system. No one in the village is going to bother learning a different sign system. Everyone here speaks Kata Kolok, not that system they teach in the schools in Singaraja.

Kolok Subentar

I have a sign-language name, a Kata Kolok name. I've spoken Kata Kolok since I was a child. I just started learning Indonesian Sign Language at primary school.

I'm sixteen years old. I'm in the third grade in primary school. I'm quite old to still be in primary school. When I was younger, the local primary school wasn't an Inclusive School. It only became an Inclusive School in 2007. That means that the deaf children in Bengkulu can study there now. Before that, if *kolok* children wanted to go to school, they had to go to Singaraja, to the Special School for the Deaf. I always wanted to go to school, but I couldn't afford to go. My parents don't have any money.

It's a long way to Singaraja. It takes more than an hour by public transport. It costs Rp 18,000 to get there and back. It's very expensive to live there, too. A boarding house in Singaraja costs at least Rp 100,000 a month. When I was younger, you still had to pay school fees for primary school and junior secondary schools. You don't have to pay fees now. The regional government provides the books you need free of charge, too. You have to pay for your own uniform.

Before I went to school, I learned how to read and write with Pak Ketut Kanta. He used to invite *kolok* children to his house for reading classes twice or three times a week. My house is quite far from his house. He often used to come and pick me up on his motorbike.

I leave for school at six in the morning. I study until one in the afternoon. After that, I often work cutting timber. The timber is used to make door frames and window frames for buildings. When I don't go to school, I often work the whole day. If I work a whole day, I get paid Rp 25,000, and I get a plate of rice and tea. I give the money to my mother. She's *kolok*, too. I speak in Kata Kolok with her. She can't spell her name in Indonesian. She never went to school. Her first husband was a hearing person. He died when he fell out of a coconut tree. My older brother can hear. My father was my mother's second husband. He was *kolok*, too.

At school, *kolok* and *inget* children are in the same classes. At first, we had separate classes, but *kolok* and *inget* children wanted to have classes together. *Inget* children like learning Kata Kolok. They think it's good fun. Not all the teachers speak Kata Kolok well. Only Pak Ketut Kanta speaks it really well. The math teacher isn't bad at it. He knows enough to be able to show us how to do sums in Kata Kolok. The history teacher is hopeless. I just sit there and wait for her to write on the whiteboard.

After I graduate from primary school, I want to go to junior high school. If I can, I want to go to senior high school. I'll have to go to Singaraja for that. I don't want to live in Singaraja. If I lived in Singaraja, I wouldn't be able to work after school. I want a motorbike so I can go to school and come home each day. If I graduate from high school, I want to get a job as a driver. I want to drive tourists around the island. They can just write down where they want to go on a piece of paper and I'll take them there. The only problem is that I can't speak English. But I could learn. I'd soon pick it up if I was working with foreigners all the time.

"I'm quite old to still be in primary school. When I was younger, the primary school wasn't an Inclusive School. I always wanted to go to school, but I couldn't afford to go."





Sukrada

“Only the *kolok* are brave enough to go to the cemetery. The *inget* are scared of ghosts and evil spirits. I’m not scared of dead bodies.”

All the gravediggers in Bengkala are *kolok*. In Bengkala, when someone dies they are buried in a temporary grave near the Pura Dalem temple on the edge of the village. When the family has enough money, they dig the body up and hold a cremation ceremony. It usually takes at least four years after the person has died before the family holds the cremation.

Only the *kolok* are brave enough to go to the cemetery. The *inget* are scared of ghosts and evil spirits. I’m not scared of evil spirits. When you dig the graves, you often come across skull and bones. Sometimes they still have rotting flesh on them. I’m not scared of dead bodies. If I killed someone, I’d be scared of the cemetery, because the ghost would want to take revenge. But I’ve never killed anyone, so I’m not scared. It’s always been the *kolok* who are the gravediggers here. My grandfather said that when he was young, he used to dig the graves for the villagers too. It’s always been that way.

We have our own club or organization. For digging a grave, we get paid Rp 75,000. We don’t divide the money up immediately. We put it all into the club kitty. We save it all year long. Then, at the Galungan ceremony, we use it to buy a big, fat pig. We kill the pig and divide it up among the families of the gravediggers. Everyone gets an equal share. We weigh the pig carefully and make sure everyone gets an equal share of the good bits, the intestines, the skin, the liver, and other offal. Each man takes home four or five kilos of meat. The family eats most of it at the celebrations. They dry some of it to eat later.

If members of the club are sick or if they have some real emergency, they can borrow money from the kitty. But they must pay it back before Galungan. People don’t like borrowing money from the club. It’s not really meant for that. Even if someone is sick, they try to find the money from other sources first. They fear they won’t be able to pay it back. The club is really just to make sure that we can celebrate the holiday. Even though most *kolok* don’t have much money, we can eat pork and enjoy the celebrations like everyone else.

Ketut Kanta

I was born in Bengkulu. I'm *inget*. That means I can hear. When I was young, no one in my immediate family was *kolok*. Even so, I grew up speaking Kata Kolok. Practically everyone in Bengkulu speaks at least some Kata Kolok. Of course, the *kolok* themselves speak it better than anyone. Their immediate family, their parents and brothers and sisters usually speak it very well too. But everyone can speak it at least a little bit.

My first close contact with the *kolok* community in the village was through Kolok Getar's father. Back then, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were no wells and no water pipe systems. Kolok Getar's father went around the village carrying barrels of water on his back, selling a whole barrel for a few old Chinese coins. I was always amazed at how strong he was, how he never seemed tired or unhappy. I always used to sit down and talk with him when he delivered water. Of course, we spoke in Kata Kolok. Through my chats with the water-seller, I came to know his son, Kolok Getar. I admired him, too, for his prowess in martial arts. In the end, I came to be quite good friends with their extended families, most of whom were *kolok*.

I remember when my father was rebuilding the family house, all the *kolok* men came and helped do the work. They did it to help, without being paid: my father just gave them rice and coffee. The *kolok* are like that: if they like you and trust you, they will help you and be loyal.

When I grew older, I moved away from the village for many years. After graduating from college, I worked as a building contractor and then in the tourist industry in the south of Bali. I learned to speak Italian and English quite well.

In 1992, when I was in my forties, my health started declining. I decided to come back to Bengkulu to raise chickens. I renewed my friendships with the members of the *kolok* community. I often used to employ them in my poultry business. For a while, my business prospered. Then a disease wiped out my entire flock. At about that time, in 1994, I was appointed as the *kepala dusun*, the position below the village head in the administration. Because I was friends with so many of the *kolok* community, they often came to me with questions related to bureaucratic procedure. I became something of an advocate for them in the village administration.

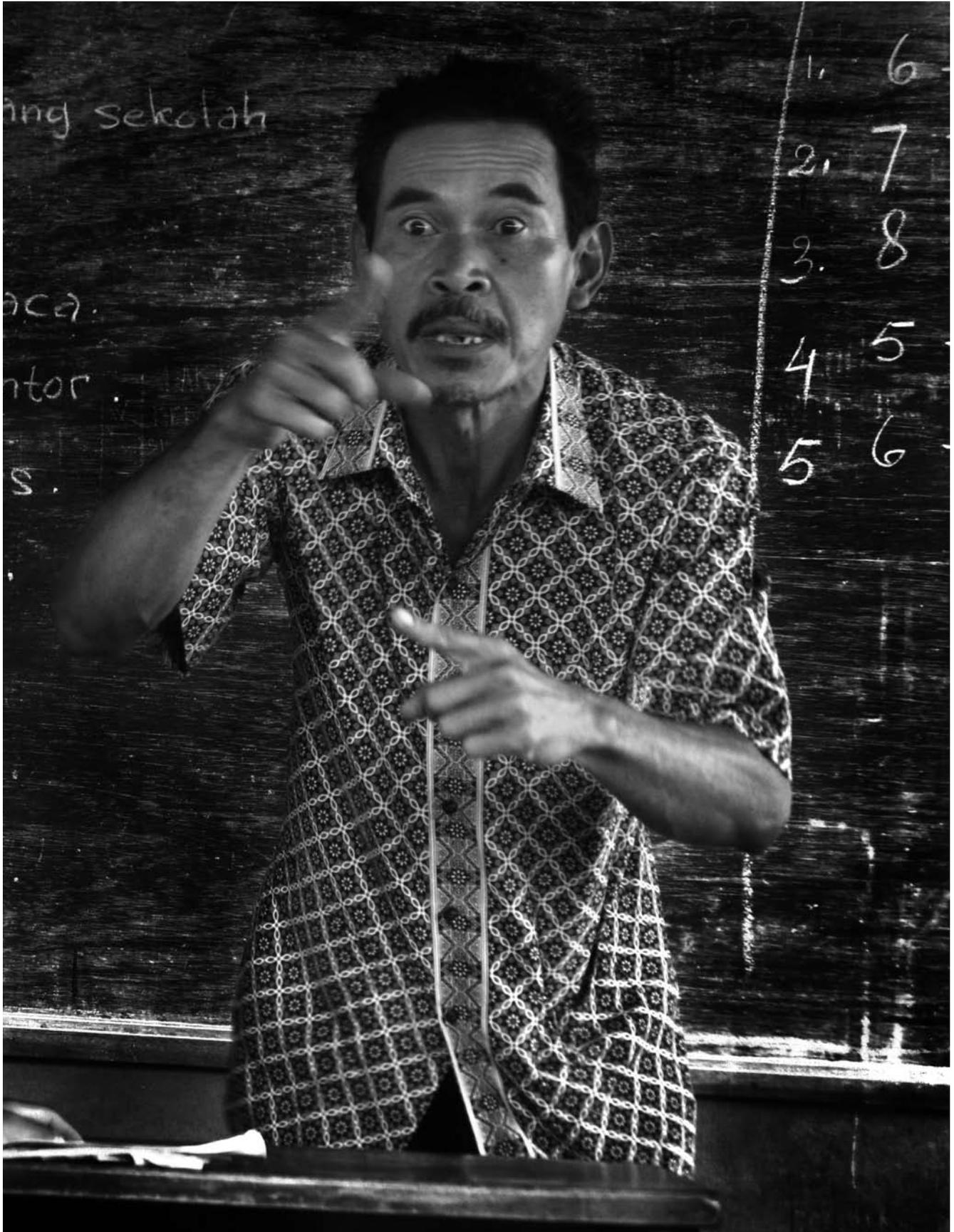
There has always been some interest in the *kolok* community by researchers from across Indonesia and even from overseas. Because I could speak a bit of English and because I was involved with the *kolok* community and could speak Kata Kolok, I was often asked to help foreign researchers. In 1993, James Eiser, a geneticist, came to conduct research to establish the genetic basis for the deafness in the community. In the same year, John Hinnant, an anthropologist and linguist, came on several occasions.

Later, in 2003, an Indonesian researcher, Gedé Marsaja, suggested that I might like to go to Holland to work with the Max Planck Institute as an informant for research into Kata Kolok. Four months before I went, I was provided with a video camera to record the *kolok* while they spoke with each other and while they interacted with the *inget* in the village.

I was in Holland at Max Planck from November 2004 until March 2006. For much of that time, I went through the recordings that I'd made to make a lexicon of the sign codes of Kata Kolok. I worked with members of the Sign Language Group at the Institute. The group included informants from Turkey, Japan, China, India, Korea, Germany, and Holland. Almost all of the informants were deaf: I was one of a handful who wasn't. Twice a week, I took part in International Sign Language classes, so that I could communicate with other members of the group.

In Holland, I met Connie de Vos, who was a research assistant to a professor at the institute named Ulrike Zezhan. Connie was interested in doing research into the *kolok* community for her PhD. She was planning to come to Bengkulu for intensive field visits beginning in 2006, after I returned to Bengkulu. I agreed

"I taught the *kolok* the alphabet in International Sign Language so that they could learn how to read and write. I taught them the correspondence between the sign alphabet and the arithmetic symbols for addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication."



to act as her assistant and facilitator with the *kolok* community. She came and stayed at my family's house for long periods over the next few years. It's funny: her Indonesian is only passable, but she speaks very good Kata Kolok now.

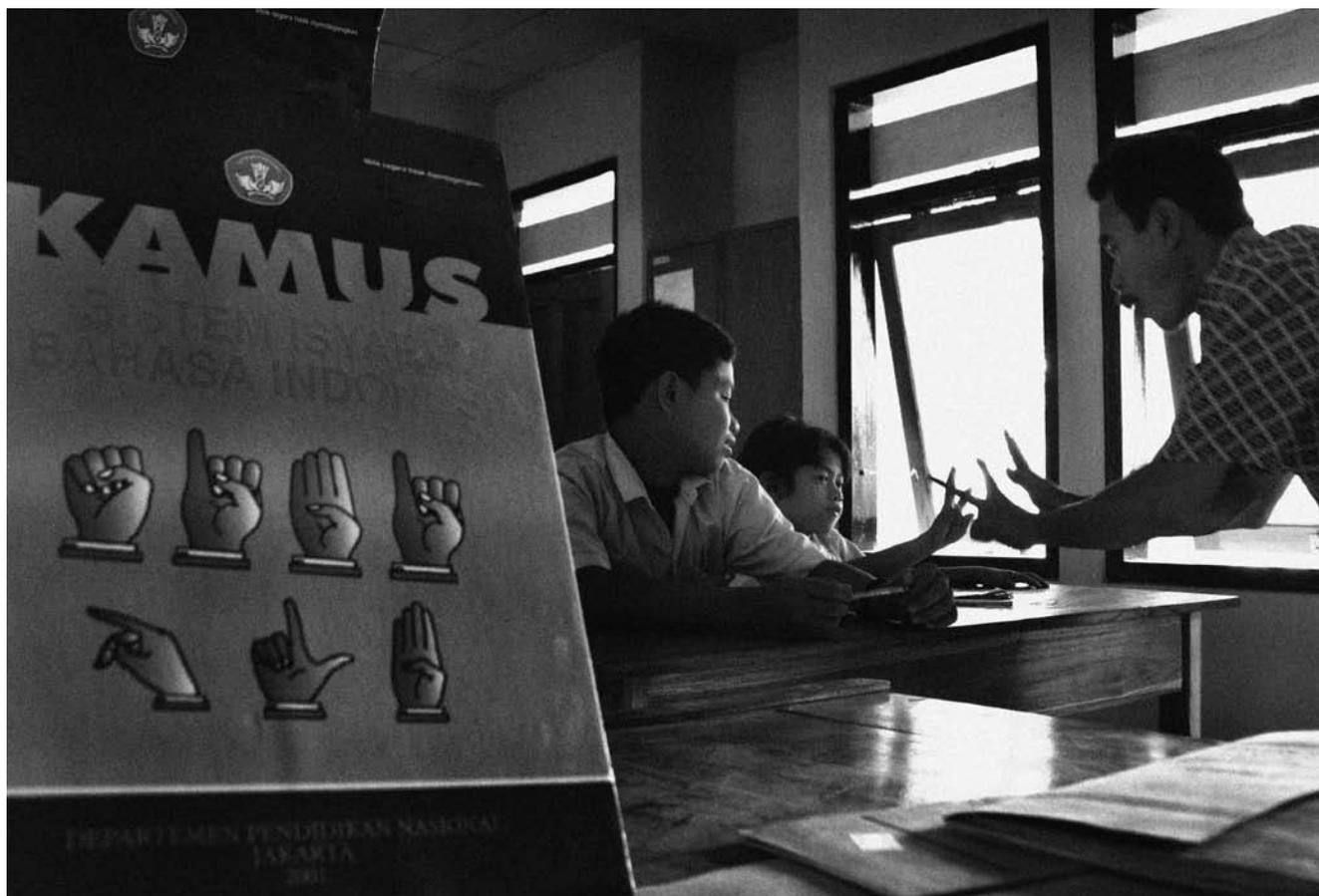
In 2006, with Connie's encouragement, I set up an informal class at my house for the younger *kolok* in the village. I wanted at least to teach them to read and write, as well as arithmetic. Connie provided some funds to buy whiteboards, pens, paper, and a few books.

I taught the *kolok* the alphabet in International Sign Language so that I could teach them to read and write. I taught them the correspondence between the sign alphabet and the written alphabet and the arithmetic symbols for addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication. To teach them to read, I made a sign code in Kata Kolok, then got them to spell it out using Sign.

I never had any contact with the local school, but in 2007 the headmaster of the local primary school did some training on disability issues and inclusive schools. He wanted to write a proposal to have the school classified as an Inclusive School, offering classes to the *kolok*. His idea was to bring in a teacher from the Special School in Bengkulu a few times a week to teach the children Indonesian Sign Language. He held a town hall meeting with members of the *kolok* community. He can't speak Kata Kolok himself. He's not from here. He explained his ideas through the current *kepala dusun*, who is a local and who can speak Kata Kolok.

The *kolok* told the headmaster that I was already teaching the deaf children how to read and write. That was the first he'd heard of it. The *kolok* suggested that Connie and I be invited to attend the meeting. We tried to explain the difference between Kata Kolok and Indonesian Sign Language. The *kolok* said

Ketut Kanta teaching deaf children arithmetic using Signed Indonesia, a sign language developed to assist the teaching of deaf children across Indonesia.



they wanted to go on using Kata Kolok, so that the young people would speak the same language as their parents. I volunteered to go on teaching the *kolok* at the school instead of in my house. I was receiving a small stipend from Connie for acting as her assistant, so I said I'd be prepared to do it as a volunteer. The headmaster agreed, although he also wanted to bring in a qualified teacher from the Special School in Singaraja. In the end that never happened: there were no funds to pay the transportation costs for a teacher to come to the village. It costs Rp 18,000 per day to travel back and forth from Singaraja.

There are five *kolok* students in the school now. They are doing quite well. Usually, *kolok* children attend special classes that I teach to prepare them for their studies. Like before, I teach them how to read and write, using the Sign alphabet, then they attend the general classes. Some of the teachers are better than others when it comes to paying special attention to the *kolok* students. It's easier for the *kolok* to learn arithmetic than other subjects, because the number of symbols in arithmetic are quite limited. One of the *kolok* students, Subentar, is in the top rank in arithmetic.

It's harder with a subject like history. It's hard, but it's not impossible. For example, I tried to explain to them about Diponegoro and the Java Wars. They know the Kata Kolok sign for "boss," so I explain that Diponegoro was a big boss from Java. I compare Diponegoro to the village head: I say the village head is a little boss and Diponegoro was the big boss. They know the Kata Kolok sign for "tourist," so I explain that the big boss in Java had a fight with the tourists from Holland who made everyone work in the fields without getting paid a long time ago. They get the basic idea. Still, arithmetic is easier.

I do special classes for the *kolok* students on Saturdays, as part of an extracurricular program at school. That's when I concentrate on teaching them how to spell Kata Kolok words in Indonesian. Originally these classes were just for the *kolok* students, but now almost all the students and teachers at the school come too. The *kolok* students use them to improve their Indonesian. The *inget* students think it's fun, but the teachers from outside use the sessions to improve their ability to communicate with the *kolok* students through Sign and Kata Kolok.

I'm glad the other teachers are interested. Perhaps it's because they are dedicated teachers. It's also because they see that foreigners and researchers are interested in the *kolok* community. The *kolok* are what make Bengkulu special: no one in the outside world would be interested in this village if it wasn't for the *kolok*. The teachers know that, so they are motivated to learn how to communicate with the *kolok* too.

I'm 52 years old. There's no way that I'll be appointed as a civil servant at this age. I don't receive a salary as a research assistant anymore, but I want to go on teaching at the school even though I don't get paid for it. I'm supposed to get an allowance of Rp 50,000 per month, but it often doesn't come through.

I'm training one of the young teachers at the school, Putu Ratniarsih, to take over from me when I can't go on. She's only 24 and comes from Bengkulu herself, so her Kata Kolok is quite good. She has already been appointed as an official teacher, so she'll get a real salary. I hope she keeps up the program for the *kolok* children.

If deaf children go to primary school in Singaraja and study Signed Indonesian, they'll lose their knowledge of Kata Kolok. The *inget* won't learn Signed Indonesian. Kata Kolok is what keeps the *inget* and the *kolok* together as a single community. Everyone in Bengkulu carries the gene for deafness. Our own children could be born deaf. In Bengkulu, being deaf is not something that is carried by the *kolok* alone. It's something that belongs to the entire community.

Tangerang, Banten

BENTENG CHINESE: CONSIDERED DIFFERENT

The Tegal Alur district is on the edge of Jakarta, where the city's suburbs merge with the surrounding satellite towns and industrial zones of Banten. A generation ago, market gardens and small farms predominated. Many of the people who used to farm the land there have been pushed aside to make way for the development of huge factories, housing estates, and infrastructure projects.

With the toll roads bringing these areas within reach of middle class commuters, there are huge numbers of newcomers in the area. Descendants of the original inhabitants of the district work on the industrial estates as laborers. Many more scratch out a living as scavengers, rooting through the piles of discarded rubbish created by the factories, working as motorbike couriers, or running food stalls. Further away from town, people survive by fishing and working as agricultural laborers. Unemployment levels are high. Gambling, alcoholism, and drug use are common.

The original inhabitants of Tegal Alur and surrounding areas consist of at least two main ethnic groups, including the Malay-speaking, mainly Muslim Betawi and the Cina Benteng. The latter group claim descent from Chinese immigrants from the fourteenth century.

To a large degree, members of this group have been assimilated by the culture of the surrounding area. Like their neighbors, they speak Betawi Malay. They also engage in similar kinds of work and trade. Like other people in the area, many of them are very poor. Unlike most of their neighbors, many of them identify as Christian or Buddhist. While they do not speak Chinese languages, they retain some elements of Chinese culture, including the veneration of ancestors and certain wedding customs. They continue to identify and be identified as Chinese.

The Cina Benteng are descended from immigrants who arrived in Indonesia from China generations ago. Many are very poor. Often they do not have identity cards, birth certificates, or other official documents.





Living and working mostly outside the formal economy, many people from the Cina Benteng community do not have complete documentation of their civil status, citizenship, and other matters. Often births and marriages are not registered. Thus many members of the community are not in possession of birth certificates, marriage licenses, or identity cards.

The same holds true for many in the Betawi community in the area. However, members of the Cina Benteng community often claim that because they continue to be seen as Chinese, the barriers in their path to acquire this documentation are formidable.

There are approximately 7,000,000 Chinese-Indonesian people, about 3% of the total population of Indonesia. Particularly in the past, there has been institutionalized discrimination against Indonesians of Chinese descent. During the Soeharto period, Indonesians of Chinese descent were forbidden to celebrate the Lunar New Year. Their access to government schools and universities was limited. They were very rarely employed as civil servants and never held senior government positions. The use of Chinese languages and writing and the teaching of these languages at schools were prohibited or strongly discouraged. Most discriminatory legislation has been formally repealed since the passing of the New Order government. However, many Indonesians of Chinese descent claim that discriminatory practices continue.

Members of the Cina Benteng community say that they are discriminated against in a number of ways. For example, they claim that are not usually included in food assistance programs and do not receive other benefits intended for poor members the community. Government officials dispute these claims, stating that benefits are provided strictly according to need.





Theng Soen Nio

My family has lived in Indonesia for more than nine generations. Our ancestors came from China, but we're Indonesians. We were born here and we've lived here all our lives. But we're outcasts. The indigenous Indonesians, the *pribumi*, hate us for being Chinese. The Chinese despise us for our dark skin. They say we've gone native. We aren't welcome in Indonesia and we can't go back to China.

My family comes from Balaraja. My father had a patch of land. It was big enough to grow rice, corn, and vegetables for the whole family. My father was quite well off, but he had eight children. My brother still lives on the land there, in an old wooden house. It's a traditional Cina Benteng-style house. It hasn't been repaired or looked after for years. My brother isn't as smart as my father was. He sells land and then just spends the money. It all goes up in cigarette smoke.

There is a lot of social jealousy against the Chinese who own land. In the area my family lived, we always got on well with our neighbors. The indigenous Indonesians used to protect us from outsiders. In some other areas, it was quite dangerous. During the Communist coup attempt in 1965 a lot of the indigenous Indonesians accused the Chinese landowners of being Communists. A lot of Chinese were killed. My uncle was killed. He was a martial artist. He was famous. People were scared of him. The neighbors accused him of being a Communist. He disappeared and we never heard from him again.

My husband was taken away for a few days. A lot of Chinese were taken away on suspicion of being Communists. My husband was only held for three days, then he was released. He said the Army officials inspected his hands to see whether he was a farmer or a Communist spy. They saw he had rough, callused hands, so they let him go.

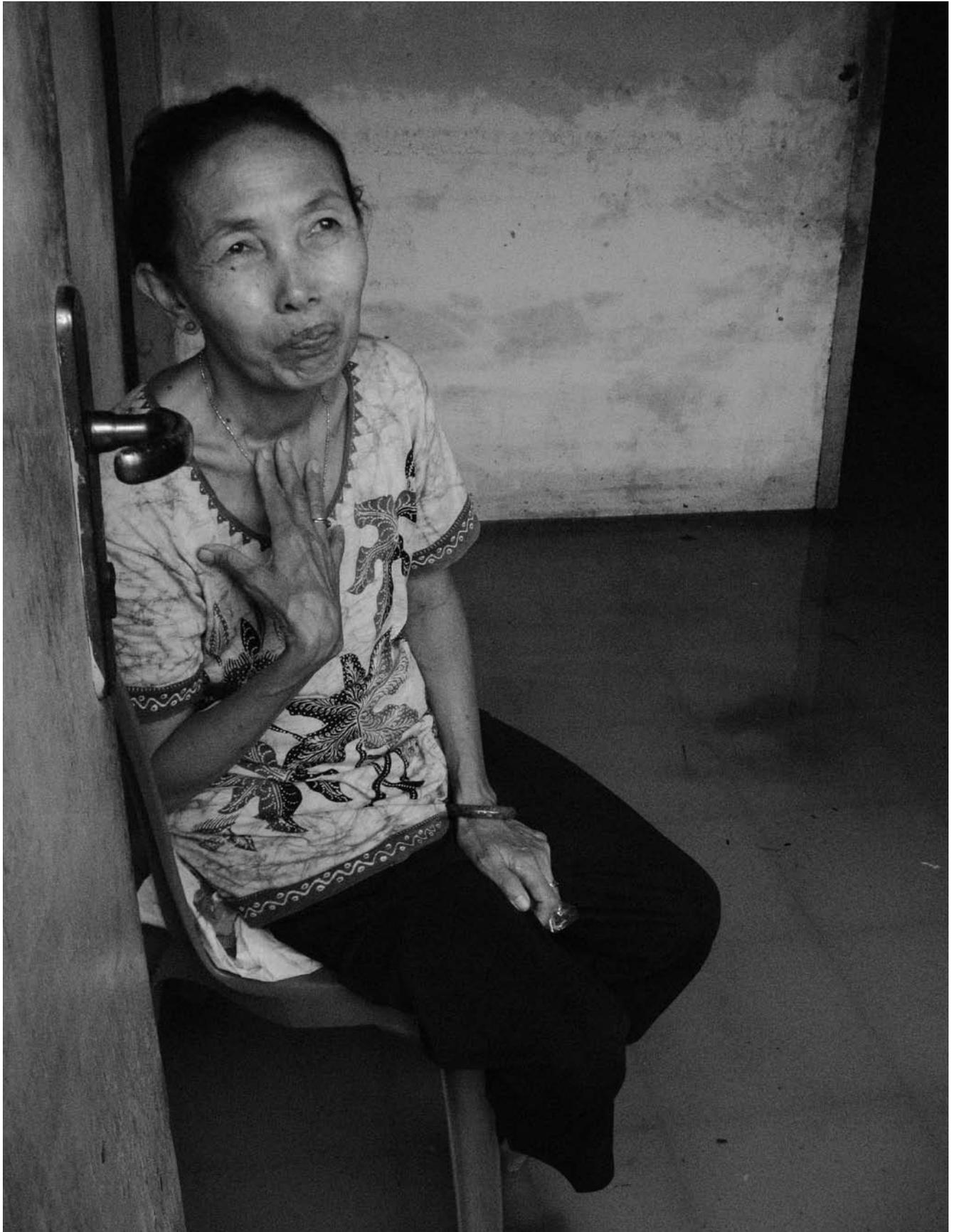
I've lived in Jagal Babi for more than twenty years, since I married my husband. The rich Chinese from Jakarta raise pigs in huge farms here. The rich Chinese don't have anything to do with us. The river used to stink of pig shit all year round. It still floods every year. The water comes into the houses along the canal. It usually comes up to your knees. It's not as bad as it used to be. We used to have to walk along a bamboo platform. People used to slip on the bamboo and fall into the river all the time. Now there's a concrete path. It was built by the local authorities when Megawati was president.

We own the house we live in, but we don't own the land. That belongs to the government. It's a small block, about five meters by seven. A couple of years ago, the people in the kampung tried to start paying land taxes, but the district

“The indigenous Indonesians, the *pribumi*, hate us for being Chinese. The Chinese despise us for our black skins. They say we've gone native. We aren't welcome in Indonesia and we can't go back to China.”



Theng Soen Nio at her home in the Jagal Babi district. Next to a canal, homes in this district are subject to frequent floods.



officials wouldn't let us. If you start paying taxes, then they can't kick you out later. If you pay taxes, it means you have a right to stay here. We've got electricity. Each house has its own meter.

I'm 67. My husband died ten years ago. I still remember him. I still light incense and pray for him. I was married more than fifty years ago. I was married when I was seventeen. When we got married, we had a party for three days. There was a feast for all our family, and dancing. We didn't register our marriage with the authorities. No one did back then. On their birth certificates, my children are listed as illegitimate.

Things are different now. It's important to have your documents in order. I made sure my children's births are registered. I gave them Chinese names, not indigenous names. I'm proud of my culture. I like the idea of a festival to celebrate Cina Benteng culture, with a mass wedding for couples who don't have marriage papers. Nobody wants to live in sin. Nobody wants their children to be considered illegitimate. If we had a mass wedding with a festival, people might realize that we're Chinese, but we are Indonesian too.

We have our own culture. It's a mixture of indigenous and Chinese. We have our own wedding costumes and ceremonies. We have our own architecture. People don't know that. Even our food is different. It's Chinese food, but it's different from the food in the restaurants. My son and I make Cina Benteng-style pork satay and sell it through small food stalls near here.

Theng Soen Nio kneels before an image of her deceased husband. While most Cina Benteng are Buddhist or Christian, a Confucian respect for dead family members is almost universal.



Sa Nio

“The district office doesn’t give free medical care to Chinese families. The government always treats the Chinese differently from the Betawi.”

My boy is sick. He has a bad lung infection. He was in the hospital for five days. The doctor said he needed to take medicine for six months. My husband works as a laborer on building sites. He earns Rp 50,000 per day when he’s working. Sometimes I sell rice at a stall on the main road, but I can’t work while my boy is sick. At most, the whole monthly household income is Rp 1.5 million. We have three children. So far, it’s cost Rp 3 million for my boy’s hospital stay and the medicine.

To get free health care, you have to have a Poor Family Card. But we don’t have a card. It’s very hard to get the card. The district office doesn’t give free medical care to Chinese families. When the district office had a food program, we didn’t get any rice, either. We had to borrow from a money lender. She’s not Chinese, she’s Batak. The interest rate is 25% per month. That means we have to pay back Rp 750,000 each month. That’s just the interest, the minimum payment. There’s no alternative if you need a loan.

I got married when I was thirteen. Lots of girls married at that age. We had a party for our family and neighbors, but we didn’t register our marriage. Back then, no one around here registered their marriage. When I was married, I didn’t have any documents: no birth certificate, no identity card, and no SKBRI, the proof of Indonesian citizenship. I had my first child when I was fourteen. I wanted her to go to school. I only went to school for two years.



As in many other households in the district, in Sa Nio’s house three generations share a single sleeping space.

We needed a proper identity card to enroll her, so I went to the RT, the local community subdivision head. I took my mother's family card and all the bits of paper we had in the house. The RT wouldn't let me use my real name, Sa Nio. Without even telling me, he changed it to "Sani." He said that Sani sounded more Indonesian. Sa Nio sounded too Chinese. I remember someone tried to deliver a letter to me here. The boy delivering it asked everyone where "Ibu Sani" lived. No one knew who he was talking about. Everyone here knows me as Sa Nio. The RT listed my religion as Muslim. I've always been Christian, but he said that if I put "Christian" on my identity card, it would cost more. If I got a card that said I was Muslim, the administration fee would only be Rp 5,000. If it said I was Christian, it would be Rp 350,000. So I just said I was Muslim.

The most important document is the citizenship paper. If you have one, it's much easier to get an identity card or to register a birth or marriage. Getting the citizenship paper is very expensive. You have to go to the district office first, and then the police. Every time you go, you have to pay. A lot of people use agents to get documents if they need them. If you don't use an agent, you have to go to the office yourself. But it's hard to find an agent you can trust. Sometimes they take your money and never give you your documents.

In 2004 a group of us tried to get birth certificates for our children. Ibu Rebeka Harsono, of LADI, the Anti-Discrimination League of Indonesia, helped us. There were more than sixty of us who didn't have any documents. It was hard





Sa Nio (third from the right) with a group of women from the Cina Benteng community, holding their hard-won birth certificates for their children. While many Indonesians lack official documents, those of Chinese descent often contend that there are additional barriers for them.

getting people to work together. People didn't know each other. Even in the same neighborhood division, people didn't know each other. People weren't used to coming to meetings together.

Li Chung Mei and I visited the neighbors we knew. Ibu Rebeka saw the neighborhood head. He gave her lists of everyone who didn't have birth certificates and identity cards. That made it easier. We organized a group to go to the district office together. When people heard that some of us got birth certificates for the children, they came to meetings. We met in small groups to organize and share information. Sixty women went to the district office to push to get the certificates there. When we still couldn't get them, we organized a demonstration at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle in central Jakarta.

Because my children are registered as Muslim, the school says they have to take part in Islamic religious education. I don't want them to do that. I went to the school to talk to their teacher. He agreed that they didn't have to do Islamic religious education. When they had a new teacher, I had to go to talk to him too. My children's birth certificates say that they were born out of wedlock. According to the government, my children are bastards. There have never been any special programs to recognize the traditional weddings of the Chinese here. The government always treats the Chinese differently from the Betawi.

Lie Am Yo

Only the Cina Benteng still wear the traditional Chinese-style wedding dress. The rich Chinese in the city wear white gowns, like westerners. Our wedding costumes are the same as people wore in China in the Ming dynasty. They are mixed a bit with traditional Betawi costume, too. We rented the dress from a salon in Bekasi.

When Sintia was married, we held the party in a wedding hall. The party lasted for three days. It cost Rp 4.5 million just to rent the hall. The food cost more than Rp 10 million. We served rice, chicken, rendang, gado gado, and kerupuk. More than 1500 guests came to the party. There was a lot of dancing and the men played cards.

In the old days, Cina Benteng weddings were held at home. People used to live in the country. They had big houses with large yards. These days, you have to rent a wedding hall if you haven't got a big house. The groom's family is responsible for renting the hall and paying for the catering. A lot of families can't afford a big party like that anymore.

It's important to get the proper marriage certificate. It makes it easier to register the births of children. Sintia got hers when she got married.

We aren't rich. I work in a warehouse recycling waste. I sort out pieces of plastic, paper, and other waste that can be recycled. If I work really hard, I'm lucky to make Rp 20,000 per day. Sintia's father is dead and her mother works. But we sent her to school. She finished high school. Now she works in a warehouse.

A traditional wedding is very expensive. A communal wedding with a group of couples getting married at the same time would be cheaper. It's still important for us to have a proper party when our daughters get married.

“The girl in that photo is my granddaughter. She's dressed for her wedding. Her name is Sintia. She's wearing the traditional Cina Benteng wedding dress. It's still very important for us to put on a proper party when our daughters are married.”

Sintia on her wedding day. Cina Benteng wedding costumes are based on Chinese costumes dating from the Ming dynasty and are extant nowhere else in the world. While the majority of Cina Benteng live in modest circumstances, they are prepared to spend small fortunes on wedding ceremonies.





Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi

THE BAJAU: AT HOME ON THE SEA

The term “sea gypsies” captures the romantic notion that the Bajau are nomads who roam the ocean in small boats from birth to death, living simply off its riches. Like the Rom, the gypsies of Europe, they are often imagined to be colorful rogues who live outside society, ignoring its laws and conventions. Like most ethnic stereotypes, this vision is simplistic and inaccurate, with just enough truth in it to make it even more dangerous. Indeed, the vast majority of Bajau live on or near the sea. A very high proportion do, in fact, earn a living by fishing. It is true that among the vast majority of the Bajau, there is indeed a strong tradition of migration and travel. As a result, Bajau people are found living in coastal settlements throughout Indonesia, particularly in the east. They are also found in places as distant as the Martaban Gulf in Burma, the Malacca Strait, the Sulu Sea, and the seas off Papua and northern Australia.

Like the Rom, the Bajau most likely do not travel and migrate because of an inherent desire to roam. While individuals or entire communities may travel or relocate, they probably do so only when it becomes difficult to remain where they are living. They may be pressured to move because of changes in environmental conditions that make earning a living difficult. They may move because of conflict with established land-based communities or government authorities. When local conditions are conducive, Bajau communities may remain settled in a single area for decades or even generations. In some areas of Southeast Asia such as Sabah, Malaysia, they have remained settled long enough to become fully integrated into the local community. In some districts of Sabah, Bajau people successfully engage in farming and horse- and cattle-breeding. There are historical precedents for Bajau people settling down and integrating, stretching back for centuries. In some places and times, such as pre-colonial Brunei, they became a politically

The Bajau people are often described as Southeast Asia’s sea gypsies. Their skills as sailors, skin divers, and fishermen are admired, while at the same time they are reviled for willfully destructive practices such as fish bombing and the use of cyanide in coral reefs.

A Bajau mother looks after her children in a house built over the sea.





powerful group at the court of the Sultan, with a favored position in society.

In modern-day Indonesia, however, the Bajau are on average less educated and poorer than other Indonesians. However, their low educational attainment is not necessarily because the Bajau have an aversion to education. Rather, while cultural factors may play a part, it is far more likely due to the fact that many live in remote areas, including islands, where educational services are often seriously lacking. While many Bajau are poor, this is equally true of other communities who live by fishing. This has become particularly true over the past few decades, with the ongoing global depletion of marine life due to excessive exploitation and climate change. Despite the difficulties and challenges currently facing the Bajau, they have both a tradition of self-reliance and a strong sense of community. With these traits, individuals and communities of Bajau have worked hard to organize themselves and lobby for access to the facilities they need to improve their welfare. Among other initiatives, Bajau people have established Bajau-language radio stations and magazines, schools to meet their specific needs, and community forums to conserve the environment in cooperation with other ethnic groups.

Rostom, “Pak Kobau”

The Bajau are happy living wherever they can make a living from the sea. For a Bajau fisherman, there’s nothing unusual about leaving one place and going off to work in another for years at a time. I was born in Mola, a Bajau settlement on Wanci Wanci Island. When I was four or five, my parents moved with a number of families to Kaledupa Island, also in the Wakatobi conservation area. When I was fifteen, after I finished junior high school, I left home to work on a fishing boat in Malaysia. In the Bajau language, we call it *sakai*. That means leaving the place where you have lived for more than a year, without definite plans to return.

I made my way up to Kalimantan and then over the border to Malaysia by myself, without any documents of any kind, not even an Indonesian identity card. Wherever I went, I stayed at the houses of kin in Bajau villages on the coast. You can go all the way from Timor to Burma, and you’ll find Bajau villages. The language is the same, although people speak with different accents in different areas. In all those villages, I found households that had some connection with my family in Mola.

In Tabrakan, Kalimantan, a distant cousin helped me find work on a boat in Malaysia. The owner of the boat was a Chinese Malaysian, but the captain was a Bajau from the Philippines. There were a few other Indonesian Bajau working as crew, and one or two Indonesians from Makassar, but no Malaysians. Malaysians wouldn’t be prepared to do the kind of back-breaking work we did for the salary we were paid. We got 300 ringgit a month. In Indonesia, on traditional boats, the fishing crew usually divides the profits from their catch, with two shares going to the owner of the boat, one share to the owner of the other equipment, and one share each to the members of the crew. In Malaysia, we just got a set salary, but it was still much more than I would have earned in Indonesia.

I was caught by the Malaysian maritime police three times during the four years I was there. They didn’t treat me badly, they just locked me up in a police cell and then deported me to Tabrakan. Each time I just went back across the border the same day. After the third time I went back, the Filipino Bajau captain said he was returning to the Philippines. He asked me to go with him.

In Malaysia, we used fishing nets and operated more or less within the law. In the Philippines, I worked on a pirate fishing operation. We fished with bombs and cyanide most of the time, often over coral reefs, where most of the fish are. There’s no denying that it’s destructive, particularly bombing. With one large bomb, you can kill or stun every fish for a fifty-meter radius. But once you’ve bombed a reef, you’ll hardly find a fish there for years after. Even five years later, you can still see the damage that’s been done to the reef.

Everywhere I go it’s the same. There are less fish than there used to be. The Bajau people know better than anyone that the fish are running out, because we depend on them for our survival. It’s the same in the waters of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The land people always say that the Bajau don’t care about the environment because they don’t feel a strong attachment to any particular area. They say that when we’ve destroyed one place, we just move along somewhere else and do the same thing there. They say the Bajau are just looking for quick, easy profits, which is why we use destructive fishing methods.

I don’t agree with that. It’s not easy fishing with bombs and cyanide. When you pack the bombs and take them out in the boat, there’s always the risk that they can explode. When you set the fuse, there’s always the risk that the bomb will go off too early. To retrieve the fish, you have to dive down into the water without any special equipment, until it feels like your lungs are bursting. A fisherman can

“The land people always say that the Bajau don’t care about the environment because they don’t feel a strong attachment to any particular area. They say that when we’ve destroyed one place, we just move along somewhere else and do the same thing there.”



pass out and die underwater because he runs out of breath before he reaches the surface. There's nothing easy about fish-bombing. I say that the Bajau sometimes use the methods they do because they can't compete with the big operators with expensive equipment. With the fish running out, a lot of fishermen feel that those methods are the only way that they can make enough money to feed their children.

When I got back to Kaledupa, I got involved in FORKANI (Forum Kahedupa Toudani), a community-based environmental awareness organization. People here are forgetting the old traditions that used to govern the relationships between the land people, the Bajau, and the environment that we share. When the Bajau built their villages over the water, they didn't just come here without permission. They asked permission from the owners of the land. They were granted permission because the two communities needed each other. There was trade between the two groups, and a certain proportion of our catch was always set aside for the land-owners. There used to be local councils to decide which areas were becoming depleted of fish, with everyone agreeing to leave those areas alone until the fish came back. At FORKANI, we aren't saying that we have to go back to all the old traditions. We are saying that we should record and collate them so that the community can look at them and decide what's still relevant. I joined FORKANI because I saw that practically no other members of the Bajau community were involved, maybe only three or four others. It won't work if the only people involved are land people. Maybe I'm a bit different from other Bajau. Most Bajau are shy about dealing with land people. When I was young, I'd only go onto land in a group of three or four Bajau. I just didn't feel comfortable dealing with the land people. A lot of people still feel that way. There isn't any conflict or hostility, but the two communities don't mix well. We need to get the two communities to understand each other better. I feel that I can play a role, because I can talk to the Bajau in our own language. Bajau people are more likely to listen to someone from their own community than to an outsider.

I say that the best way to ensure the cooperation of the Bajau is to work out a



While the Bajau are often blamed for causing damage to the environment, they respond that the areas that they used to fish have often been severely polluted by mining and forestry operations.



way that we can use our skills in a non-destructive way. If the Bajau had access to capital, we could form a cooperative to buy modern boats and equipment. The government tries to patrol the waters to prevent illegal practices, but they only have a handful of boats and limited equipment. Instead, they could work with Bajau people to patrol the waters themselves. The Bajau are out on the sea all their lives. We know it better than anyone. We have names for species of fish that have never even been recorded. We know straight away when something's out of the ordinary. Not all the Bajau are involved in illegal practices, and the ones who aren't resent those who are. If the government just gave a group of Bajau rangers simple equipment like mobile phones and radios, we could report on illegal activities. We could monitor and control our own community. The Bajau are never going to become farmers, but if the government helped us to use our maritime skills productively, we could make a contribution to the nation. The government should look at us as an asset, not just as a bunch of troublemakers.

Udin

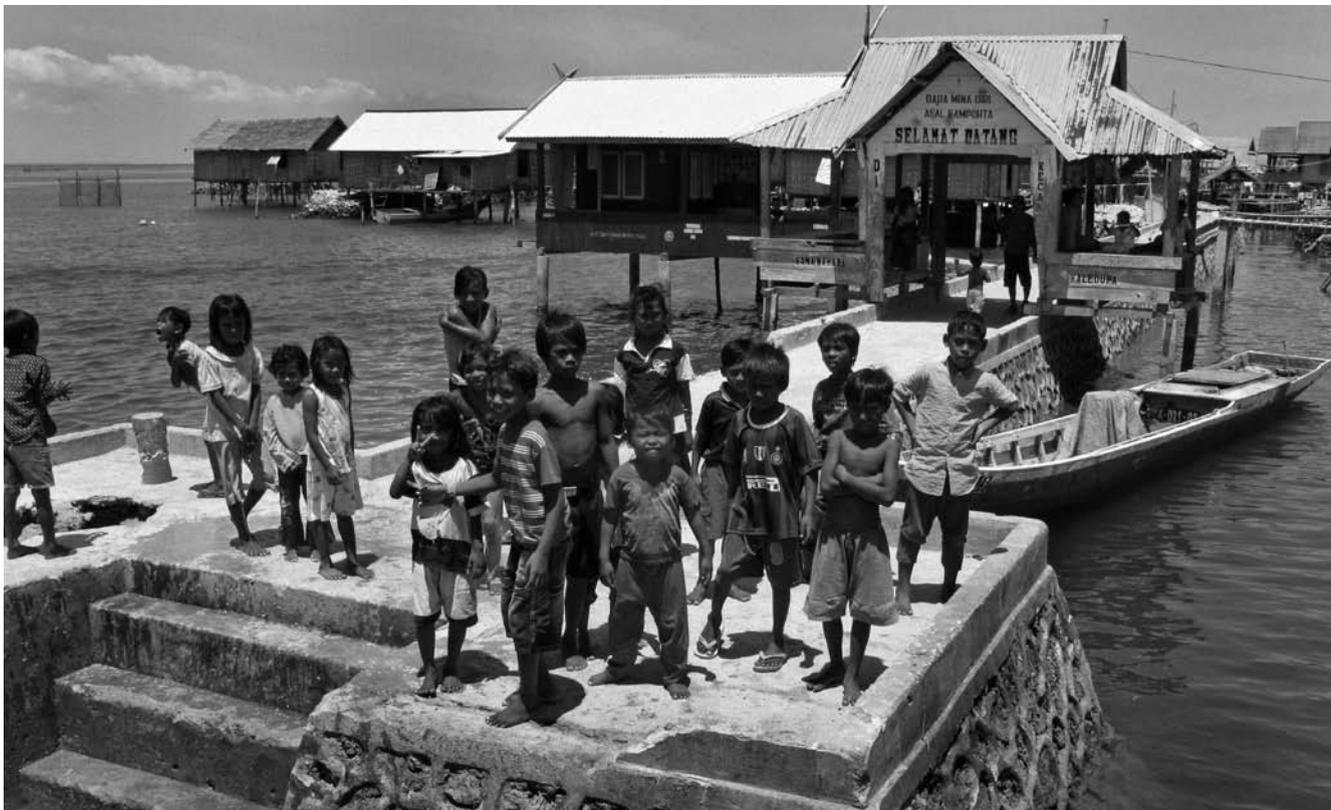
I've been living in Hakatutubu for more than forty years, since my family moved here from Dawe Dawe, further down the coast. Like all the Bajau here, I live right on the edge of the water. The Bajau always live by the sea. Ten or twenty years ago, there was living coral right to the edge of the tide line. Kids could catch fish just by throwing a line from the veranda of the house. The coral is dead now, and you have to go out hundreds of meters before you find fish. There aren't nearly as many fish as there used to be. And they're much smaller. The sediment and the waste from the company's mining operations have turned the water brown and murky. Everything's dead for at least half a kilometer off shore.

It's hard for us to compete with modern fishing operations. We don't have the capital. The only asset I have is my *perahu*, which is worth about Rp 7 million. I don't own the land I live on. Land next to the sea line is considered public property, so the Bajau never have certificates for the land they live on. That means we can be moved out with paltry compensation or none at all. It also means that we have no collateral. We don't have land certificates that we can use to obtain loans. If you own a motorbike, you can use the papers to secure a loan, but there is no registration system for our boats, so we can't use them to secure loans. I don't know if it would work to introduce a registration system for boats, particularly if it meant that we had to pay taxes on them. If the community could see that there was some benefit to its members, then maybe they could be convinced, but it would take a long time. If the Bajau want to move forward, then we have to help ourselves. We know that the government isn't going to help us much. The most we hope for is to be left alone.

I'm only a stupid fisherman. I only attended primary school for three days. I have trouble reading or writing. Still, I believe that the only way we can move forward is to educate our children. I'm proud that I've been able to send my daughter to the local college. I pushed her and encouraged her all the way. I don't

"I believe that the only way we can move forward is to educate our children. I don't want my only inheritance to my children to be my stupidity and ignorance. I want something better for them."

Bajau children near the school on stilts over the sea established by Udin and his daughter.



want my only inheritance to my children to be my own stupidity and ignorance. I want something better for them. The trouble is that a lot of Bajau children still don't want to go to school. It's difficult for Bajau children to go to school with the land children. Bajau children look different and talk differently. Their skin is dark from playing in the sea, and their hair is bleached. The Bajau children are shy. One harsh taunt from the other kids, and they'll never go back to school.

That's why we need our own school. I've worked with my daughter to set up a school on stilts in the sea here especially for the Bajau children. My daughter is still at college, but she's serving as the head of the school. As far as possible, the teachers at the school use Bajau language for instruction, not Indonesian. That's a problem with the government schools: many of our children don't speak Indonesian, so if they go to school, they can't understand a word the teachers are saying.

In the beginning, it was almost impossible to get people here to support the idea. People laughed at an illiterate fisherman setting up a school, but I'm a stubborn old man. I went around to all the community leaders, one by one, gathering support. Little by little, people came around. With funds and donations of material and labor from the community, we built three simple rooms on stilts in the water with a whiteboard in each room. We started with basic literacy classes for young kids, and then we asked volunteer teachers to use primary school books. The teachers are both Bajau and land people. None of them gets a salary. Maybe the non-Bajau teachers feel some sort of calling, or maybe they are trying to gather experience so that they'll be able to get a paying job at a government school later.

We started the school with absolutely no money and no help from the government. In 2009, we finally got the government to recognize the primary school, so the children can receive certificates. It wasn't easy. We registered it as the Madrasah Tsana Wiyah Swasta Bahrul Ulum with the Department of Religion. It's not really a religious school, but the process was a lot less complicated and cheaper than going through the Department of Education. Even so, to register the school, we had to raise Rp 1.5 million to pay the notarization fee. I went to a local hajji's house, almost in tears. I told him that I had to raise the money for the school, even though I didn't have enough money in my pocket to buy a pack of cigarettes. He looked at me for a moment and then reached for his wallet to donate the money.

In Dawé Dawé, the Bajau community also set up a school on stilts in the sea. After a few years, it was converted into a government school. I don't want that to happen here, even if it means that the government would be responsible for the costs. It would mean that the local community has no control over who is appointed as a teacher, or the syllabus, or the way the school is managed. That's why we set up the school ourselves in the first place. We're used to doing things for ourselves. In our language, we say that a Bajau sailor knows how to steer his boat directly into the wind with no engine. We know how to make do with practically nothing. One of the problems of getting children to attend the school is that parents still don't believe in education. A father is more proud of his son if he shows skill at harpooning fish than if he gets a good report card at school. I'd like to see a school for the Bajau that builds on our maritime skills. I'd like to see courses in mechanics, fishing techniques, and marketing, so that the Bajau have the skills they need to compete with modern fishing operations. If parents could see that an education is relevant to the way people in the community live and really helps their children earn more money, then of course they would be enthusiastic about it. It's just a dream at the moment.

Haris Ibrahim

I was born in a Bajau village on Saponda Island in 1967. My parents were fishing people, like practically everyone on Saponda. When I was young, there was only a primary school on the island. Back then, secondary schools in remote, unpopulated areas were practically unheard of. No one went past primary school. In those days, the village head and all the government officials, the schoolteachers, the district nurse, they were all outsiders from the mainland. There was no one on the island qualified to serve in those positions. Positions were often vacant because no one from the mainland wanted to serve in such a remote area. If outsiders came, they usually stayed for only a year or so. Then the position would become vacant again.

I determined somehow to be the first boy from the island to complete high school. My father gave me his blessing but told me he wouldn't be able to give me any money. I went to Kendari and found the former head of my primary school. For the first years in Kendari, I lived in his house as a servant, working from morning until night, with time off only to attend school.

When I graduated, I got a job as a seaman on a large ship. I travelled to Singapore, Thailand, and Hong Kong. Wherever I went, around the ports and on the coastlines, I saw Bajau people. Their villages looked like mine, and the people spoke the same language. I always took the time to meet them and talk to them. Through my travels, I came to realize how widely spread the Bajau are across the world, but they are mostly poor, powerless, and uneducated. Other ethnic groups have their own organizations and formal support networks, but the Bajau have nothing like that.

Actually, it's not true that all Bajau people are poor, uneducated fishing people. There are a few wealthy Bajau who own small fleets of boats. Even though levels of education are lower than average, quite a few have managed to finish school and to make their mark. The mother of the Deputy Regent of Wakatobi was a Bajau, and so are a few senior officials of the regional planning office. Even so, you can be sure that to achieve those positions, they had to overcome challenges and difficulties of all sorts.

When I came back to Kendari, I worked in the operational section of the Department of Public Works for a period, but I wasn't satisfied. I knew that as a low-level employee, I'd never be in a position to help my family and my people. After a few years, I left to work as an activist with legal rights organizations. I often helped Bajau people involved in land rights disputes. I was also an advocate for people who had been arrested for fish-bombing, so I became concerned with environmental issues as well. Later, in 2005, I set up a newsletter in the Bajau language to address those issues, among others. In 2007 I wrote a proposal to establish a weekly radio program broadcast in the Bajau language. It's transmitted from Kendari, but I know that Bajau people all across Indonesia as far away as Timor tune in.

Land rights are an essential issue for the Bajau. Because the Bajau usually live on public land at the sea line, they have very little security. They often don't have deep roots in the local community, so they can be shifted away. In the Soeharto era, that happened even more frequently than it does now, often with devastating consequences. Entire communities were moved inland, far from the sea, with practically no proper facilities. Maybe the intentions were good, to settle the Bajau and to bring them to areas where they could have access to schools and medical facilities, but the programs were often very badly implemented, without enough funding or support. I have to admit, over the past ten years, since the fall of Soeharto and the advent of regional autonomy, the situation has gotten a lot better. The national and the regional governments are getting better about listening to people.

“I wrote a proposal to establish a weekly radio program using the Bajau language. It's transmitted from Kendari, but I know that Bajau people all across Indonesia as far away as Timor tune in.”



My own parents were forcibly shifted to a new community site in the Soeharto era. When they protested, the officials threatened that if they resisted, they would be considered anti-government troublemakers. In their new site, they had very limited supplies of fertilizer, seed, and pesticide. After a couple of years, they abandoned the place. The program wasn't nearly as well funded as the interprovincial transmigration programs. But the government said the program failed because the Bajau can't adjust to living on land. Actually, I don't agree that the Bajau are always fishing people and can only live on the sea, even if that's what our ancestors said. I've seen a few examples of entire Bajau communities that became successful farmers, when they got the support they needed.

The Bajau are often blamed for causing the destruction of the maritime environment, but a lot of the time they are convenient scapegoats. More often than not, they are the victims of environmental disasters, not the perpetrators of them. Yes, they are often involved in fish-bombing, but the damage caused by fish-bombing is nothing compared to the damage caused by logging and mining operations. When we went to visit Pak Udin in Hakatutobu yesterday, you could see for yourself how much destruction the mining company's operations caused. And in return, the company builds a few houses each year for the community and creates a few jobs in the port. That's poor compensation when the people can no longer earn a living from fishing.

Yesterday, when Pak Udin started talking about the destruction and damage, I deliberately changed the topic and asked him how the community had benefited from the company's presence. I reminded him that it wasn't all bad. Actually, I wasn't being entirely honest. I was disgusted by what we saw, but I could see he was getting upset. There's no point in going into a community and provoking them to become angry. We aren't trying to start a revolution. I encourage people to look for constructive solutions and to concentrate on the areas of their lives that they have control over.

That's the reason I'm always promoting education and political participation, through my newsletter and radio show. I always say that whatever the problems facing the Bajau, nothing will change without those two factors. We need good leaders and we need to act collectively. I use the media to tell the Bajau about scholarships and work opportunities. I say that we need to speak with one voice when we demand facilities. We need to find a political party that is prepared to support the building of schools in remote areas, even if they are single-classroom schools or require home study. Then we must support that party as a group. I don't want the next generation of Bajau to face the same difficulties I did in getting an education.

At the same time, we have to be reasonable. We can't expect the government to invest a disproportionate amount of resources in our community. When people call the radio station to complain about unofficial charges for medical services or education in remote areas, I remind them of how difficult it is to get facilities there in the first place. I remind them to weigh the benefits of having those facilities against the costs. If we complain too loudly or too readily, the government will dismiss us entirely. We have to present our case in such a way that we aren't branded as troublemakers. We have to show that the Bajau people can make a positive contribution and be a valuable part of Indonesian society. All we need is some support and facilities to help that happen. But we can't wait for the government to give it to us. We need to organize to make it happen.

Erni Bajo

“When I fought with my parents about going to high school, I never imagined that I would go this far. All I wanted was to get a job in a shop or a food stall to earn some extra money for my family.”

I come from a village of poor Bajau fishing people in Langara, about three hours away from Kendari. These days, every single child in the village goes to primary school. Most of the older children go to junior high school, and quite a few go to senior high school. A handful go to the local tertiary college, too. It certainly wasn't like that ten years ago, when I first went to secondary school.

Back then, most children just finished primary school, at most. Girls often didn't even get that far. The Bajau people are very concerned about the honor of their daughters. A lot of parents don't think it's safe for their daughters to go into the village on their own, particularly after they reach puberty. They say that a girl should stay at home until a man comes to make her his wife.

But from an early age, I wanted to go to school. Even in a village where everyone was poor, my family was the poorest of all. We had the worst, most run-down house in the village. I thought that if I finished school, perhaps I could get a job in a shop or stall in town to earn some extra money for my family. My mother wasn't very supportive, but my father encouraged me, at least in primary school. Someone always took me to school and came to meet me afterwards, every day. I remember when I had to get a photo taken for registration, five members of my family came to watch over me while it was taken.

Most of the kids at school were land people. In early primary school, there were six other Bajau girls. By the time I'd finished, there were only two or three left. The others had dropped out to get married or wait for a husband. At school, the other children sometimes teased us. One day when I was coming into the classroom, the other kids barricaded the door to stop me from coming in. They said I shouldn't be at school in the first place. As I progressed through the school, the teasing gradually eased up.



When I finished primary school, my father and mother had a vicious fight over whether I could go to secondary school. I've got seven younger brothers and sisters, and my mother said we couldn't feed them all and pay for my school at the same time. She said my father was sacrificing all the younger children for the benefit of his favorite daughter. When she said that, my father hit her. They fought about it again and again.

In secondary school, I always got good grades. I was often top of the class. The teachers always encouraged me to stay in school, but the farther I went, the more difficulties I had at home. The whole village sided against me. People called me bad names and said I didn't know how a girl should behave. In my final year, I was top of the class three times in a row.

What made it worse was that I really enjoy singing. I often sang at school events. My father hated me doing that. Sometimes when he heard that I'd got up on the stage at school, he hit me when I got home. Once I was asked to sing at someone's wedding and went without my parents' permission. My mother came out to meet me and told me to stay at another family member's house for a day, because my father was still in a rage. He said I was shaming the whole family. He threatened that when I came home, he was going to tie me up naked in front of the house and electrocute me. After a day or two, he calmed down.

The final straw came when I finished high school. I'd never even dreamed of going to university, but my favorite teacher told me I should think about it. Even my father went berserk when he heard that. These days, there are some scholarships for high-achieving children, but there wasn't anything like that back then. He demanded to know how the family was going to pay for it. I told him that I'd find a way, even if he didn't pay for it. He hit me and called me a slut, so I ran away to my teacher's house and stayed there for three days. In the end, my father came to the teacher's house and said that he'd sell the engine from his small boat to pay for my education. He hardly ever used the engine anyway, because fuel is so expensive.

I remember setting off in the boat in the middle of the night to take the engine to Kendari to sell, after my parents had been shouting at each other all day. It was in the middle of a torrential storm. At the last minute, just as we were setting off, my mother came running down to the beach. I thought she was going to stop me from going, so I ran away down the beach. But she called out that she was only trying to give me a piece of plastic to cover my head on the trip there. We hugged each other and cried. That was when I knew that she'd forgiven me.

When we got to Kendari, it was early in the morning, before the morning prayer, but my father eventually found someone to buy the engine. It was one day after registration for university had closed, but they let me put in my application anyway. When I first started studying, I stayed at an aunt's house, outside town. I had to take three different buses to get to campus. It took almost two hours each way. When my family heard, my grandmother sent me the gold necklace her husband gave her when they got married. I sold it to pay for cheap accommodations near campus. For the first few months, I hardly ate anything.

Then there was a university sports event, with music and singing contests. I got up and sang a song and won the first prize. The guitarist asked me if I wanted to come to Buton to perform at a wedding. That was the first time I was paid for singing. I got Rp 40,000 for a performance that lasted several days. It wasn't much, but that was the first time I realized that I could get paid for singing. After that, I supported myself by singing at weddings and other celebrations.

I usually sang *dangdut* and pop songs, but sometimes I tried to change the lyrics from Indonesian to Bajau language. I started getting lots of requests to sing at celebrations and parties in Bajau villages. I became quite well known. Hardly anyone else ever sang in Bajau, so I was asked to record a song for a pan-Indonesian compilation album. I got paid Rp 300,000 for that. That was when I began to call myself Erni Bajo. When I was younger, I was just called Erni. When my parents heard that people from the Bajau communities were talking highly of me and that I was earning enough to support myself, their attitudes towards my singing changed. They started to be proud of me. I encouraged one of my sisters to finish high school. I promised that I'd pay for her to go to nursing school if she came to live with me in Kendari. By that stage, my mother wasn't so set against school anymore.

I kept getting good grades at college, and eventually I graduated. Since then, I've been working as a volunteer teacher at a junior high school and a senior high school. I teach about fifty hours a week. I don't get a proper salary yet, but I think I'll eventually get a position in the civil service. At the moment, I teach in national schools, open to all members of the community, not specifically Bajau children. But that's my dream, to open a school especially for the Bajau. Pak Harris told me about the school set up in Hakatutobu by Pak Udin. I've never heard of anything like that before. I'd like to see how they are managing it.

Like I said, almost all the children in my village go to school now. The parents hold me up as an example of what can be achieved through education. When I went home last time, a woman told me that she'd named her child Erni, because she wanted her to grow up to be like me. Of course that makes me proud. I must admit, when I fought with my parents about going to high school, I never imagined that I would go this far. All I wanted was to get a job in a shop or a food stall to earn some extra money for my family.



Makassar, South Sulawesi

SELF CARE: LEPROSY-RELATED DISABILITIES

Leprosy is a bacterial disease that affects the skin and peripheral nerves. Leprosy remains endemic in 91 countries around the world, with 738,284 new cases detected globally in 2000. Around the world, several million people have permanent disabilities and disfigurements related to the disease.

Across Indonesia, the rate of prevalence is slightly under one new case per 10,000 people. This means that there are approximately 20,000 new cases detected each year. However, the rate is considerably higher in some regions, particularly East Java, North Maluku, and South Sulawesi. Approximately 10% of leprosy patients in Indonesia have already suffered significant nerve or other damage prior to the diagnosis and treatment of their disease.

The Jongaya leprosy settlement in Makassar, South Sulawesi, is a community of 2000 people. Of these, about five hundred have suffered from this disease. Most of the others are the healthy wives, husbands, and children of those affected. All the residents with leprosy have been treated for their disease and are considered cured. Even so, many have serious disabilities and horrible disfigurements. Some have had limbs amputated. Others are blind. Many wear prosthetic limbs. Others push themselves around in makeshift carts.

Jongaya is well located and has good facilities. Situated on the edge of town, it has electricity and access to water. People here are more likely to be able to work or beg successfully than in remote rural areas. There, people live in some of the most squalid circumstances and dire poverty in Indonesia.

In the past, lepers were often forcibly quarantined. This is no longer the case. No one is compelled to live in Jongaya. However, many people here have been driven away from their original communities. Others feel shame and leave home to seek refuge with others similarly afflicted.

Living near a large, prosperous city also makes begging more profitable. Some residents of the Jongaya leprosy settlement in Makassar, particularly those with amputations and serious disfigurements, claim to be able to earn up to several hundred thousand rupiah a day, ten times the minimum daily wage in the region. However, begging can be a physically demanding and dangerous occupation. There is significant risk of injury, particularly for those who move from place to place in carts.

In addition, beggars are often harassed by the police. Recently the city of Makassar enacted regulations forbidding begging, particularly in the streets. In response, with the support of Permata, a group of people with leprosy-related disabilities presented a petition to the local government assembly, which demanded that the government make itself responsible for the welfare of those prevented from earning a living by begging. So far, there has been no formal response to the petition.

One of the main goals of Permata is to eliminate discrimination against people with leprosy. One of the organization's projects trains people with leprosy to interview each other and write up their personal experiences in autobiographical form, with the goal of publishing these stories to increase awareness of the issues that people with leprosy face. Mursalim's story, published below, is one of more than fifty personal accounts that have been collated so far.

One of the most significant achievements in Jongaya is a self-care group, established by people with leprosy-related disabilities to support each other in practices that protect their health and well-being. One of the most effective interventions practiced by the members of leprosy group is the care and prevention of wounds to the feet. This is achieved by sitting together as a group

Many people in Jongaya are disabled by leprosy. People with damaged limbs gather to soak their feet, which helps heal wounds and sores that can become gangrenous. The self-care group has also set up a savings and loans program to finance small business ventures by its members.

to soak feet in water, then carefully scraping them with a rough stone and oiling them with any readily available vegetable oil.

In addition, the group established a micro-credit savings and loans system. Members make small, regular savings, and after a set period they are able to borrow money to establish, maintain, and expand small businesses. The cooperative was initially established with funds provided by the Netherlands Leprosy Relief organization. However, it is now self-sustaining, relying on repayments and savings to fund loans. Members have used funds, for example, to buy a computer and printer to rent and to buy a refrigerator to sell cold drinks.

Not all self-care groups in Indonesia have been as successful as the one in Jongaya. They often fail to reach the tipping point where enough people become convinced of the value of the system that it can be self-sustaining. Once members see their health improving, or they borrow money to set up a successful business, they usually become strong advocates and encourage others to join.

At Jongaya, many people with a similar affliction live in a single community. This works in favor of establishing a self-care group. It is harder to establish a successful group when people affected by leprosy do not live in close proximity to each other. In such cases, the cost and difficulty of travel may work against the success of a group.

Another issue is that participating in a self-care group means acknowledging, more or less publicly, that one has leprosy. Where there is stigma and denial, people may be reluctant to announce their condition in this way.

Following pages

Women from the Jongaya leprosy self-care group soaking their feet together at the weekly meeting. Soaking feet and rubbing them with oil help cure their wounds.







Andi Amin Reffi

For a long time I didn't know I had leprosy. I didn't want to know. Sometimes the kids at school saw the sores and the ugly white patches on my body. Sometimes they called me a leper. If they said it to my face, I'd smack them. My family knew there was something wrong but they never talked about it. My family is high-caste Bugis, from one of the royal families in the village. For an aristocratic family like mine, leprosy is terribly shameful. Some people believe lepers are cursed by God, others that it comes from black magic. It's something unclean.

I was finally diagnosed in the late 1970s. Medical care wasn't as good then as it is now. Back then, the drugs for treating leprosy were much less effective. A lot of strains of leprosy were resistant to the medicines they had, and not everyone responded well. The multi-drug therapy (MDT) that they have now is much better. If patients follow MDT for six months or a year, they can be completely cured. If people with leprosy are diagnosed early, they may not even suffer from complications. They can be completely cured and lead a normal life.

In the 1970s, I was prescribed Dapsone. I didn't take it regularly. I only took it when I was feeling bad. That's not the proper way to use it. You've got to go on taking it, even if you don't feel sick. I didn't know that at the time.

When I graduated from school, my parents used their influence to get me a job at the Governor's office. Most people didn't know that I was sick. I had a high school diploma, quite a good qualification back in the 1980s. Any sort of position at the Governor's office, even a menial one, was very prestigious. As part of the process of becoming a government employee, I had to have a medical examination. When the doctor examined me, he saw that I had leprosy. I was fired from my job immediately. Pretty soon, everybody knew why.

My family didn't kick me out. I left by myself. Bugis people have a very strong sense of pride. I didn't want to bring shame on my family. I just wanted to disappear from their lives and move away as far as I could so that I'd be somewhere where no one knew me.

The next few years of my life were a nightmare. It's a blur now. I came to Makassar to hide in the big city. I did anything I could to survive. Sometimes I worked, sometimes I begged. Sometimes I stayed in rented rooms, or with friends, or even out on the streets. During that time, I didn't have any contact with my family. I didn't look after myself. I didn't wash properly or change my clothes. I let myself get filthy. I thought I had a revolting disease, so I didn't care what happened.

Eventually I came to the Jongaya Leprosy Settlement. No one is forced to live here, you know. It's just much easier to live with other people who have suffered leprosy and who are used to dealing with it. Around here, there's no need to be ashamed, even if you have amputations and other disfigurements. Around here, even people with serious leprosy-related disabilities can work or run a business. On the main road here, there are small shops and food stalls run by people who have had leprosy. Of course they only sell to other people from the settlement! Normal, healthy people from the outside aren't going to buy food from a leper, are they? It doesn't matter if the person has been treated and isn't infectious, and the food they are selling is wrapped in sterilized plastic: no one's going to buy it. No one even wants to touch something that's been handled by a leper. Sometimes shops refuse to serve someone who has had leprosy – they don't even want to touch a leper's money.

It's different here. Back in the village, people who have had leprosy often feel that they have to hide themselves away. They wouldn't be brave enough even to show

“When I was still at school, I had red splotches on my body that wouldn't heal. Then I had small patches of hard, dry white skin. When I touched the hard white patches, I couldn't feel anything.”

their faces in public. You can lead more of a normal life here. It's a community. These days, the majority of people here don't have leprosy. A lot of lepers have healthy partners and children. Out of the 2000 people in the settlement, about 600 have had leprosy. Everyone here is used to dealing with people who've had leprosy and have disabilities.

Back in 2006, we set up a self-care group. One of the big problems if you've had leprosy is keeping your hands and feet from getting damaged. Many of us have lost feeling in our hands and feet. If you stub your toe or tread on a nail, you may not even feel it. A lot of the women hurt their hands in the kitchen. If they aren't careful, they can burn themselves and not even notice. If you get wounds like that, they can become infected. Your hands and feet can become gangrenous. That's why so many people who've had leprosy have amputations.

Leprosy can make your skin dry out, too. When the skin on your feet dries out, it can get cracks, which can let the dirt in, and that can lead to infections. One of the best ways to prevent injuries to your feet is by soaking them in water. It's really quite simple. You soak your feet in water for half an hour until the skin becomes softer, and then you rub the dry calluses with a stone. Then you apply coconut oil to keep the skin supple and to keep the moisture in. It sounds simple, but it really does work. The trouble is that people can't be bothered. People say they are too busy working and they don't have the time. Or they don't really believe that it works.



So we set up a self-care group. We began in 2006, with just four people. Other people around the settlement began to see that it worked, so more and more people started joining. At one point, it went up to sixty people each week. Now it's gone back down to about thirty. Some people do it at home now instead of coming to meetings. We meet every Monday. We sit together and soak our feet. People who've been in the group for a while explain how it works to those who have just joined. We just use water and soap and oil, but it works better than anything else. Some people had really bad wounds, so bad that the doctors said they were going to have to amputate. After they started soaking regularly, they got better.

At first, we just used buckets for soaking our feet. Last year we built special concrete troughs. Every week, we have an *arisan*, a kind of lottery. Each person who comes to the meeting puts in Rp 5000. Every week, taking it in turns, a different person gets to keep the pool of money. That person is responsible for buying the soap and the oil for everyone in the group. It doesn't cost that much. It's all made locally, stuff that you can buy around here.

Treating injuries and keeping them clean is vital. It can make the difference between losing a toe and keeping it. But avoiding injuries in the first place is just as important. That's not always easy. Good shoes are important, but the type of work you do makes a big difference. With some types of work, it's really difficult to watch your feet and your hands to make sure you aren't damaging them. But we don't have much choice. If people with leprosy have any sort of job, it's likely to involve manual labor. It's pretty hard to make sure you aren't hurting yourself when you're working in the fields. Jongaya is probably one of the better leper settlements in South Sulawesi. It's close to the big city, so there are more opportunities. It's much harder for people with leprosy in the rural areas. A lot of the men at Jongaya work in town as parking attendants. Many people with more serious disabilities beg, at least sometimes. But quite a few people here run a small business of some kind.

Last year, the self-care group received some funding from the Netherlands Leprosy Relief to set up a microfinance credit co-op. The co-op is open to anyone



Left

A patient in a hospital for people with leprosy-related conditions, keeping up appearances.

Opposite page

A man scraping calluses and dry skin from his feet.



who comes to the self-care group regularly. If you want to borrow money, there are a few extra conditions. It's meant for people who are already running some kind of business, and the loan has to be used to develop or expand the business. There was one woman who sold drinks: she borrowed a few million to buy a fridge to keep them cool. Another woman borrowed some money to buy a computer and printer to rent out when people here need to print out a letter or document. And there's a married couple who run a stall selling vegetables and basic foodstuffs. They ran into trouble, and borrowed money to restock and get started again. Everybody who joins the credit co-op makes a commitment to save a certain amount per month: if you make a commitment to save Rp 100,000 per month then you can borrow up to Rp 1,000,000, so long as you meet the other conditions. If you save more, then you can borrow more. Since the credit co-op started, more people have been coming to the self-care group: they can see that there are a lot of benefits for the people who join. They realize that working together benefits everyone.

Even so, there's a limit to what we can do. It's always going to be hard for people who have had leprosy, because of the way other people react to it. If people go on seeing it as a punishment or a curse or something disgusting instead of a medical condition, it's always going to be hard for us to live in society. People need to realize that it's just a medical condition and that we are just normal people like everyone else.



Dalindring

“I don’t beg. I just push myself along the streets in my cart. People wind down the windows of their cars and give me money. They feel sorry for me. I don’t ask for anything.”

I never come home with less than Rp 50,000. More often than not, I come back with Rp 100,000. I go out every day at seven in the morning and come back in time for the midday prayer. Pak Mursalim takes me into town on his motorbike every day. I pay him Rp 10,000 for his trouble.

My leg was amputated in 2002. It got twisted and dried, and got in the way. The doctors said I’d be better off without it, so they cut it off. Now I’ve got a false leg. I can walk with it. It hurts and I get tired, but I can walk with it. I don’t wear it when I go into town. People feel sorry for me because I have a leg missing. But otherwise I’m quite healthy. My hands and my foot are OK. I haven’t been to the hospital since the amputation. I haven’t seen a doctor or been to the community health center.

I try to stay healthy so I can go out onto the streets. Some guys go out the whole day, but they wear themselves out. I’ve got to pay for the rent on this house, and I’ve got to pay for food. The only help I get from the government is subsidized rice. I can get 25 kilograms a month for a bit more than Rp 20,000. But it’s terrible rice. It often has stones and insects in it.

I’ve got two children. The youngest is Jumardi. He’s in first class at junior high school. Yes, he’s healthy. I’ve been married four times. All my wives were healthy. I’ve just separated from my fourth wife. I used to give her all the money I took. She just spent it all, and not always on the right things. That’s why I haven’t saved any money. My wife spent it all.

There is a new government regulation that says you aren’t allowed to beg on the streets or at traffic lights, or in any public places. You can only beg outside mosques and churches.

I’ve never had trouble with the police or the Army. The police and soldiers sometimes give me money. The only people I’ve ever had trouble with are from the social welfare agency. They’ve taken me away a few times. They don’t do anything, they just drive me back to Jongaya and leave me here. They just tell me that I shouldn’t beg. I tell them I don’t beg, people just give me money. I don’t ask for it.

When the new law came in, we staged a demonstration. We went to the regional assembly to protest. They said we weren’t allowed to beg. We said we’d stop begging if they provided Rp 50,000 a day as a social security payment. We said we’d take a minimum of one million a month. They say we can’t beg, but they don’t offer any solution. What are we meant to do instead?

I found out about the demonstration from my other friends who go around the city in carts. We went to the assembly in a bus. We all paid our own fares. I didn’t meet any of the members of parliament. A few crippled lepers went in to meet them, but only the ones who had been to school. I never went to school.

What can I do if I can’t beg? I can’t work. I can’t work as a laborer with a missing leg. I can’t feel my foot or my hands. If I don’t look after myself, I mess them up. I don’t hurt my hands when I push myself around in my cart. I use a stick to pull myself along the ground on the right side and push myself with my left leg. I have a shoe so I don’t hurt my foot.

If I had the capital, I’d set myself up in business. I could set up a business making bricks. But I don’t have the capital. I don’t go to the self-care group. My feet and hands have been clean for a long time. I wouldn’t have time to go to meetings in the mornings; that’s when I go into town.

Mursalim

When I was younger, I wanted to be a professor of electrical engineering. But when I finally graduated from junior high school, my mother enrolled me in the teacher's vocational training high school. I was horribly disappointed about that, but I did what I was told. When I was in the first semester, I just happened to see a television program about leprosy and people affected by it. According to the program, one of the symptoms of leprosy is white or red patches of skin with no feeling. I couldn't believe it: I had exactly the type of sores that were described on the television program. I was worried, so I told my mother. My mother was also alarmed and took me to the nearest community health center to get checked.

The health worker told me that there was no way that it was leprosy, because no one else in my family had it. But after I graduated from school, I had another check-up. This time, the health center confirmed that I did indeed have leprosy. My mother was completely devastated by the news. But the health worker explained the implications of it to her so that she could understand. I went onto multi-drug therapy. Each month I was given the medicine I needed. I was supposed to keep on taking it for two years. After just one year, though, I felt a lot better, so I left home to look for work. I traveled to Southeast Sulawesi, where I got a job as a volunteer teacher at an Islamic religious school.

A year later, all the volunteer teachers were organizing their applications to join the public service. Just at that time, I started having serious adverse reactions to the medicine I was taking. I ended up going to Malaysia for treatment. I was in Malaysia for two years. But because of the cost of the treatment, my brother made me go back to Indonesia to get treatment here. In Indonesia, my condition got worse. In the end, I was completely paralyzed. My leg became twisted and bent, and I couldn't straighten it at all. The fingers on my hands began to dry and shrivel, becoming clawed. I went to see a *dukun*, a traditional healer. He told me to throw away my medicine. He told me that the medicine was making my condition worse.

With my condition getting worse, people in the community began avoiding me. Before then, they hadn't really known that I had leprosy, so I was still allowed to live at home in the community. When people found out that I had leprosy, everyone avoided me. They didn't want me to live there anymore. My brother came with me when I left home. I went around trying to find someone to take me in, but word had gotten around that I had leprosy, and no one would take me in. I felt like a rotten fish being passed from buyer to buyer. I went to a friend from school who didn't know that I had leprosy, and he let me stay.

That afternoon, though, a health worker came to the house and told my friend that I had leprosy. I knew that I was going to get kicked out again, and I was right. The same day my friend told me to get out. I was completely devastated and had no idea what I should do. One of my brothers patiently came out in the middle of the night and helped find another place where I could stay. I know how difficult and confusing it must have been for my family, too. Try to imagine how it would feel if it happened to your brother. But they didn't want to abandon me. They took me round from place to place, looking for someone kind enough to take me in. No one would take me. It was just too much, so I flopped down and bawled my eyes out. I looked at my two brothers and said, "Just cut me loose. Let me go." When my elder brother heard me, he hugged me and told me that I had to be patient. He said that if no one took me in, he'd stay with me in the forest while I took medicine and got better.

After he said that, both my brothers sat down and cried. I couldn't help asking

Mursalim is actively involved in Permata, which is currently trying to produce a book of personal accounts and stories of people affected by leprosy. He originally wrote this account in Indonesian.



where we were going to go next. My brother answered that God would guide us somehow. Just after that, a stranger came up and greeted us and asked us what was wrong. We told him, and he told my brother to bring me to his house. I ended up staying there. He looked after me like I was his own child. He never complained about the trouble I was causing. I'll always be grateful to that man. I got well enough that I could make my way to the Daya Makassar Leprosy Hospital. In the leprosy hospital, they made sure I took the medicine properly. I found a new life there. The hospital was completely different from outside: no one treated me badly or unfairly. They gave me excellent medical treatment, completely unlike the treatment I'd had before. I stayed in the hospital for eight months. By the end, I was almost completely well again.

I had no idea what to do or where to go after I left the hospital. I thought people would still try to avoid me, but they couldn't even tell that I'd had leprosy. I wanted to go back to my village, but I didn't have anywhere to go there. I didn't know how to support myself in Makassar. I just wandered around at a complete loss, not knowing what to do. I knew that I had to find some work in order to survive. I looked around at the people working in the street. I saw people working as scavengers, parking attendants, and so on. In the end, I decided to try to earn money as a parking attendant. I waited until one parking attendant went home, and I just filled in for him before anyone came to replace him. Of course, I didn't get much, but I had enough to eat.

Even though I'm accepted by the community now, sometimes I still feel sad when I see how people treat lepers and people with leprosy-related disabilities. Maybe they ended up that way because they didn't get treatment soon enough. That's why people end up with disabilities. Even so, once they are treated, they are completely cured of leprosy, just the way I and the luckier ones are.

I wish that people in the community wouldn't feel such revulsion and fear when they meet lepers. If they have been treated, they aren't infectious anymore. Almost everyone has a natural immunity to leprosy. It's only people with a very weak immune system who are vulnerable. Lots of children are born to mothers who have had leprosy and live with her until they grow up, but they aren't infected! There are lots of people with leprosy who have a healthy spouse. And their children and grandchildren are healthy. Just to give you an example, the brother whom I talked about before, who looked after me when I was sick and cleaned me up and hugged me because he was so sad to see the state I was in – he's still healthy. There's no reason to be afraid. I looked after a child, like a foster father while he grew up, from when he went to primary school until he graduated. He's married now. He slept in my room and ate with me, and he's still healthy.

I'd just like to say to everyone who reads my story here, I hope you have learned a little bit about leprosy, and if you meet someone with the symptoms that I described earlier, please encourage them to go to the nearest community health center. If you have the symptoms yourself, please don't be embarrassed about going to the doctor. The medicine is free! Your condition will deteriorate if you don't get treatment. And to the government, I'd like to say that we would be really, really grateful if you would help us make people more aware of the real nature of our condition, so they will know that we are really just like them. Empower us to do the best we can. And for those of our friends who are in such bad condition that they can't look after themselves anymore, give them a pension or an allowance of some kind. Prove that Indonesia can be magnanimous and generous.

Mading

“The people with amputations make more than I do. You make more if you push yourself around in a cart than if you just sit still in one spot.”

I wear glasses to protect my eye. I've only got one eye, and it doesn't close properly. I've got to keep the dust out. I can't rub it, or I'll lose that one, too. I don't have any feeling in my arms, all the way up to my elbows. I don't have any feeling in my legs from my knees down.

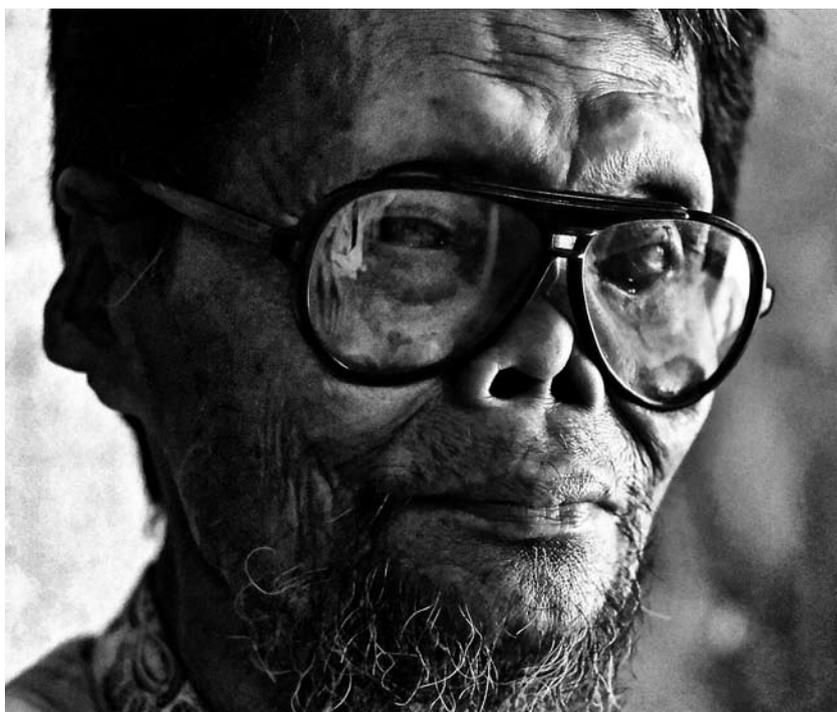
I sit outside the Toko Agung shop in the afternoons. I don't get that much money. At the most, people give me Rp 30,000 per day. The people with amputations make more than I do. You make more if you push yourself around in a cart than if you just sit still in one spot. But if you go from place to place, you're more likely to hurt your feet and hands. If you sit still, there isn't so much risk. I don't wear my glasses when I'm sitting outside the shop. People think I'm rich if I wear glasses. So I take them off and keep them in my pocket.

It's against the law to beg in the streets now. It's OK in my spot, as that's on private land. I've been sitting there in the afternoons for four years now. The owner of the shop says it's OK if there's just one person there, but he doesn't want a lot of other beggars. The security people are OK, they don't give me any trouble, but they shoo away anyone else.

I've had some trouble with the social welfare people. They saw me talking to you today, and they came up and asked me what we were talking about. They've taken me away once or twice, but they just take me to their office and then back here to Jongaya. I still go out the next day.

I don't like begging, but what else can I do? I've got to pay the rent on my house and I've got to look after my wife. If the government wants us to stop begging, they should provide us with some security.

I go to the self-care group in the mornings. They talk to me about protecting my eye. I've never borrowed money from the credit co-op there, though. I'm 67 years old. I'd like to set up a business, but it isn't that easy. I'm not sure what kind of business I'd like to run. It's hard to set up a business when you are getting old and you've got disabilities like mine.



Mading wears glasses to protect his remaining eye.

Proklamasi Street, Jakarta

DRUGS, MUSIC, AND HARM REDUCTION

In June 2000, a riot broke out around Jalan Proklamasi in central Jakarta. More than three hundred youths from at least two warring gangs took to the streets. They began by attacking each other, then turned to smashing car windows at random, throwing Molotov cocktails, and blocking roads with burning tires. By the end of the day, the disturbance had been quelled. Several motorbikes had been set on fire and a police car overturned, its windows smashed. On this occasion, no fatalities occurred. This was not a political protest or demonstration that ended in violence; it was a fight between bored, angry youths from neighboring communities. The specific grievances that sparked the riot were obscure and trivial.

There are plenty of bad excuses to explain the violence. There isn't much work for young people. There isn't much to do. People are poorly educated. There are a lot of drugs and drug dealers in the district. Drug dealers have money and power. When they squabble over territory, gangs of young people who are their customers or underlings get involved.

The young men and women in the poor districts of central Jakarta use heroin, marijuana, methamphetamines, and other drugs. Sometimes these drugs kill them. According to the community health center in Menteng, in a single division around Jalan Proklamasi 158 residents died of heroin overdoses from 1998 to 2007. Other people died after they bought drugs there and used them elsewhere. Even more died from AIDS, septicemia, and hepatitis contracted through drug use.

Drugs, gang violence, unemployment, and crime have not disappeared from Jakarta. However, several districts around the Proklamasi area have transformed themselves dramatically over the past few decades. Not only have they driven out drug dealers, they've also made it possible for young drug users to become productive, useful members of the community.

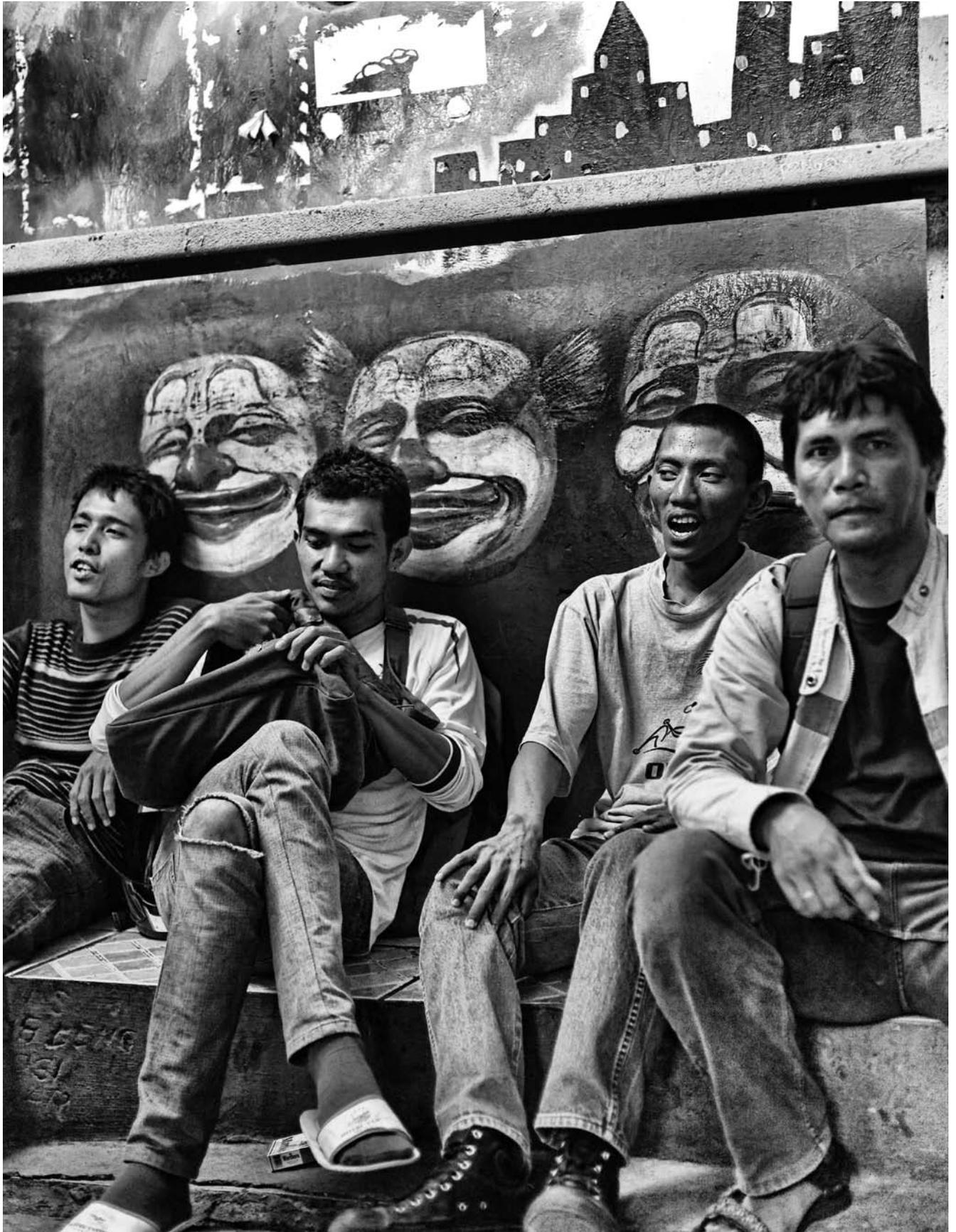
Benk Benk, a young artist from this district, himself a former drug user and one time convicted criminal, serves as a volunteer outreach worker for a harm reduction program administered by the government-operated Cikini community health center for intravenous drug users. Through this program, to prevent the spread of HIV through the community, he actively discourages injecting drug users from sharing needles. To achieve this, and through the health department-sanctioned program, he exchanges new needles for used ones, explaining the risk of sharing to each recipient. He also encourages the youths of the district to understand their legal rights, to engage in rehabilitation programs, and to otherwise take control of their lives and make responsible choices.

In 2007, Benk Benk set up a *sanggar*, or clubhouse, on land near the railway in the Proklamasi area. The clubhouse is a well-constructed shed decorated with graffiti images of heroes of alienated youth, such as the musicians Iwan Fals and Harry Roesli. The shed contains donated musical instruments, amplifiers, and some recording equipment. It also has a library of scavenged and donated books, and a computer.

A lot of the young, mainly male drug users in the area love music. They are particularly fond of heavy metal, punk, and reggae. Some of the young men who come to the clubhouse have formed a band called Cispleng. Most band members have used drugs. Some still do. At the very least, some are still in methadone programs. The band is quite successful. Their music is sometimes played on the radio. They play at venues around Jakarta. There has even been talk of a recording contract. They play at community events and tutor kids in the neighborhood. The kids in the neighborhood look up to them.

Several districts around the Proklamasi area have transformed themselves dramatically over the past few decades. Not only have they driven out drug dealers, they have also made it possible for young drug users to become productive, useful members of the community.

Youths from the Proklamasi area hanging out on the narrow footpath that runs past their clubhouse. They are here to participate in a peer-supported harm reduction counseling session.



Benk Benk

We don't discourage drug users from coming to the clubhouse. They are welcome here. We don't let people hit up here, but if someone needs a syringe, they can get one. I hand out needles as part of the exchange program sponsored by the local community health center. I work with the center as a volunteer outreach worker. If someone asks or wants to know, I tell them about rehab programs or the methadone program operated by the community health center. But you can't force people. We don't try to make them promise to stop using drugs.

All the young guys here have done drugs. Before I was in prison, I tried everything. I was never really into it the way some guys were, but I tried everything. I like painting and drawing. I'm an artist. I used to smoke some spliff and then spend the next few hours painting. Back when I was at school, it was mostly pills and a bit of grass. Smack wasn't really a big thing until the late 1990s. When people here first got into smack, they smoked it on tin foil. Later, people started injecting. These days, I've given it all up. If someone's passing a joint around, I just pretend to take a puff. I don't inhale.

When I was younger, there were always fights between gangs from different neighborhoods. You had to take part. If you didn't want to fight, everyone said you were gutless. At least ten of my close friends were killed fighting. Guys used to drink and take pills before they went out to fight.

I went to prison in 1996. It was nothing to do with drugs. One of the local tough guys disrespected my girlfriend. I'm not into violence, but I couldn't just do nothing. I stabbed him in the belly with a knife. When the police got me, they tortured me at the station. They held me against the wall and hit me. They put my hands under a chair and sat on it. They did all kinds of things. There was no reason for it. That's just what they do when they arrest you. After that, I was sent to jail in Salemba.

There are a lot of drugs in prison. They are cheaper and better than they are on the outside. It's completely open. The police don't bust anyone for drugs in prison. The guards don't stop you. They are the ones who sell the drugs. It's harder to get a needle in prison than it is to get drugs. You can rent an old one for Rp 2000. People just keep on using the same one over and over again. When the point gets blunt, they sharpen it on the side of a matchbox.

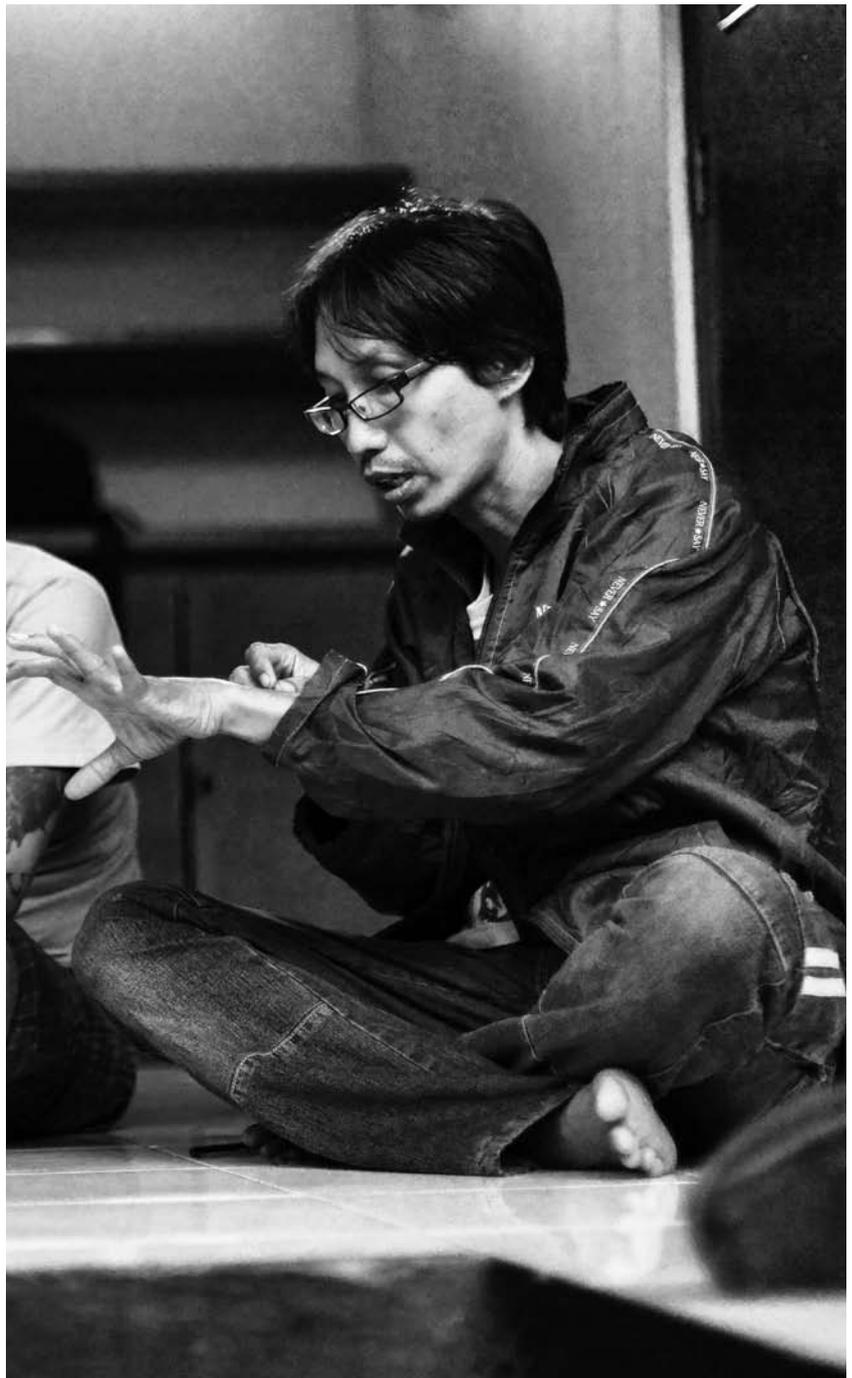
When I got out of prison, I was sick of drugs. I wanted to do something with my life. I wanted to grow as an artist. I wanted to help my community. I started doing some volunteer work with an NGO. I visited prisons to talk about HIV and AIDS as part of a harm reduction program. It was easy for me to talk to the guys in prison. Some of the guys I knew were still in there. We couldn't hand out clean syringes. We just told them about the risks of hitting up and how to avoid them.

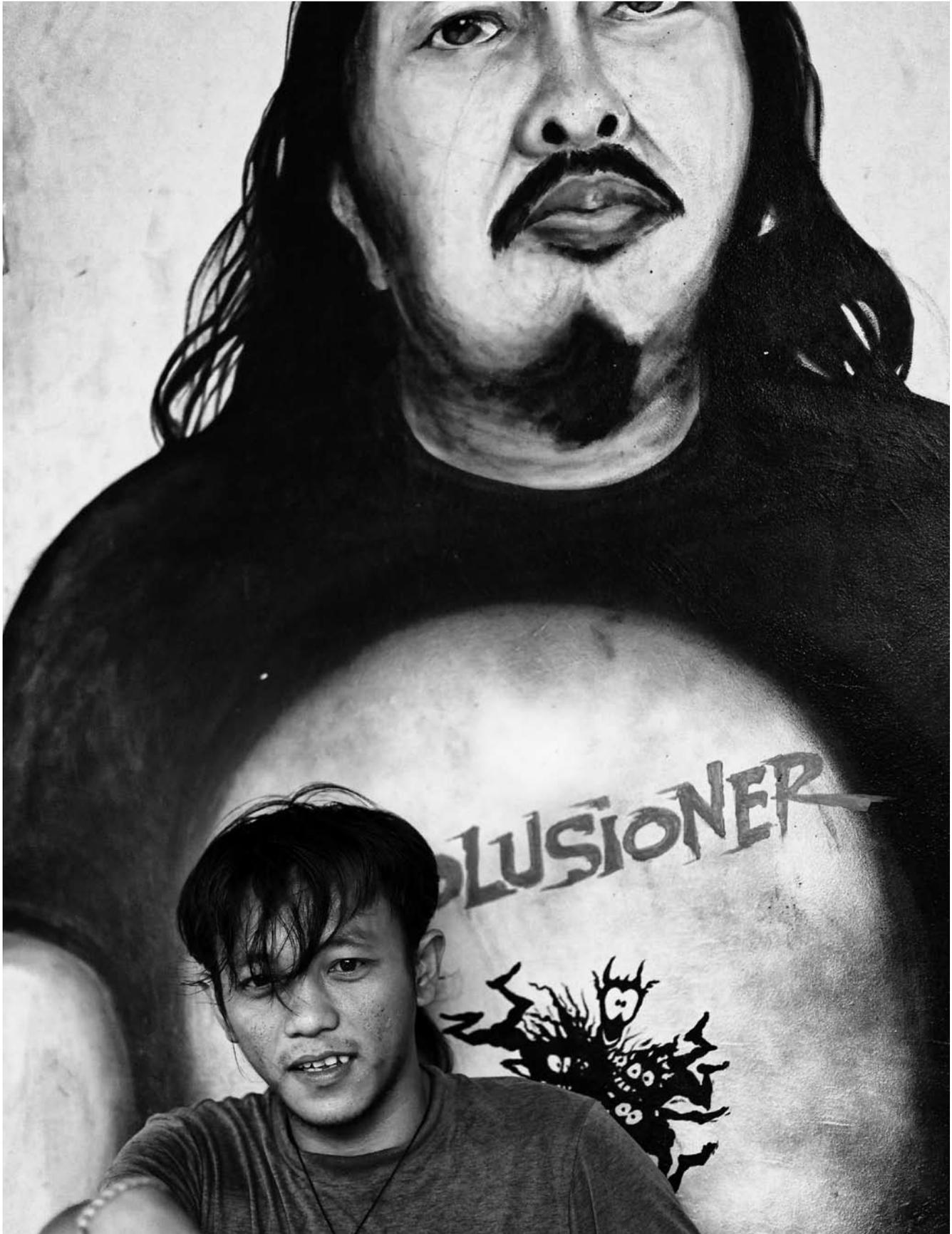
The community had begun to change, too. There weren't so many drugs around. The gang wars had stopped. And the community study center, Rumah Belajar, was running. The community study center changed the community. It gave kids something to do. I respect Pak Megi and the other people who are involved in it. They have helped a lot of people. Sometimes, though, they can be a bit overprotective. They are scared that some of the guys will be a bad influence on the younger kids. The young guys felt that they needed a place of their own. We needed somewhere to relax and play music.

At first, the clubhouse was just a patch of ground next to the railway where people hung out and played music. In 2007, we spoke to the Railroad Authority to see if they'd let us use the land to build a place where we play music. After that, we built this shed. About a year ago, General Electric donated some musical instruments and some recording equipment.

"I hand out needles as part of the exchange program sponsored by the local community health center. If someone asks or wants to know, I talk about rehab programs or the methadone program operated by the community health center."

There are a few bands now. The most successful is Cisleng. Their music is played on the radio. They play at events around Jakarta. All the guys are from around here. Most of them used to use drugs. I think one or two are still on methadone. They've cleaned up a lot. When the band first started, some people still used, but you can't succeed as a musician or an artist if you use drugs. In the end, you have to make a choice. The guys who were still using didn't turn up at rehearsals. They didn't stick with it.





Apay

“My biggest influence is Harry Roesli, may he rest in peace. He was a great musician and a brave activist. Back in the New Order period, only Bung Harry had the guts to talk straight about corruption and fascism.”

We’ve just been setting up the stage over in Taman Proklamasi. There were four bands on the stage today. We weren’t playing ourselves, we were just helping some of the younger bands. We’ve been jamming with them at the clubhouse, showing them how to use their instruments.

My band is Cisleng. That means “In your face.” That more or less sums us up. I’m the vocalist. I call our music “Nationalist Rock.” We play music to shake people up. We want them to think. We want to fire people up to care for their community. We want our community to stand up for itself. We want people to realize that they don’t have to be scared of the police or of rich, powerful men. We want them to know that this is their country and that they have a right to live here in the way they choose.

My biggest influence is Harry Roesli, may he rest in peace. He was a great musician and a brave activist. Back in the New Order period, only Bung Harry had the guts to talk straight about corruption and fascism. He opened his house to street kids from rough neighborhoods. He taught us all how to use music to channel our energies, to express our aspirations. I stayed at his place for three years after 1998. I was learning and teaching at the same time. I learned from the people who knew more than me and I helped the ones who didn’t know as much.

I don’t know if we’ll get a recording contract. We don’t play the kind of music that goes down well with the people who run the music industry. If you want to get a contract, you have to give them what they want. You have to sing love songs. Our songs are more to do with social issues. But you can’t just change the way you play to win a contract. Maybe our type of music will come back into fashion. We’ll keep on going the same way until it does.

Drugs? Yeah, well, drugs and music have always gone together. But if you really want to do well with music, you can’t take drugs all the time. I’ve used drugs a bit, but I never got in too deep. I always thought I had something that was more important to me than drugs. That was music. The band has been running for almost ten years now, and some members have come and gone. The ones who really get into drugs don’t last that long. You’ve got to work hard at it if you want to get anywhere with your music.

But we aren’t moralistic about it. Some of the guys who turn up here at the Clubhouse are still into drugs. We never turn them away. That isn’t going to help them. We know what it’s like for them. Everyone’s welcome to come here. If they are having trouble at home, then they can come here and talk about it.

Are we good examples for the kids? I don’t know! That depends on who you ask. But yeah, I suppose the younger guys look up to us. We don’t control them, though. They have to find their own path. All we can do is support them and help them to find a way for themselves. They have to do the hard work themselves.

Megi Budi

People were sick of the fights and violence. They were sick of the drugs and the gangs. Ten years ago, this place was an open drug market. Outsiders streamed in and out at any time of day or night looking for drugs. The drugs fueled the violence. Drugs were only a small part of the problem. Even the violence wasn't really the main problem; it was a sign that something was wrong. The real problem was unemployment. The kids often didn't go to school. There wasn't anything for them to do.

The transformation of the community began with an aerobics class. There were always big fights between the guys from Pegangsaan and the guys from Menteng Jaya. There were two women, Ibu Rosdiana and Ibu Ratih. Ibu Rosdiana was from Pegangsaan, Ibu Ratih was from Menteng Jaya. The guys from those districts fought practically every week, but Ibu Rosdiana and Ibu Ratih were friends. They both liked doing aerobics. They decided to set up a class together. They both invited other women from their neighborhoods, who met to do aerobics once a week. Even though their brothers and sons and boyfriends and husbands were throwing rocks at each other and killing each other, the women became friends. They called themselves the Peace Loving Citizens' Forum.

They held their aerobics class near Proklamasi. Dr. Imam Prasodjo lives nearby. He's a sociologist from the University of Indonesia. He's involved in community empowerment and conflict resolution. He talked to the women from the group and liked what they were doing. He donated a tape recorder and started to take an interest in the group. He said he was involved in conflict resolution in places like Aceh and Papua, so it would be interesting to see if he could do something about a conflict that was taking place a couple of hundred meters away from his house. He introduced the group to people and businesses who donated some sports equipment.

People began to work together. It didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of time. The Nurani Dunia organization helped a lot. If people came to them with some good ideas, they'd talk to them about how to make them happen. They helped us meet people who could help us.

I lobbied to set up a community study center. We call it Rumah Belajar, which means "Study House." Most of the problems in the neighborhood were because kids didn't have anything to do. Kids don't finish school. It's not that they don't want to, they just don't have the support they need. I wanted to set up place where students could get help with their homework and learn. Schools in Indonesia often aren't very good. The teachers just stand up and talk. They don't really help the kids learn. I wanted Rumah Belajar to be completely different from that. I wanted Rumah Belajar to be fun. I wanted kids to enjoy coming here. I wanted it to be open for everyone in the community, not just kids.

Dr. Imam and Nurani Dunia helped us to meet GE Consumer Finance. They promised us some money to rent a house in Jalan Bonang. They didn't give cash, but they provided us with computers, books, and other equipment. We began by offering math and religious-studies tutoring programs, as well as computer skills classes. When the classes went well, a lot of other businesses and companies started making donations, too. I like it best when they donate books or equipment rather than money. It's easier for people in the community to see what the donations are being used for. Some companies donate old computers or equipment they can't use. That doesn't cost them much. It's probably easier for them to donate that than cash. Some businesses have donated old magazines and books, paper, and art supplies.

"I wanted to set up a place where kids could get help with their homework. I wanted the study center to be fun. I wanted kids to enjoy coming here. I wanted it to be open for everyone in the community."



With the materials that we've been given, we've set up a library. Kids really like reading books if they can get hold of them. Kids even like old magazines with pictures and stories in them. They're naturally curious. We've also run art classes and music classes.

Some businesses have supported us by offering apprenticeships and jobs to kids from the Rumah Belajar. That's great. Kids often say that even if they finish school they won't be able to get a job. It's great if they see that there are opportunities for them. The Astra Group gave a few jobs to kids from the area. So did a few banks, and the Bakmi Gajah Mada restaurant. They've done well. It's also good when the companies see that kids from a district with a bad reputation are prepared to work hard. They see that they can be good employees, so they feel better about giving jobs to other kids later.

The whole community has gotten involved in Rumah Belajar. It's not just for the kids anymore. Housewives have started learning how to turn dried and pressed flowers and leaves into osibana products. They also got involved in growing herbs and medicinal plants on the vacant land next to the railway tracks. Some of the young guys have set up courses in motor mechanics. People here are beginning to realize that if they have a good idea, they can ask for some help and they can make it happen. People are coming up with more and more ideas. We've already shown that we can make it work, so organizations and businesses are prepared to make donations or provide equipment.



Rifky is a musician and a regular participant at harm reduction meetings. His brother in the photograph is doing time for drug offences.

It has changed the way the community works together, too. People here have gotten to know each other better. People work together better. When the women wanted to set up their gardens, they cleaned up the land around the railway first. They made their husbands come along to help. When a fire burned down a section of the district in 2008, everyone worked together to rebuild the houses, without being paid.

The drug problem has gotten a lot better, mostly because young people who used to use drugs have other activities to make use of their time. But it's also because the community is much more united. People here used to be scared of the drug dealers. Even though a lot of people hated what they were doing, nobody was brave enough to say anything. When people got used to working together, they were prepared to stand together against drugs. In the end, Dr. Imam contacted a friend of his, a senior policeman. They agreed to push the dealers out. They concentrated mostly on the dealers and the outsiders who were coming here to buy drugs. They didn't focus so much on the guys from around here who were using. These days, people in the community support the police against drugs. They report dealers who are operating here.



Megi Budi helping some young people in the community education center who are learning computer skills. These computers were donated by corporate sponsors.

Surabaya and Madura, East Java

WARIA: STANDING OUT, FITTING IN

In Indonesia, some biological males dress, act, and behave like women. They are known as *waria*, a term derived from a combination of the Indonesian words *wanita* (woman) and *pria* (man). Sometimes, during brief interactions, they may be mistaken for women. However, they are usually recognized as being *waria* rather than women. Often, they consider themselves to be part of a distinct group or even of a separate gender. They feel they are not quite men and not quite women: they are *waria*.

At best, the position of *waria* in Indonesian society is ambiguous. In some local traditions, *waria* play a prestigious role in society. One example is the Bissu priests, who originated as ritual specialists and advisors at the courts of the Bugis kingdoms of South Sulawesi. These priests adopt a number of feminine manners and styles and consider themselves to be neither men nor women.

However, when most Indonesians see or notice *waria*, they regard them as flamboyant low-rent sex workers soliciting from the sides of the street, or as lowbrow comedians and entertainers.

In East Java, *ludruk* is a coarse, improvised, traditional music-hall style genre. It is popular mainly with poorer, working class Indonesians. Until recently, *waria* were employed almost exclusively to play the female parts in this theater form. Irama Budaya is one of the few remaining *ludruk* theater groups with a permanent base in the city of Surabaya. It is also one of the few groups that continue to use *waria* to play female roles.

When *ludruk* is performed elsewhere, it has been made respectable by eliminating the *waria*. When it is performed by government-owned radio stations, the female roles are now almost always played by women, not *waria*. These female actors are often graduates from dance academies. In these performances, the crude sexual innuendos of more traditional *ludruk* performances are removed, and the biting social commentary is toned down.

Irama Budaya is part of a fading tradition. It operates from a small, grubby theater near Surabaya's main bus station and next to a filthy, polluted river. In the cigarette smoke-filled hall, thickly made-up performers wearing padded bras flirt brazenly with the mostly male audience. Many of the *waria* who perform

***Waria* are biologically male but dress, act, and behave like women. They form a group of their own, with their own highly visible subculture. *Waria* who own beauty salons and other small businesses act as patrons, mentors, and protectors to younger *waria* trying to find a place in the community.**



Waria performers preparing for a show at the Irama Budaya Theater. Many *waria* are employed at beauty salons, both in the country and the city.



here have sex with favored patrons, often in exchange for cash. As marginal, low-status entertainers who engage in sex work, the *waria* of Irama Budaya are what most Indonesians imagine all *waria* to be.

However, many *waria* live respectable lives. Some, such as Sofa (see profile), manage to overcome the negative stereotypes to achieve acceptance, even prominence, in the community in which they live. As a certified primary school teacher, Sofa occupies a highly respected position in a conservative Madurese community. As the owner of a successful beauty salon, she is also a highly respected figure in the small community of *waria* in the surrounding area.

In large cities, *waria* often operate formal peer support groups, information and counseling services, and vocational training programs for members of that subculture. One example of such a group is Surabaya's *waria* organization, Perwakos, which is headed by Irma Soebechi. Such organizations are rarely found outside large cities or towns.

Waria often work in the beauty industry. Even in relatively remote rural areas, many hair and beauty salons and bridal costume rental services are owned and operated by *waria*. In these rural areas, hair salons and beauty parlors operated by successful and established *waria* perform many of the roles of the formal support organizations in larger cities.

Waria are a marginalized group with a distinct identity. They have a cohesive subculture with strong social links between members. Through the small businesses owned and operated by successful and established *waria*, these *waria* become patrons, mentors, and protectors to other members of their subculture. Through this social network, young, insecure *waria* from the villages can find a path to acceptance and prosperity.





Mbak Sofa

I always knew I wasn't a boy, even in my earliest years at primary school. I always played with girls and girls' toys. While my brothers liked flying kites and playing football, I preferred playing with dolls. I always liked dressing up. So I don't think anyone in my family was shocked that I became a *waria*. It wasn't something that happened suddenly. I was always a *waria*.

I don't think I've ever really experienced much discrimination. People always say that Madurese society is extremely conservative and fanatically Islamic. In some ways, that's true. It's true that the Islamic religious schools and communities, and the teachers and preachers are very powerful here. But at the same time, the community is very tolerant. If you don't interfere with other people, they don't interfere with you. People here don't judge you badly just because you are a *waria*. They judge you by how you behave and what you achieve. If a *waria* behaves properly, then nobody minds the fact that she dresses up in women's clothes and puts on makeup. If a *waria* does sex work on the streets, of course people are going to judge her negatively. But that's not because she's a *waria*, it's because she's selling sex.

I'm a teacher at the local primary school. I've completed the full primary teacher certification process. I'm a permanent member of the civil service corps. Out of 300 primary school teachers in this subdistrict, only twenty have completed the full certification process. It's quite an achievement. Completing the certification process is not just a matter of passing exams. You need a testimonial from the school principal and the school board. The school board includes community representatives. I couldn't have done it if the community didn't support me. Everybody knows I'm a *waria*. Nobody holds that against me.

When I teach at school, I wear a male teacher's uniform. The children call me "Pak" (Sir). I don't mind wearing a man's uniform. That's the regulation. I'm prepared to accept that. I don't go looking for confrontations. I don't feel I have to prove a point by wearing a woman's dress or makeup. But this is a small community. Everyone here knows that I'm a *waria*. They've all seen me in woman's clothes wearing makeup. No one at school ever makes any negative comments about that. At the most, some of the other teachers laugh and joke about a dress they saw me wearing. They tease me about how pretty I look. I don't care. I take it as a compliment.

There aren't any other schoolteachers in the district who are publicly known as *waria*. But even so, there are a lot of very effeminate men who are teachers. It's not like being a policeman or a soldier. The kind of person who becomes a teacher is a softer, more caring sort of person. Those are feminine characteristics. The people around me are not judgmental.

I also run a hair and beauty salon in the village. I set it up twelve years ago. It's doing quite well now. We also offer makeup and bridal costume rental services for wedding ceremonies. That's very profitable. I've got two full-time staff. They are both *waria*. But all the young *waria* in the district hang out here. There is usually a group hanging out here until late at night. Some of them spend the night here if they need a place to sleep.

Some of the *waria* in the village are very young, only fourteen or fifteen. Some of them have never left the village. They don't have access to any of the *waria* support groups in the city. They come here to talk to older *waria*. We are like older sisters to them. We can set a good example for them. They see that it's possible for a *waria* to be successful and get a good job. Often the young ones help out around the salon, tidying up and such. If they are talented, they can learn how to do haircuts. They can learn skills to earn a living later on.

"I don't think I've ever really experienced much discrimination. People here don't judge you badly just because you are a *waria*. They judge you by how you behave and what you achieve."

Mbak Sofa dresses as a man when she teaches at the local primary school.



I've been involved in providing outreach and counseling services for Perwakos, the *waria* advocacy organization in Surabaya. I have pamphlets and condoms at the salon. If I know that young *waria* are having sex, I tell them to use condoms. I warn them about HIV and AIDS. Some people might be shocked at the idea of fourteen- or fifteen-year-old boys having sex. I reckon that if they have sex, then they should do it safely. You can't just pretend that it doesn't happen.

It is true that a lot of *waria* hang out on the streets, looking for sex. Sometimes they do it for money. But it's not always about money. *Waria* go to their beats on the streets to hang out with other *waria*. It's where they go to show off and have fun. Part of the fun is looking as sexy and gorgeous as you can. It's part of the process of coming out as a *waria*. Of course, *waria* can't hit on men in public like that in the village. In the city, there are areas where it's acceptable. In Surabaya, the city has several tolerance zones, such as the beat on Jalan Irian Barat. In those places, *waria* aren't usually bothered by the police or the security officials.

There are other places for *waria* to socialize and act out in public. The Miss Waria beauty pageant is a socially acceptable way for *waria* to dress up and express themselves. The pageant changes the way people look at us. It changes the way we see ourselves. We want to put on a spectacle that proves that *waria* aren't low class. I was on the selection committee for the East Java pageant. I took some of the young *waria* from my salon to see the event. It's good for them to see high-achieving *waria*.

Opposite page

Mbak Sofa is dressed in full drag, which she wears on special occasions or when going out.

Below

Sofa is a certified and respected primary school teacher. She teaches at a school in Bangkalan, Madura.





Reza

I always liked to play with girls, even when I was at primary school. But it wasn't until I was in junior high school that I realized that I was different. When I was thirteen, one of the older boys at school took me into the toilets. He told me that I wasn't a boy. He said I was beautiful and soft as a girl. Then he kissed me and touched me. I became his girlfriend. He looked after me and protected me. He made sure that the boys at school treated me with respect.

I let my hair grow long. I shaved my eyebrows. I started wearing makeup. My family was shocked. They didn't understand what I was going through. My mother wouldn't speak to me. Neither would my brothers and sisters. My father hit me and shouted at me. He told me to act like a normal boy. I told him I couldn't. I said it's not that I want to be like this. It's who I am. I don't have any choice.

My father and my brother kept on beating me and shouting at me. Living at home was impossible. I couldn't keep going to school. I dropped out before I finished junior high school. My parents sent me to an Islamic boarding school, a *pesantren*. They thought that religious education would make me normal. It didn't work. The boys at the *pesantren* saw what I was. They treated me like a girl.

My family refused to accept who I was. I remember once I was with my mother at the market. We saw an ugly old *waria* with big, pumped-up tits. She was begging and demanding money. My mother told me that that's how I was going to end up. She thought all *waria* were hookers or beggars.

I ran away from home. I made friends with Agung. I started hanging out at his beauty salon. He looked after me. I used to help out around the salon. I learned how to apply makeup for weddings and how to cut hair. I started taking jobs at weddings. I started earning good money.

My family was shocked to see how much money I was making. It changed the way they thought about me. I moved back home. I don't have my own salon yet, but I go out to wedding ceremonies and parties. I'm making more money now than my brother does. I'm helping to send my little sister to school. I'm proud to help out the family. They show me some respect now.

“My father hit me and shouted at me. He told me to act like a normal boy. I told him I couldn't. I said it's not that I want to be like this. It's who I am. I don't have any choice.”



Opposite page

Reza is sitting outside Agung's Salon, operated by another *waria*, a friend and mentor who trained her in haircutting and other skills.



Susanto

I was always a woman in my heart, but I didn't dress up as a girl until I started to perform in *ludruk*. That was in 1997. I was 55 years old. Before that, I always dressed like a man. I was slim and pretty, but I dressed in men's clothes. When I was a young man, you couldn't dress in girls' clothes in public. You wouldn't have gotten away with it.

When I was a young boy, I lived in a *pesantren*. Of course there weren't any girls there. I was the most popular boy in the dorm. Sometimes I used to have sex with four different boys in one night. When one boy was finished, I'd go to the next one.

I've been married six times now. I'm not a good Muslim, but I am still a Muslim. As a man, I'm meant to get married and have children. I never did have any children. None of my marriages lasted very long. I wasn't comfortable being a husband.

I'm 67 years old. Men still want to have sex with me. They give me money. I don't go out onto the streets looking for men anymore. Usually, men from the audience come looking for me backstage. They see us on stage with our makeup on. I still look good when I'm dressed up.

"I'm old and bald now. I used to be beautiful. When I was young, real men wanted me, young women wanted me, older married women wanted me, and gay men wanted me."

The Irama Budaya Theater is located in a decrepit building next to a heavily polluted river near Surabaya's major bus station.





Like the other *waria* performers, Susanto lives in the theater in cramped quarters under the stage. "Male" performers usually live elsewhere, with their families.

I've got a young boyfriend. He's seventeen years old. He's a handsome guy, big and strong. With me, he likes to be the girl. I take the active role. With him, there's no money involved. I have sex with him because I like him. *Waria* don't always play a passive role. Even some of the older men who come to me behind the stage want me to take the active role.

I still know how to make men want me. I use some tricks. In the 1970s, I visited a *dukun* [traditional healer] in Banyuwangi. He put gold needles under my skin on my shoulders, elbows, and hips. He put three tiny diamonds under the skin on my face. The needles and the diamonds make men want me. A *dukun* also puts a spell on my makeup. I don't let anyone else use my makeup. I've never had any surgery done. On stage, I wear a padded bra. That's enough. Being a *waria* is something that comes from within. If you have a woman's soul, then you'll look like a beautiful woman when you appear on stage. It doesn't matter what you look like in real life.

Ani

I've been performing since I was fourteen years old. I've always earned my own living. For a few years, I worked as a *dangdut* singer. Then I joined a *ludruk* troupe. Back in the 1970s and '80s, all the women's roles were played by *waria*. Men played the men's roles and *waria* played the women's roles. Now, real women usually play the women's roles. On television and radio, women always play women's roles. They never use *waria*.

Irama Budaya is the only group that still has *waria* performers. There aren't any women actors in the group. There are sixteen *waria* and ten real men. The show only goes on if enough people turn up. We usually perform on Saturday nights. On a Saturday night, a couple of hundred people turn up. The other nights are very irregular. Each ticket costs Rp 5,000. Actors get paid Rp 10,000 each time they perform. And we get one meal a day. We all need to do something on the side to make some extra money.

I'm the prima donna of the group. I'm the most popular. On Saturday nights, I always have at least three regular admirers who want to see me. I don't let them spend the night. I just spend an hour or two with each one. They all give

"I'm the prima donna of the group. I'm the most popular. On Saturday nights, I always have at least three regular admirers who want to see me. I don't let them spend the night. I just spend an hour or two with each one."





Ani is applying makeup before a show. As the prima donna of the group, she has the best dressing-room.

me money. I often get called to do performances at weddings and circumcisions. I charge at least Rp 150,000 for that. This month, I've gone to six weddings. With the extra income, I make enough to survive.

I live in the theater. The *waria* in the troupe live under the stage. It's hot and cramped, but it's somewhere to sleep. The men in the group are mostly married. They live at home with their wives and kids. Only the *waria* sleep under the stage. My regular boyfriend performs here. He's married. I don't take money from him. Sometimes I give him money. It's hard for him with a wife and children. His wife isn't jealous. We get on well. She knows that I'm helping her family.

I'm 49 years old now. I sometimes wish I'd done things differently. I wish I'd stayed at school. I wish I'd become a civil servant. I'd be eligible for a pension by now. I sometimes wonder why God didn't make me a real man or a real woman instead of a *waria*. When I get older, I'd like to set up some kind of business. Perhaps I could set up a tailor's shop. But when you're an artist, it's very hard to give it up. You can't make much money, but you have a home. The *waria* at the theater are my family. I don't think I'll ever be able to leave them.

Irma Soebachi

There's still a lot of prejudice and discrimination against *waria*. It is true that it's easy for a *waria* to find work in certain fields. The beauty industry is certainly one of them.

Back in 1983, I received a high school diploma in primary education. Back then, that was enough to work as a primary school teacher. I started teaching as a temporary teacher. I enjoyed teaching and got on well with my students, but I had a lot of trouble with the school establishment, particularly the headmaster. I didn't wear a dress, but I wore my hair long. I wore brightly colored, feminine clothing. When I came up for consideration for appointment as a civil servant, the headmaster took me aside. He said that he'd had some complaints from the parents. He said that the parents were worried that I might influence their children. He said if I wanted to be appointed, I'd have to change the way I dressed and cut my hair. He wanted me to get a crewcut, like a soldier! I don't know why he singled me out like that. Why should I be the only teacher at school who had to have a crewcut? He didn't tell the other male teachers how to wear their hair. So I decided that being a teacher wasn't for me.

In 1990, I started working at Perwakos, Surabaya's *waria* organization. At first I was a volunteer. Later, I got a salary. At the moment, we are concentrating on prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. We used to run a skills development program for *waria* so that they could earn a living. We ran programs to teach them salon and beauty skills, cooking and sewing. It's always been acceptable for a *waria* to work in a beauty salon, so programs to teach *waria* skills in that area were quite successful. I still think it's very important to teach *waria* skills that make them employable and allow them to earn a living. It's a way of helping them to raise their status in society. It's a way for them to be accepted. At the moment, it's hard to get funding for anything except HIV and AIDS programs. I think that's a shame. Actually, the two issues are related to each other. If *waria* have skills that make them employable and respectable, they are less likely to sell sex. That also reduces their risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. You can't separate the two issues.

"If *waria* have skills that make them employable and respectable, they are less likely to sell sex. That also reduces their risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. You can't separate the two issues."





Singkawang, West Kalimantan

SEX WORKERS: TO MAKE MONEY

Singkawang is a small city in West Kalimantan. With its vast forests and coconut and oil plantations, sparsely populated West Kalimantan has always attracted migrants looking for work. In addition to the indigenous Dayak population, many Madurese, Bugis, and Javanese live in the area. In the past, coolies were brought in from China to labor in the plantations. Their descendants continue to live throughout the region, working as farmers, traders, and laborers. In Singkawang, this group comprises the largest single ethnic group, making up a total of 45% of the population.

Singkawang has a large sex industry. Many women work in small coffee shops, or *warung kopi*. Men come to the coffee shops and pay inflated prices for coffee and beer. While they drink, the women keep them company. Many of the women are available for paid sex at nearby short-time hotels. In addition, there are brothels in the city and nearby villages. Some prostitutes work from the streets and markets. Still others can be contacted by mobile telephone, either directly or through pimps. The women come from across the region and beyond, particularly from certain specific regions and districts in Java.

With the large sex industry, Singkawang has become notorious as a center for the trafficking of women. There have been a number of media reports on the export of Chinese-descended women as mail-order brides for marriages in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Apparently, men from these countries pay large fees for introductions to women from Singkawang. The reports claim that the exported brides are often badly treated in their new countries.

Many women from the region work abroad as contract workers, usually as domestic servants. Mostly they work in the Middle East, Singapore, and Malaysia. Some travel with work permits organized by agents. Many work illegally, particularly in Malaysia, which shares a land border with Kalimantan. Many succeed in making good money in countries where salaries are much higher than in Indonesia. However, with little legal or other protection, these women are vulnerable to many kinds of abuse. Women working overseas have been raped, tortured, and beaten. There have also been claims that women contract workers are forced to work in the sex industry, often with little pay.

It is probably true that some Indonesian women are forced to work in the sex industry, both in Singkawang, elsewhere across Indonesia, and abroad. However, it is far too easy to conflate the term "trafficking" and "sex work," as though they are one and the same thing. People often have strong moral views about sex work. If those who hate the very idea of prostitution don't resort to the belief that the women who do it are morally depraved, they may prefer to see them as innocent victims. One way to see them as innocent victims is to believe that they have been forced into sex work against their will. Thus, the media and anti-prostitution activists often pay disproportionate attention to cases where women claim to have been forced into sex work against their will.

None of the women working in the brothels in Singkawang who were interviewed for this book say they are working under compulsion. This is not to say that they enjoy their work or that they are happy with their current circumstances. Almost all talked about the dangers of disease and the difficulty of dealing with troublesome customers. Some lied to family and friends and worked far away from home because of the stigma of being known as a prostitute in their home town. Many came to sex work after terrible abuse as children, mostly from family members. Others had gone through bad marriages followed by divorce or widowhood. Almost all had children whom they were supporting without the help of partners. Almost all the women said they wanted to leave their brothel to find other work. Most wanted to get married and run their own businesses, usually as traders or stall-holders. Despite their dissatisfaction and distaste for their work, however, they all work voluntarily in the sex industry.

Women work in the sex industry for one, simple reason: to make money. With the nearly complete absence of social welfare programs in Indonesia, sex work can be a means for divorced and single women to cope with poverty, unemployment, and family obligations.

The women in these profiles worked in the sex industry for one simple reason: to make money. With the nearly complete absence of social welfare programs, most of them regard sex work as a means of coping with poverty, unemployment, failed marriages, and family obligations. In the brothels on Jalan Happy in Singkawang, women get paid Rp 40,000, or about four dollars, for fifteen minutes of sex in a back room. To those living on the average wage in a developed country, this sounds appalling. Indeed, in absolute terms, it is not much – just a bit more than a bottle of beer at the *warung kopi* where they work. However, it is more than twice the minimum daily wage in the region. Put simply, sex work is usually better paid than any other option available to young, uneducated women.

According to a report published by the International Labor Organization, between 140,000 and 230,000 women in Indonesia work in the sex industry. The sex industry accounts for between 0.8% to 2.4% of Gross Domestic Product.

Selling sex is not technically a criminal act, although soliciting, pimping, and procuring are illegal. Brothels such as those in Jalan Happy in Singkawang are often regulated by regional authorities. Often, brothels are tolerated on the grounds that their purpose is to facilitate the rehabilitation of sex workers through compulsory education, skills training, and psychological and social counseling.

A disproportionately large number of sex workers come from certain specific locations. These include certain villages in Indramayu, West Java, and Wonogiri, Central Java. As the anthropologist Hanna Papanek states, the strong degree of regional specialization in certain easy-entry occupations such as prostitution can be explained in terms of “the preference given by those already employed or in a position to give jobs to relatives, friends, and others from the same group; the information provided to newcomers by established acquaintances; and the greater ease of allocating work or territories in a group with a common background.”

A brothel district... Five to ten women work in each house with almost all of these women being divorcées or single mothers.



U'un

I work in one of the brothels in Jalan Happy. There are six or eight women in my brothel. We sit with the men and keep them company while they drink. If they want, they can take us to a room at the back. They pay Rp 35,000 for a bottle of beer. The boss makes Rp 17,000 per bottle. We don't get a cut from that. We only get paid if a man takes us into one of the rooms. It doesn't usually take long, maybe ten or fifteen minutes. The men pay us Rp 50,000. Out of that, we have to give the boss Rp 10,000. If we spend too long in the room with the guy, then we have to pay double for the room. The boss makes more money from selling the beer than from the girls. The girls are just there to get the men to drink. The boss gets bad-tempered if the men don't drink beer.

I started working here after I got divorced. I was married when I was fifteen. I stayed with my husband for seven years. When I was with him, I worked as a cook in Jakarta. I asked my husband for a divorce because he wouldn't work. He was a cripple. He had polio when he was young, so his legs were shriveled. Even so, he could have worked if he'd wanted to. He could have looked after a stall. Instead, he just felt sorry for himself. He wanted me to look after him and do all the work.

I knew what kind of work I was going to be doing before I came here. I came with a friend from my village in West Java. She'd worked here before. She was coming back and invited me to come with her. A lot of girls from my village do this type of work. All the girls in my brothel come from my village. My family knows what I do. They didn't force me to come. Sometimes they call me and ask me to send them money. They're happy that I work far from home in Kalimantan. None of the girls from my village does sex work in West Java. It would be embarrassing if people we knew saw us. But I meet a lot of other women doing the same work when I go home for Idul Fitri holidays.

Sometimes the men are spoiled and difficult. If they feel that you aren't giving them good service, they don't want to pay. Last night, we had some trouble. A bunch of drunk guys turned up. They were being difficult. One of them took a girl into a room, but he couldn't come. After fifteen minutes, the girl told him that his time was up. He got angry and started calling her names. He said he wasn't going to pay. She told him he had to pay. She said it wasn't her fault that he couldn't come. The boss's husband had to step in. He's a Bugis from Singkawang. He made the guy pay up. It was lucky the boss was there. If a guy walks out without paying for his drinks, the girl he was sitting with is responsible.

The young men are more difficult than the older ones. The young guys often come in groups. They just hang out without spending much. They want to sit next to you and touch you. They don't want to pay to take you into a room. The older men are usually more to the point. They just choose a girl and then take her into the room. There's nothing worse than guys who waste your time. If a guy is sitting with you, no one else is going to come near you. You can't waste time with someone who isn't going to go into a room.

Most of the guys wear condoms. We make them wear condoms. We have a policy of "no condom, no sex." The health agency provides free condoms to the women in the brothel. They're Family Planning brand. They aren't good quality and burst easily. If you want to be really safe, you put on two. Sometimes the men complain that they can't feel anything if they wear a condom. I tell them if they get AIDS, they'll suffer for years just because they think it feels better without a condom. Sometimes they moan about it, but we don't service men who don't wear condoms. I'm always glad if right at the start, a guy says "Hey, sister, have you got a condom?"

"Most of the guys wear condoms. We make them wear condoms. We have a policy of 'no condom, no sex'."



I know about HIV and AIDS, that it's spread through exchange of bodily fluids like sperm and blood. I know that it can be spread through unprotected sex or by sharing needles or by blood transfusions. I know that you can reduce spreading it by wearing condoms. I know that anal sex is very risky. The most dangerous activity is sharing needles.

I did a five-day training course at the Hotel Mitra Tanjung about HIV and AIDS. There were fifteen people in the class: five sex workers, five *waria*, and five injecting drug users. Before the course I'd heard of AIDS, but I didn't really know anything about it. I didn't know how it was spread. I'd see some posters up on the wall that had warnings about it, but I didn't really understand. In the course, the instructors told us about the risk. They showed us how to put condoms on properly. They asked us about how we dealt with difficult customers, and we talked about it together.

The course trained the participants to be outreach workers. After the course was finished, each of us had to promise to bring friends to the health center for testing and counseling. We were each given a target. I have to bring in nine friends every month for testing and counseling. If I don't bring in nine people one month, then I have to bring an extra one the next month. I get paid Rp 300,000 per month, plus money for transport. I arrange a time for a group of girls to come to the clinic together. I rent a van to take them all in. The transport money that the clinic gives me is enough to cover the cost of the van. Some of the women would be too nervous to go to the clinic by themselves for the first time. They don't know where it is or how to get there.

The clinic is pushing me to start working as a counselor. That's a more responsible position than being an outreach worker. A lay counselor gets Rp 500,000 per month. I'm a bit nervous about it. Being a counselor means I have to talk to women who are HIV-positive. I have to talk to them about taking their medicine and give them advice. I think a woman who was HIV-positive herself would serve better as a counselor, because she'd know about the medicine and everything else. I know a bit, but not as much as someone who has experienced it herself.

Some of my friends did the same course, but they didn't keep up their commitment to bringing in other sex workers. They dropped out and stopped participating. Mostly, they stopped coming because they said that the women they knew either didn't want to come or that they had already come in by themselves. But if a girl sticks to it for a few months, she gets more confident. She gets better at talking to her friends. The ones who stick with it for a few months usually continue as outreach workers.

It's easier for me to meet the women and talk to them than for an outsider. Most of the women I bring in come from the brothels on Jalan Happy. I don't know the women who work on the streets so well. But if you got someone who worked on the streets to be an outreach worker, they would know the other girls there. Sex workers aren't hard to find.

Ninot

“I don’t care if people call me a whore. I don’t care if other women hate me for taking their husbands’ money. I’m only afraid that my daughters will find out what I do and be ashamed of me.”

I make more money working in a brothel than I can doing any other work. That’s why I do it. I do it to make money to look after my children. When my husband died, I thought about other types of work as well. I thought I could take in laundry. I could charge Rp 300,000 to do the laundry for one household. If I did the laundry for three households, that would add up to Rp 900,000 per month. That’s not such a bad income. But it’s not as much as I make as sex worker.

I don’t know exactly how much I make each month. Some months it’s more than others. It’s quiet this month, because it’s Ramadan. The police make the brothels shut down at midnight. In a normal month, we can stay open until dawn. But I still have regular clients. I managed to send Rp 750,000 to pay for my youngest girl’s kindergarten fees a couple of weeks ago, and I made a Rp 600,000 payment on my motorbike. I sent back another few hundred thousand rupiah to my mother for the household expenses. I’ve still got enough money to go home at Idul Fitri and take presents for my children. I send money for my daughters at least once a week.

I don’t chase any client who walks into the brothel the way some of the women do. If I don’t like the look of a guy, I don’t serve him. I pick a customer that I think is a nice guy, and generous. I treat him properly so that he comes back. Some girls are sweet to a guy while they’re talking to him outside. Then, as soon as he takes her into one of the rooms, she tells him to get it over with as quickly as possible. Some girls won’t even take their bras off. They just tell the guy, “That’s not the part you’re looking for. The part you want to use is lower down.” But if a man wants to take my bra off and touch my tits, I don’t charge him extra. I just tell him that if he’s good to me, I’ll be good to him. If a guy wants, I sit and talk to him afterwards. I leave it up to them how big a tip they leave.



I make more money by picking my clients carefully than by serving anyone who walks in. A couple of weeks ago, I needed money to make my motorbike payment. I called up one of my regulars. I told him I missed him. He came and gave me the money. Sometimes that guy comes by and gives me money without having sex. He just sits and talks. Last night, I had a new customer, a Chinese man. He was a good man, too. He only gave me Rp 50,000 last night. He said straight out that that was all he had, but he'd give me more next time if I was nice to him. Then he sat and talked with me. He asked me if I drank alcohol. I told him the truth, that I don't like alcohol. Then I lit a cigarette. He took it from me and put it out. He told me that nice women don't smoke. So I promised him I wouldn't smoke anymore. I'll just smoke when he isn't there. I'll put the cigarettes under the mattress when he comes. I asked him to bring me some gold earrings next time he came. He promised he would.

My mother doesn't know what I do. Neither do my daughters. No one in my town knows that I'm a sex worker except one or two friends whom I really trust. I tell everyone I work in a coffee stall. I'm not worried about what other people think about me. I don't care who knows what I do. I don't care if people call me a whore or whatever. I don't care if other women hate me for taking their husband's money. I'm only afraid that my daughters will find out what I do and be ashamed of me.

My older daughter is really clever. When my husband was still alive, she always came in first or second in her class. He was really strict about education. He was really good about sitting down with our daughters and helping them with their homework. Since my husband died, my oldest daughter hasn't been doing quite so well. My mother looks after her, but she doesn't check to see that she's doing her homework. Even so, my daughter is always in the top half of her class.

Ever since my daughter was young, she said she wanted to be a doctor when she grew up. It breaks my heart when she says that. I don't know if I'll be able to afford even to send her to high school, let alone medical school. I really, really hope so. I told her the last time I saw her that I didn't like leaving her with her grandmother, but I needed to go away to work. I told her that I was working so that she could go to school. I told her that I'd work hard to look after her now, but she had to promise to look after me when I'm old and can't work anymore. She just looked at me and nodded her head.

Sometimes I'm afraid she'll realize what I'm doing when she gets older. She notices what's going on around her. I had my nose pierced before I went home. I had a gold stud put in. When my daughter saw me, she looked at my nose stud and touched it. She told me that good women don't wear rings in their nose, they only wear them in their ears. She said that I was a good mom. She said she didn't like my nose stud because it might make people think I'm a bad woman.

If one day she finds out what I did to send her to school, I hope she isn't ashamed of me. I hope she understands why I did this kind of work. I don't care what anyone thinks about me except my daughters.

Ana

“I’ve been working in Jalan Happy for almost ten years. I’d like to do something else. I’d like to set up my own business.”

I got pregnant when I was fifteen. My sister was heavily in debt to a Chinese man. She gave me to him to pay off her debt. That was how I lost my virginity. My sister let him use me for a week. I stayed in a hotel room with him for a week. That was how I got pregnant. After that, I started working in a brothel.

I haven’t seen the child since he was born. I gave him away to a married couple who didn’t have children. I know where my child lives, but his new parents don’t want me to come anywhere near. They don’t want the child to know about me.

I’ve been working in Jalan Happy for almost ten years. I’d like to do something else. I’d like to set up my own business. I don’t have any savings. I did save up to buy some land. It wasn’t much, just five *are*. I sold it to pay for the funeral when my father died.

I don’t know how I’m going to get the money to set up a business. Perhaps I’ll meet a rich man and he’ll marry me. Perhaps he’ll give me money to set up a business of my own.



Sri

It's Ramadan at the moment, so business is quiet. I had one customer last night. The night before that I had two. In a normal month, I usually get three or four, or maybe more on a Saturday night. After I've paid the brothel Rp 10,000 for the room, I get to keep Rp 40,000 for each client I service. We don't have to pay for the room we sleep in, but we have to buy our own food.

All the clients use condoms. We make them wear condoms. Sometimes they don't like it. They get offended. They think we're being snotty. The other night, a man got angry. He said he wasn't sick, so why was I trying to make him wear a condom. He said I was the one who was having sex with hundreds of men every night, so I was the one who was likely to be sick, not him.

I knew what kind of work I was going to be doing when I got here. I talked about it with a friend of mine. I'm from Tegal, Central Java. She's from a village near Indramayu. She introduced me to the boss here. All the other girls are from the same village. Before I came to Kalimantan, I worked in Jakarta, making clothes. I got paid according to how much I produced. If I worked fast, I could do quite well. I could make one or two million rupes a month. I think that's more than I make now. I'd rather do that kind of work than sex work. The factory I worked in closed, and I couldn't find another job.

I'm sick of working in Jalan Happy. I don't make that much money. Sometimes I only get one guest in an evening. Sometimes a few days go by without a client. I'd like to set up some kind of business. I'd like to set up a business selling cakes. I've already done a skills training course. It was good, but the government only offers three types of courses. You can study sewing, cooking, or hairdressing. I'd like to learn business skills. I'd like to learn how to keep books and records of expenditures. I'd also be more interested in doing one of the Education Department's "Packet B" home-study programs to get a junior high school equivalency certificate. I'd like to do a course like that in a class with other sex workers, so we could support and help each other.

Most of all, to run a business I'd need some capital. I don't have any savings. I don't have a bank account. I've heard of credit cooperatives and savings groups, but I don't think they would work here. It would be hard to get a group of women who could trust each other. You'd need to have someone you could trust to look after the money. When we tried to set up an *arisan*, a revolving savings scheme, in Jalan Happy, it didn't work well. It fell apart because after women received the funds from the group, they didn't keep contributing.

"I don't make that much money. Sometimes I only get one guest in an evening. Sometimes a few days go by without a client. I'd like to set up a business selling cakes."



Nur Hayati

I am really sick of this line of work. It's boring. It's dangerous. I don't make enough money doing it. The guys are supposed to pay Rp 50,000. A lot of times, they try to bargain. They offer Rp 30,000 or Rp 40,000. They don't like to wear condoms. I try to make them, but sometimes they refuse. Sometimes, instead of getting the men to wear condoms, I just take antibiotics to stop myself getting sick. I know that antibiotics don't prevent infection from AIDS. But they work for the other infectious diseases. If you take antibiotics regularly, you don't get sick.

I first came to Jalan Happy in 2001. I ran away from my husband. I told him I was going to get a job in Malaysia as a domestic worker. Instead, I came to Jalan Happy and started working here. My husband found out almost straight away. He tracked me down in my brothel. He said that a *dukun* told him that I was working as a sex worker here.

My husband was a bastard. He used to hit me. He liked hurting women. In front of other people he was sweet and polite, but he had a demon inside him. When he found me in Jalan Happy, he tied me to a tree and gagged me. He whipped me and threatened to stick a piece of wood up my vagina. He burned my thighs with cigarettes. He didn't make me leave the brothel. He came around every night at closing time and took the money I'd made that day. He kept on beating me and hurting me.

In the end, it got so bad that a policeman at the guard post in the market near Jalan Happy came to talk to me. He said I should report my husband to the police. In 2002, my husband was arrested. He was taken to court and sentenced to four months in prison. He was evil. I never want to see him again.

I've done various vocational skills programs while I've been working at Jalan Happy. I did a hair-styling and beauty skills course in 2004. I did a cake-making course in 2005. I don't have any natural talent with hair-styling. I was better at making cakes. In 2006, I left Jalan Happy to try to set up a business selling cakes in my home town. I started with a capital of several hundred thousand rupiah. I just saved the money and kept it in my cupboard. I didn't have a savings account.

The business failed. There weren't enough customers. Maybe I shouldn't have tried to do business in my home town. It's too small. Maybe I should try again in Pontianak. Maybe I would do better in a big town. When I save up the money, I'll try and set up another business.

I'm back in Jalan Happy. I'm not really serving guests. I don't often go into a room with them, I just sit with them while they drink. The boss is good. She lets me stay in a room without paying anything. I'm making some money by selling roast peanuts. I cook them behind the brothel. I also make some money making decorations out of recycled playing cards. I mostly sell them to the other girls in the brothels here.

I've got a boyfriend. He's a policeman. He already has a wife, but he might marry me as his second wife. He's a good man. He doesn't take my money from me. He gives me money sometimes, when he can afford it. He doesn't like me serving guests.

What do I want now? First, I want a place to live. I don't want to stay at Jalan Happy anymore. I want to get married. Then I want to set up my own business.

“My husband was a bastard. When he found me in Jalan Happy, he tied me to a tree and gagged me. He didn't make me leave the brothel. He came around every night at closing time and took the money I'd made that day.”



Sorong, Papua

HIGH RISK GROUPS AND A LOCAL EPIDEMIC

Tanah Papua occupies the western half of the island of New Guinea and some smaller surrounding islands. Its geography, history, culture, and economy make it distinctly different from the rest of Indonesia. It covers a huge area and is very sparsely populated. Its people are made up a vast number of different tribes and groups, many with their own languages and cultures. The great majority of these people live in rural and sometimes very isolated areas. In the coastal towns and mining centers, there are large numbers of migrants from Java, Sulawesi, and elsewhere in Indonesia.

Tanah Papua is one of the richest regions in Indonesia. It also has some of the country's direst poverty. Mining and logging operations generate enormous revenues, but almost half the people live on less than a dollar per day. Medical services are often poor, particularly in remote areas. Education levels are much worse than average. Undereducated men and women from rural areas travel to towns and mining centers to earn a living as laborers, often leaving families behind.

In general, Papua has been more severely affected by HIV and AIDS than anywhere else in Indonesia. In the rest of the country, the virus is largely concentrated among high risk groups. In Papua, the disease has become a general epidemic, with at least 2.4% of young adults testing HIV-positive. In the rest of Indonesia, most new cases of HIV result from the sharing of needles by drug users. In Papua, sex between men and women is responsible for more than 90% of new cases.

There are many reasons for the high rate of sexual transmission in Papua. There is a general lack of awareness regarding HIV and how it is transmitted and a low level of awareness regarding the effectiveness of condoms to reduce the risk. Condoms are often hard to find, particularly in rural areas. Many people, especially sex workers, have sex with multiple partners.

Sorong is a large port town on the north coast of Papua, the hub for the region's oil and gas industry. More than half of the people came here from outside Papua. Most of the rest are migrants from rural districts in Papua itself, looking for work. There are considerably more men than women in the town. The town has a large sex industry, with women from Java, Manado, and elsewhere, working from bars, clubs, and brothels. Mainly Papuan women sell sex in parks and on a strip of beach near the harbor. The town has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the region and, indeed, the whole of Indonesia.

To help those facing discrimination and stigmatization and to provide other services, a group of people living with HIV have established a peer support group called Sorong Sehati. Sorong Sehati was established with some support from the Spiritia Foundation, a Jakarta-based organization that has played a powerful role in developing a network of such groups across the country. In total, it has supported the establishment of at least 64 peer support groups in 27 provinces. Like Sorong Sehati, each of these groups is almost entirely autonomous, established and managed by local activists. However, Spiritia plays an important role by providing advocacy materials and training for these activists. Often, it helps the activists to visit more established groups elsewhere.

At present, Sorong Sehati receives virtually no financial support from the government or from outside agencies. It operates on a tiny budget in premises donated by Yayasan Saint Augustina, a Catholic medical mission managed by Sister Zita Kuswati. In addition to providing a meeting space for the Sorong Sehati peer support group, the mission provides medical services for people with HIV and AIDS.

Papua has been more severely affected by HIV and AIDS than anywhere else in Indonesia. At least 2.4% of young adults are HIV-positive. Sex between men and women is responsible for more than 90% of new HIV transmissions.

AIDS was first identified in Indonesia in 1987. By the end of 2007, there were 270,000 HIV-positive people in the country – one in five hundred of the population. In most provinces, the virus is largely concentrated among high-risk groups, such as female sex workers, injecting drug users, men who have sex with men, and *waria*. Among these groups, the nationwide infection rates are 7.1% among female sex workers, 52.4% for injecting drug users, and 5.2% percent among men having sex with men.

After the first confirmed case of AIDS in 1987, the Indonesian Ministry of Health established a National AIDS Committee, which established a series of national action plans. The government's programs focus on prevention through education to raise awareness among the general population and particularly high-risk groups. In some areas, government programs provide condoms and clean syringes. The government also provides funding for antiretroviral therapy (ART), which is intended to be available free of charge through major hospitals.

In fact, ART is readily available only in hospitals in big cities. In December 2006, less than a quarter of people who had advanced HIV infection were receiving ART in accordance with approved treatment protocols. The majority of those receiving this treatment lived in Jakarta. In Papua, only 3% of people with HIV, including those with advanced infection, have ever received ART.

Infection rates are beginning to fall in all high-risk groups across the country except among injecting drug users. The rate of use of condoms by sex workers is improving. However, knowledge regarding HIV and AIDS remains extremely low among the general population throughout Indonesia.

A young AIDS victim.







Yudhi

I'm HIV-positive. I was first diagnosed in October 2003. When I was younger, I used hard drugs in Makassar. That's where I was born. My family sent me to Sorong to try to clean up and get off drugs. And I did. After I kicked drugs, I read about HIV and AIDS. I wanted to get tested. My sister-in-law was a doctor. She helped arrange the test for me. Then I found out that I was positive. My sister-in-law reacted badly. She was ashamed to have an HIV-positive brother. She thought that if people found out, they'd think badly of the whole family, so she sent me back to Makassar.

My parents didn't cope well either. They didn't know anything about HIV. They were scared. They made me eat with my own cutlery and plates. I wasn't allowed to eat with the rest of the family. If I came into the room and sat down, they got up and moved away. They set aside a separate bathroom for me, which no one else used. I had to wash out of my own bucket. My parents were terrified that other people in the family would find out. At the time, I didn't know much about HIV myself. I went to a self-help group in Makassar. They gave me some information. They explained that HIV wasn't really very infectious. My parents were still scared. In the end, I couldn't stand living at home. I decided to go back to Sorong. I didn't stay with my sister-in-law. I stayed with a friend. I didn't tell him about my status.

I was quite healthy. I responded well to the antiretroviral therapy. I received treatment free of charge through the local hospital. My viral loads were low. My weight was normal. Through the hospital, I started working as a volunteer for the provincial health department's HIV information programs. Eventually I received a small salary. Out of eleven educators in the program, I was the only one who was HIV-positive.

I was sent to Jakarta for training. In Jakarta, I met some people from the Spiritia Foundation. Most of the people at Spiritia are HIV-positive. They operate on the principle that HIV-positive people should help each other. They pushed me to set up a self-help group in Sorong. So together with two HIV-positive friends, I set up Sorong Sehati.

Spiritia told me about a sympathetic doctor in Makassar. I went home to Makassar. With the doctor, I visited my parents. He made them realize that HIV wasn't as infectious as they thought. Their attitudes began to change. They weren't so scared. They still don't want anyone else to know about my status, though.

I'm quite open about my status. When I'm talking about HIV and AIDS, I try to judge the audience first. If I think they can handle it, I tell them about my status. If I don't think they can cope, I keep quiet about it. Sorong Sehati has made people more aware about HIV and AIDS. We had one member, a bank employee, who was HIV-positive. His employer found out. They were scared. They threatened to fire him. Sorong Sehati went to the bank with a doctor. We did a presentation to help them understand. They agreed to keep him on.

People who have just found out that they are positive need to know how to manage HIV. They often think that they can't have children. They think their children will be infected. They worry that they will infect their husband or wife. If you know how to manage the risk, you can prevent that. I'm married. My wife is not HIV-positive. She's pregnant. Before my wife got pregnant, a doctor checked my viral loads. With the antiretroviral treatment, my viral loads are low. That means the risk of infection is low. The doctor calculated my wife's fertile periods. He suggested that if she wanted to get pregnant, we should have sex without a condom once a month during her most fertile period. She became pregnant and she's still negative.

If people living with HIV have accurate information, they know how to cope with their condition. They can handle other people's reactions to it. It's a serious chronic disease, but it isn't that different from diabetes or high blood pressure. The main difference is that people are scared of it.

"My parents didn't cope well, either. They didn't know anything about HIV. They were scared. I wasn't allowed to eat with the rest of the family. If I came into the room and sat down, they got up and moved away."



Sister Zita



Sorong Sehati receives virtually no financial support from the government or from outside agencies. It operates on a tiny budget from premises made available by Yayasan Saint Augustina, a Catholic medical mission managed by Sister Zita Kuswati. In addition to providing meeting space for the Sorong Sehati peer support group, the mission provides medical services for people with HIV and AIDS, as well as other conditions and ailments. The foundation runs a communal garden and has other activities for its patients.

Sister Zita would like to provide more services for people with HIV/AIDS. "If we had more funds, we could build a hospice. It wouldn't cost much. We could buy land or rent on the edge of town. Land isn't expensive there. People with HIV and AIDS who are still healthy would volunteer to work there. It works better when people with HIV and AIDS are involved in looking after themselves."



Karang Ploso, Bantul, Jogjakarta

FILMING URBAN / RURAL TRANSITION

Karang Ploso is located some fifty kilometers from the city of Jogjakarta. In the past it was a rural village, with almost the entire population engaged in agriculture, particularly rice farming and market gardening. Over the past couple of decades, however, new and improved roads and transport facilities have brought the village much closer to the city. The younger generation has far greater opportunities than their parents did to attend high school and even receive tertiary education. Television and internet access are also exposing people to life in the cities and beyond in a way that would not have been possible twenty years ago.

Increasingly, the young people of the village are reluctant to work in the rice fields and plantations. Instead, they look to the factories and shops of Jogja and further afield, to Jakarta and Batam, for work. While social and economic changes have made them more ambitious, young people often find that with unexceptional qualifications, the high rate of unemployment, and the intense competition for jobs, opportunities are limited. Young women and men often wait for years before finding a job. Boredom and frustration are rife. There has been a great deal of resentment and misunderstanding between young people and their parents' generation. The older generation often feels that the younger generation is spoiled and lazy. The young people feel that their contributions and aspirations are not recognized.

Karang Ploso is being transformed from a rural village into an urban outskirts. The villagers use video cameras to interview each other and record their daily lives. By discussing the films they make together with the whole village, the younger generation and their elders are learning to understand each other.



In the earthquake on 27 May 2006, Karang Ploso was devastated. Almost every single building was destroyed and twelve people died. In the aftermath, the youth group Taruna Reka played a major role in the reconstruction efforts, guarding and distributing food and emergency supplies, treating the sick and the wounded, and cleaning up and rebuilding the village. However, when the situation began to return to normal, young people again began to feel excluded from the life of the village.

Several months after the earthquake, the youth group made contact with Kampung Halaman, an organization that encourages young people to make films and documentaries about themselves and the communities in which they live. In Karang Ploso, they interviewed each other, recorded the details of their daily lives, and then sat down with the entire community to watch and discuss the videos they had produced.

The documentaries discussed by Zery, Beni, and Pak Kemy include *Andai Ku Tahu (If Only I'd Known)*, *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon (Slowly but Surely)*, and *Who Are We...???*. These films can be accessed and downloaded from Kampung Halaman's website: <http://kampunghalaman.org/>

Most residents of Karang Ploso earn a living from agriculture; increasingly, young people are looking to the cities yet for more rewarding employment.



Beni

The earthquake killed twelve people from our village. A lot more people were injured. Some people were permanently paralyzed. Everyone was badly affected. Even now, some people are still traumatized. It destroyed almost every house in Karang Ploso. My family's house was one of only three left standing.

During the reconstruction, my house was the base camp for the Taruna Reka youth organization. It's an organization for the young men and women of the village here. After the earthquake, Taruna Reka guarded the emergency supplies and helped clean up the village. On television, we'd seen reports of Aceh after the tsunami. They said that the survivors were fighting over supplies of food and water. Thieves were stealing the wedding rings from dead bodies. We made sure that nothing like that happened here.

We drew up a roster and set up different teams for various tasks. We went from house to house to check and make a record of who was wounded or killed. We contacted the aid organizations to push them to send water, food, and tents. We went around and handed out food and water packages to people who needed them. The girls set up a tent and treated people with light wounds. They made sure that clothes and other supplies were divided fairly. The young people from Taruna Reka did that all by ourselves. The village head and the village administration hardly did anything. They left it all up to us.

A month after the earthquake, we met to conduct an evaluation. We were upset that our contribution hadn't been recognized. The young people pulled the village back on to its feet. But as soon as the village started to return to normal, everybody forgot about that. The village administration didn't respect the contribution that the young people had made.

There was a lot of boredom and frustration among the young people in the village even before the earthquake. Most kids here go to vocational senior high school. Not many go further. Kids choose vocational schools rather than academic schools because they think it's easier to get a job afterwards. Everyone wants to get a job in town, in Jogja. But it's not easy to find work in Jogja if you don't have experience. Some young guys go to Batam or Jakarta on contracts. If they have technical training, they might get a job in a factory, if they are lucky.

There isn't much work in the village. Some guys set up small businesses, raising chickens or rabbits to sell. Some get work as laborers on building sites or in the rice fields. But that's a last resort. Kids want something better than just to work in the fields. A lot of people spend a long time unemployed while they are waiting to find a job. Sometimes it causes tensions with the older generation. Sometimes parents get upset that the young people don't help them in the rice fields. Our parents and grandparents can't understand that we want to achieve different things. We want to take advantage of new opportunities.

At the meeting after the earthquake, we talked about how well we'd worked together during the emergency period. Taruna Reka had been really active. We didn't want to just go back to the way we were before. One guy said that he had some friends who would teach us how to use video cameras. We thought it would be fun. That was how Kampung Halaman first came to the village.

One of the first films we made was called *Who Are We...???*. It was about Taruna Reka's history and activities. The film crew interviewed other young people and got them to talk about what they had done after the earthquake. We found out that there has always been a youth group called Taruna Reka in the village. It's been running since the early 1960s at least. We talked to some of the older people who were involved in it when they were young. In the 1960s, times were

“There was a lot of boredom and frustration among the young people in the village even before the earthquake. Everyone wants to get a job in town, in Jogja.”

tough. There wasn't much food. Most people were poor. Back then, the village was still isolated. It took a whole day to get to town. Everybody here worked in the rice fields. Some people went to high school, but not nearly as many as now. When we heard the stories of what it was like then, it made us realize how hard life used to be.

A couple of hundred people came to watch the film when we screened it. In the film, one of the old men said that young women were spoiled and delicate these days. He said they were scared of hard work and didn't want to get their hands dirty. Some of the girls in the audience got angry about that. One girl said that girls worked just as hard as the boys, but no one noticed. She was upset that the film crew hadn't interviewed any girls when they made the documentary. Mbak Dian, from Kampung Halaman, suggested that the girls form their own film crew and make their own video. They liked that idea and later on they made a video.

After the film, Taruna Reka began to work more closely with the LPMD [Village Community Development Organization]. One idea that came up was to build a *sanggar*, or clubhouse. The *sanggar* was meant to be a place where Taruna Reka could meet to study and work on video projects, but it could also be used for other activities involving the entire community.

A lot of people helped in the building of the *sanggar*. We used salvaged tin and bricks from houses that had been destroyed by the earthquake as building materials. The village administration let us use a piece of government-owned land. The guys from Taruna Reka provided their labor for free. We were helped by some of the older tradespeople. They provided their labor for free, too. The girls and the housewives prepared food and drink for the workers. The girls also created a garden in front of the *sanggar*. It was their idea. They said they wanted to do something more than just cook and prepare food for the men. There were a lot of meetings and a lot of talking. People argued backwards and forwards for ages, and sometimes it felt like nothing was getting done. But it was worth it in the end. The *sanggar* belongs to the whole village.



Zery

We'd never used video cameras before. We didn't think making a film was something you could do yourself. We thought films were something you sat down and watched. The people on the screen were never like they are in real life. They were always rich and beautiful. They were foreigners with blond hair and white teeth. We enjoyed watching them, but it was just a fantasy world. It was just entertainment.

When Kampung Halaman came to Karang Ploso, we'd already worked hard to rebuild the village. People were starting to live their lives again. A lot of people had already gone a long way toward rebuilding their homes. People who were hurt in the earthquake had gotten out of the hospital. We received some aid and assistance from the government for reconstruction, but people were still traumatized. Some people couldn't even face going out of the house.

Nobody understood what Kampung Halaman was about when they first came. We thought maybe they were psychologists. We thought they had come to treat people who had been traumatized by the earthquake. When they showed us their cameras and asked if we wanted to play with them, we thought it was weird. Of course it was fun to play with fancy equipment, so we were glad they had come. But some people wondered why they didn't send engineers or doctors instead of people with cameras.

They just showed us how to turn the cameras on and off and how to load the cassettes. They gave us some hints about how to hold the cameras steady. But they didn't tell us what to shoot. They just gave us the cameras and told us to do whatever we wanted with them. They just said to shoot whatever we thought was interesting. It was good fun. We just clowned around and took pictures of each other. We went around the village to the places where we always went.

When we finished, we took the cameras back and went through the footage we'd shot. It was really funny seeing our faces on the screen and hearing ourselves talk. If you aren't used to it, your voice sounds funny when you hear it for the first time on a video. Everybody was laughing at themselves and each other. Mbak Dian from Kampung Halaman got us to talk about the things we'd shot, like the place down near the river where we used to hang out and play. It was all just normal stuff. We'd never really thought about it before, or talked about it.

As we talked, we came up with some ideas for making a better film, one with more of a story. We'd shot a lot of pictures of the houses that were being rebuilt. Sometimes, we'd talked to the people who were building them. Most of the time they were happy to talk to us and tell us what they were doing. But at the same time, we knew that there were problems with the reconstruction. Some people felt that others were getting more assistance than they were. It was creating difficulties and tensions. So we decided to make a film about the reconstruction.

Mbak Dian helped us to go through the footage we'd made and arrange it so that it told a story. We called it *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon (Slowly but Surely)*. It consisted mostly of people being interviewed about rebuilding their houses or shots of them working on them. Sometimes people assumed that other people were receiving assistance when they weren't. When we actually spoke to them, we learned that they were using mostly scavenged or recycled materials. Some people had sold land or jewelry to rebuild their houses. Others were being helped by families.

When we invited everyone in the village to sit down together, people began to realize that everyone was affected by the earthquake in the same way. There wasn't as much favoritism as we had thought. People really enjoyed seeing themselves on the screen. It was a good experience for everyone. At the screening,

"It's often easier to talk about difficult things to a camera than it is to tell someone straight to their face. We've made more than seventeen films now, and a lot of them have been about things that are quite difficult to talk about in day-to-day life."



the Kampung Halaman people introduced themselves to everyone in the village. They explained what we were doing. They asked permission to go on working with us to teach us how to use cameras and make films. Now that everyone had seen the first film, they had a better idea of what it was about. Kampung Halaman offered to provide a facilitator to live in the village for a year and to coordinate the filmmaking process.

It's strange but it's true: it's often easier to talk about difficult things to a camera than it is to tell someone straight to their face. And people are more likely to listen to someone in a film than they are to listen to that person in real life. We've made more than seventeen films now, and a lot of them have been about things that are quite difficult to talk about in day-to-day life.

One film we made was about business and work opportunities in the village for young people. Many young people here feel that their only choice is to leave the village and look for work in Jogja or the big cities. A lot of people think there aren't any opportunities here. If kids have finished high school, they don't want to work doing agricultural labor. At the same time, their parents are always talking about how they need help. They always say that it's too expensive to hire laborers, but that their own children won't go out and work in the fields.

So the film crew tried to make a film to look at young people who had actually set up some kind of business venture in the village itself. These businesses often took advantage of the area's assets and advantages in innovative ways. With the good road system, the village is quite close to the city these days. That makes it easy for people to sell produce in town. Some young people have managed to breed livestock that they can sell in town. They've done quite well that way. We interviewed young people who were involved in that kind of business.

We called the film *Andai Ku Tahu (If Only I'd Known)*, because it seemed that even though the village is small, a lot of the time we don't really know what other people are doing or thinking. If we'd known more about the potential business possibilities in the village, we might have made different choices. We might have felt differently about leaving the village to look for work in the cities.

We found that there were a lot of things we didn't know about other people, including our parents and friends. For example, we never knew that one of our friends, Joko, managed to earn quite good money using a tractor to plough rice fields. We'd seen him on the tractor, but we'd never thought about it. It was only when we were going around with the camera that we asked him what he was doing. After we made the video, we showed it to everyone who was interested. On December 13, 2006, we showed it to an audience of around one hundred people at the Masjid Al Himmah in the village. A lot of the older people repeated their comments about the younger generation being too spoiled and lazy to work in the fields. Some of the young people said that we would prefer to stay in the village if we could, if there were opportunities for us here. The older people made some constructive suggestions about raising livestock profitably, particularly after they had seen examples of young people who had already started developing that kind of business.

Before that, the young people in Taruna Reka never had any kind of discussions with the men from the farmers' cooperative. We always felt that they were just looking after their own interests. When we got talking to them, we realized that they were prepared to help. In the weeks after the video was shown, people from the two groups often got together in smaller groups to discuss ideas and business proposals. That was the first time that had happened.

Young people from Taruna Reka also got involved in trying to find a solution to the irrigation problem. One of the biggest problems here is that the land is very dry, and the water table has been sinking for decades. The older generation always complains that it's much harder to find water than it used to be. Along with the cost of labor, that's one of their most common complaints. After we watched the film together, Taruna Reka formed a group to learn more about irrigation systems. The kids who had been to college had access to libraries, so we set up a group to research different systems, like windmills. Actually, it wasn't a complete success. In the end, the ideas that we came up with were too expensive to implement. Even so, we learned a lot.

By making films, we've met a lot of people from outside the village whom we wouldn't ordinarily have met. We've shown the films we made at cafés and film festivals. At first we were really surprised that outsiders were interested to watch the films we made. It seemed to us that what we were talking about wouldn't make any sense to anyone else. We didn't think the quality of our films was that good. But people were interested in what we did.

The biggest benefit is that people are better able to discuss problems that affect everyone. It doesn't mean that everything always goes smoothly, but there has been a big improvement. Since we started making the films together, we've been able to sit down and talk with our parents much more easily.

Zery is one of the most enthusiastic filmmakers from the Taruna Reka group.



Pak Kemy

Kids these days don't want to work in the rice fields. They think it's easier to make money working at a job in town. They are ashamed to get dirty and work hard the way we did when we were young. I told them that on the film. They asked me my opinion, so I told them. I told them that I'll never sell my rice fields. I inherited this land from my father, and he inherited it from his father. It's my duty to leave it to my children. I can't sell it.

The land around here used to be all rice fields. It used to be much easier to pull water up from the wells. The water table has been sinking over the past twenty years. Some people have rented out their land for sand-mining, for construction work. The trouble is that after it's been used to mine sand, the land is no good for farming. It destroys the land.

After the young guys made the film, they formed a group to find a solution to the irrigation problems. Some of the lads from Taruna Reka came with us to meet some of the officials from the Department of Agriculture to look into various solutions. We talked about some sort of hydro-powered system and a windmill. It was all too expensive.

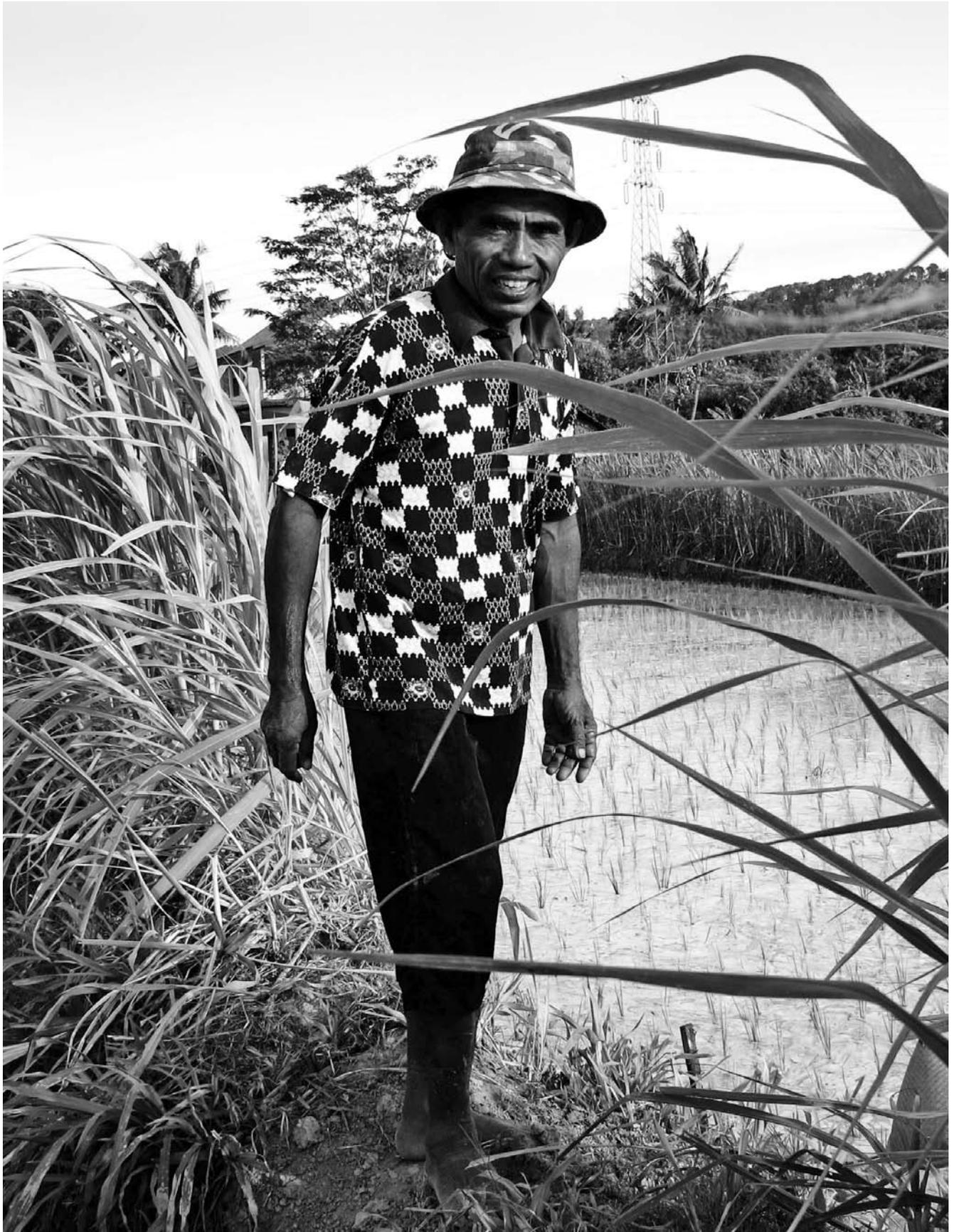
It's still difficult to get enough water for the fields. In the end, the village organization bought diesel-powered pumps. That helps, but the fuel is very expensive. Fuel prices have gone down, but they could go back up again. Some of the ideas that the lads came up with were actually very good. A windmill would have cost a lot to build, but once it was built, we wouldn't have to spend money on fuel. But the village administration said there were only funds available for the diesel-fueled pumps.

Some things did change a bit after the kids made the film. Some of the kids became more interested in setting up businesses in the village. But that doesn't really solve all the problems we have. We still need the kids to help us in the fields. The younger generation still doesn't want to get out into the rice fields and work hard the way we do.

"Some things did change a bit after the kids made the film. Some of the kids became more interested in setting up businesses in the village. But that doesn't really solve all the problems we have. We still need the kids to help us in the fields."



Youths from Taruna Reka holding a video camera and chatting with Pak Kemy.



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This book was sponsored by the PNPM Mandiri program. The goal of PNPM Mandiri, Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment, is to reduce poverty. PNPM Mandiri was established by the Indonesian government in 2007 to act as an umbrella for a number of pre-existing community-driven development programs, including the Urban Poverty Program and the Kecamatan Development Program, as well as a number of other community-based programs that were managed by nineteen technical ministries. By 2009, PNPM Mandiri was operating in every subdistrict in Indonesia.

PNPM Mandiri is committed to increasing the participation of all community members in the development process, including the poor, women's groups, indigenous communities, and other groups that have not been fully involved in the development process. *Invisible People* is one way that PNPM Mandiri can reflect on ways to better include marginalized and excluded groups in development.

Bilateral and multilateral assistance for the PNPM Mandiri program has been forthcoming from a number of donor agencies. The PNPM Support Facility (PSF) was established by the Indonesian government as a means of facilitating the contributions of international donors that support PNPM Mandiri. Contributors to the PSF currently include Australia, Denmark, the European Community, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. PSF provided financial and other support for the publication of *Invisible People*, in order to raise awareness of the special needs and aspirations of marginalized and excluded groups.

We would like to thank the people who sat down to tell their stories and put their lives on public display for the publication of this book. Across the country, the people who were approached were amazingly open about the most personal details of their lives, their problems, their hopes, and their aspirations.

When they collected these stories, Irfan Kortschak and Poriaman Sitanggang explained the purpose of the project and sought the consent of all subjects. The subjects told their stories, often over several days and during several meetings, after which Irfan attempted to recreate their words in a first-person account that conveyed the individual's ideas, feelings, and voice. In a few cases, subjects wrote their own stories in their own words, which were then edited with the subject and translated. When possible, Irfan provided a written account to the subject so that he or she could check and reconfirm that the account was an accurate representation. Otherwise, he discussed it with them. Subjects were reminded that their accounts would be published and asked to be certain that they had no objection to this. Irfan apologizes if despite this process, inaccuracies or misrepresentations have slipped into the text.

A vast array of people helped facilitate interviews and

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and *Picturing Indonesia, Village Views of Development* (2005).

All the photographs in this book were taken by Poriaman, with the exception of those taken by Irfan on the following pages: female students (p. 37); Ai Anti Srimayanti (p. 43); Heri Ridwani (p. 45, p. 47); Pak Inceu (p. 51); Laminah (p. 70); women's literacy group (p. 72, p. 74); Musinah (p. 73); Kolok Getar (p. 81); Kolok Subentar (p. 83); Erni Bajo (p. 113); Mading (p. 129); harm reduction meeting (p. 131); Benk Benk (p. 133); Apay and Harry (p. 134); Megi Budi (p. 137, p. 139); Rifky (p. 138); and Reza (p. 148, p. 149).

Irfan Kortschak studied Indonesian Area Studies at the University of Melbourne, and International and Community Development at Deakin University in Australia. He is a writer, translator, photographer, and long-term resident of Jakarta. His previous publications include *Nineteen: The Lives of Jakarta Street Vendors* (2008) and *In a Jakarta Prison: Life Stories of Women Inmates* (2000). He is currently engaged in writing assignments and consultancy work for NGO's and development agencies in Indonesia.

Poriaman Sitanggang has worked as a freelance photographer since 1985. He has held a number of photo exhibits, including *Indonesia - Famous People* (1993), *Batak Faces* (1994), *Dani: The Forgotten People* (1997), *Manila: The City of Contrasts* (1999), *The Song of Arini: The Eastern Indonesia People* (2001), and *Burning Borneo* (1998-1999). His work has appeared in a number of magazines and books, including *Kain untuk Suami* (A Cloth for My Husband) (2004),

Postscript

While this book was being prepared, the author and photographer contacted community and social worker Maya Satriani, plastic surgeon Enrina Diah, and the columnist and writer Julia Suryakusuma to see if anything could be done to alleviate the terrible scarring and disability suffered by Santi. As a result of the efforts of these women, funds were raised and facilities provided for Santi to undergo the first of several operations she will require.



INVISIBLE PEOPLE

Who are Indonesia's invisible people? They include people with physical disabilities in Aceh; people from a village with a very high rate of congenital deafness in Bali; malnourished children and their parents in West Timor; widows and female heads of households in Lombok; people with leprosy-related disabilities in South Sulawesi; women surviving domestic abuse and communal violence in Ambon; people with HIV and AIDS in Papua; children in a village in West Java without access to a secondary school; sex workers in West Kalimantan; and transgendered persons in East Java.

PNPM Mandiri, Indonesia's national program for community empowerment, has developed numerous enlightened initiatives to improve the welfare of these people and to give them the opportunity to actively participate in the social, political, and economic life.

As this book shows, through first hand interviews with members of vulnerable groups in Indonesia, these people are not passive victims, merely waiting for assistance. They are actively working to improve their own lives.

With more than 100 photographs, *Invisible People* tells the sometimes heartbreaking but often heartwarming stories of their lives.



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