



INVISIBLE PEOPLE

POVERTY AND EMPOWERMENT
IN INDONESIA

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

INVISIBLE PEOPLE

POVERTY AND EMPOWERMENT
IN INDONESIA

Text by Irfan Kortschak
photographs by Poriaman Sitanggang
with an introduction by Scott Guggenheim

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



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

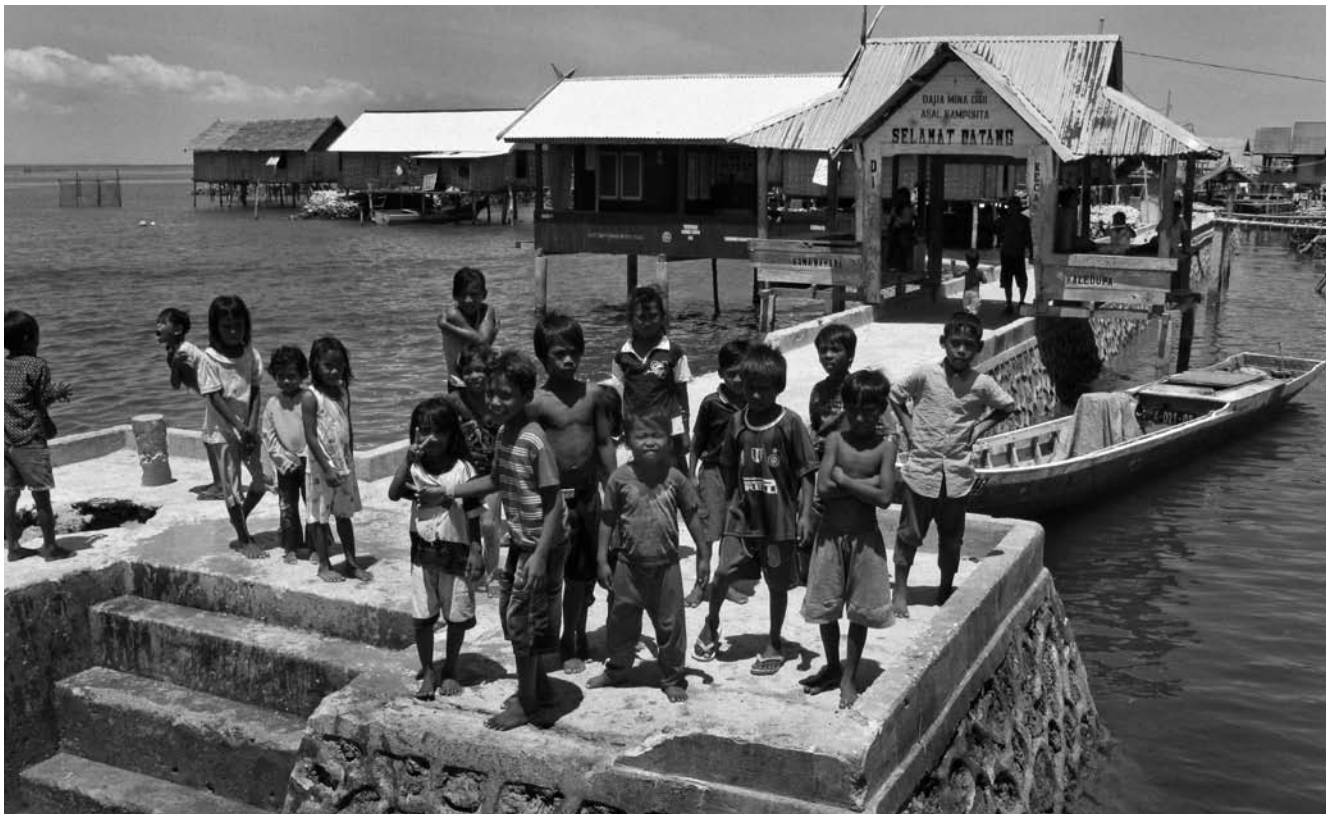
I've been living in Hakatutubu for more than forty years, since my family moved here from Dawe Dawe, further down the coast. Like all the Bajau here, I live right on the edge of the water. The Bajau always live by the sea. Ten or twenty years ago, there was living coral right to the edge of the tide 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 Hakatutubu 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 Hakatutubu 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.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CREDITS

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

meetings and provided all sorts of other assistance. A partial list of these people includes Marjorie, Mateo, Marwan and all the staff of Handicap International in Banda Aceh and Takengon; Ricco Sinaga from the Puskesmas (Community Health Center) in Cikini, Jakarta; Imam B. Prasadjo and the staff of Yayasan Nurani Dunia; the members of the band Cisleng and the young guys and women who hang out in Proklamasi; Kamala Chandrakirana, sociologist, author and former Chairwoman of Komnas Perempuan (the National Commission on Violence against Women); Kodar Wusana and Nani Zulminarni of PEKKA (the Women Headed Household Empowerment Program) in Jakarta and the PEKKA field facilitator in Lingsar, West Lombok, Sitti Zamraini Alauthi; Fenny Purnawan, writer, editor and mother of Gana, Smita, Anggita and Oorvi. Agas Bene of the Dinas Kesehatan (Health Agency) in Belu, West Timor; Maria K'lau, an outstandingly dedicated midwife in Belu; Antonia Godelpia Lau, the manager of the Panti Rawat Gizi and all the doctors, midwives, staff and workers at the Puskesmas in Belu; Anne Vincent, Fajar, and Anton Susanto of UNICEF in Jakarta; Nelden Djakababa and Vitria Lazzarini, psychologists from Yayasan Pulih; Piet Pattiwaelapia of the Maluku Refugees' Coalition (Koalisi Pengungsi Maluku); Nelke Huliselan, a community worker in Ambon; Enrina Diah, a plastic surgeon; Julia Suryakusuma; Richard Oh, novelist and crewcut; Rebekka Harsono, an activist from LADI (the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination League); Pephy Nengsi Golo Yosep and Adi Yosep, activists for the rights of people affected by leprosy in Jongaya, Makassar; Kerstin Beise of Netherlands Leprosy Relief (NLR); Dede Oetomo and friends from GAYa Nusantara (a gay and transgendered rights organization in Surabaya); Irma Soebechi and friends from Perwakos (transgendered rights organization); Nig and friends from US Community (a gay and lesbian rights organization in Surabaya); Ayi Na, previously at UNICEF in Mangkowari, Papua; the indefatigable Sister Zita Kuswati at Yayasan Saint Augustina in Sorong, Papua; Connie de Vos, a linguist and specialist in sign languages; Thomas J. Conners, a linguist at Max-Planck-Gesellschaft; Josh Estey, photographer and crewcut; Dian Estey, journalist; Maya Satrini, community worker and friend of the sex workers in Singkawang; Rina, Dewi, Adhe and Yuyun and other sex workers in Jakarta; psychologist Jeanette Murad of the University of Indonesia; Alexander Sriwijono, consultant; Mustamin, of the Bajau community in Mola Selatan, Wakatobi; the Forkani environmental protection group on Palau Dupa; Veda and Rili Djohani of The Nature Conservancy; Ani Himawati in Jogja; Ayu Sastrosusilo; all of the people from Humana, an organization advocating for the rights of street children in Jogja; Muhammad Zamzam Fauzanafi, visual anthropologist; Mbak Diah, an activist filmmaker, and all the other people at Kampung Halaman in Jogja.

The project would not have been possible without the support of Sujana Royat, the far-sighted Deputy Minister for Poverty Alleviation in the Department of Social Welfare. In addition to being a driving force behind the Indonesian government's involvement in the PNPM Mandiri program, he has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of Indonesia's invisible people and to include them in the development process through his active support of PEKKA and a number of the people, groups, communities, and programs described in this book.

Nor would the publication of *Invisible People* have been possible without the patience, tenacity, and kindness of Threesia Siregar, of the World Bank's PNPM Support Facility. The support of Victor Bottini, Ela Hasanah, Sentot Surya Satria, Inge Tan, Lisa Warouw, Rumiati Aritonang, Nancy Armando Syariff, Juliana Wilson and all other staff at the PNPM Support Facility. In addition to providing his introduction, Scott Guggenheim, of AUSAID, kept the project alive with his wisdom, and sense of humor, editing the English language text, and making sensible suggestions throughout the project. Erick Sulistio used his extraordinary talents as a designer to transform the words and images in this book into a visually impressive final product. Sila Wikaningtyas worked long and hard to produce profound and sensitive Indonesian translations of the text, which was originally written in English, as well as a number of personal accounts written by the subjects. Jamie James played a valuable role tweaking, proofing, and editing the final English-language text, while Dorothea Rosa Herliany performed a similar role with the Indonesian-language text. John McGlynn, of the Lontar Foundation, provided excellent advice regarding the publication and distribution of the book.

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),

Invisible People: Poverty and Empowerment in Indonesia

Published by Godown, an imprint of the Lontar Foundation for
Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (PNPM Mandiri) —
Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment
Copyright © 2010 The Lontar Foundation
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced
or transmitted in any form or by any means
without permission in writing from:

The Lontar Foundation
Jl. Danau Laut Tawar No. 53
Jakarta 10210 Indonesia
www.lontar.org

Protected by copyright under the terms
of the International Copyright Union.

PNPM Mandiri supports the sustainable use of Indonesia's forests.
This book is made from recycled paper.

Design and layout by Erick Sulistio
Cover photograph by Poriaman Sitanggang
Printed in Indonesia by PT Jayakarta Printing

ISBN 978-979-25-1002-7