



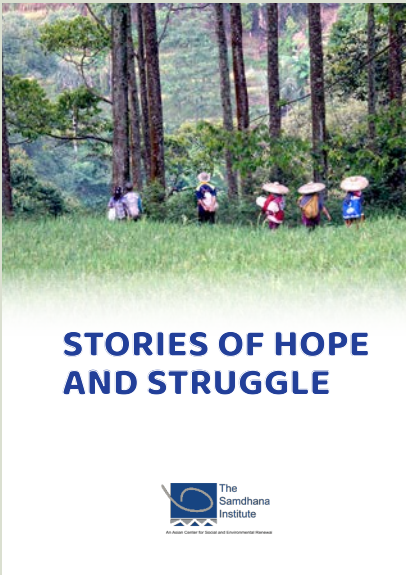
STORIES OF HOPE AND STRUGGLE



An Asian Center for Social and Environmental Renewal

STORIES OF HOPE AND STRUGGLE 2020

The Stories of Hope and Struggle are snapshots of the lives of Communities engaging with Samdhana Institute, bringing faces to individuals who strive to nurture their environment and ecosystems and persist in creating a better life. Here are short stories from Partners in Indonesia and the Philippines, coming together, inspiring us in Samdhana to consistently renew our energies for the vision of a Southeast Asia region that values natural, cultural and spiritual diversity.



Cover Story:

Female farmers Kasepuhan Karang customary community. Since the recognition of Customary Forest they are free to go to the fields and arable land.

Photo by Anggit Saranta

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Desa Gerduren: Beginning the Women's Journey in Forest Management

Village mapping by the women of Gerduren village. (SAMDHANA/Rizkiah Ma'mur)

When speaking about participatory mapping, an activity rarely involving women, Gerduren Village¹ has its own unique story. From the very beginning, the women have been heavily involved in the mapping process. LPPSLH (Institute for Research and Development of Resources and Environment) has been working in the village since 1998. In 2018, they started work to obtain a Forest Utilization Permit for Social Forestry (IPHPS), based on Regulation No.39/ 2017, on the work area of Perum Perhutani. They actively involved the community to participate in an open discussion on the planning, management, advocacy, and setting of goals, including identifying the village's potential livelihood.

As the journey to obtain the permit began, the village needed to clarify its border with their neighbouring village. Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif (JKPP), the facilitator of the process, trained the locals, both men and women, to use Global Positioning System (GPS) tools. Narsem, one of the women who actively involved in ecotourism in the area said she was very excited with this new experience. *"Pada saat diajak oleh teman-teman LPPSLH, saya langsung tertarik. Karena tentu akan ada pengalaman baru ketika kita melakukan sesuatu yang belum pernah. Kami diajak untuk berkeliling*

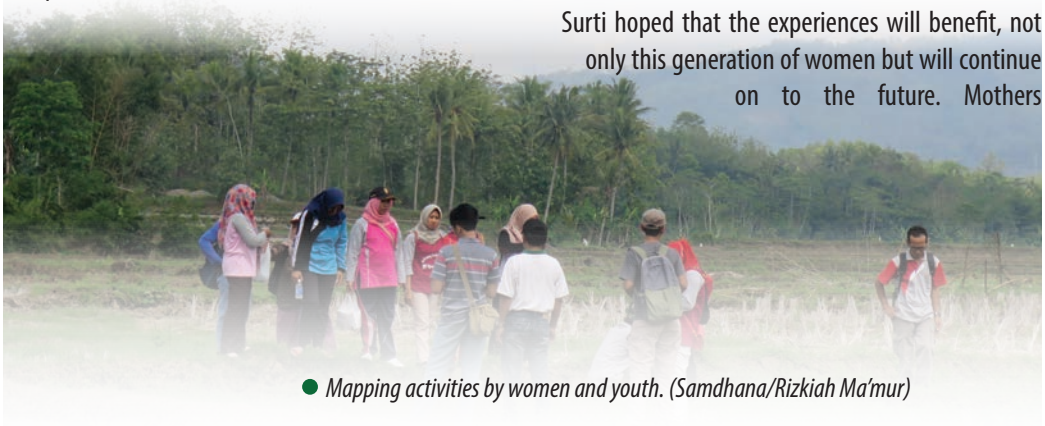
desa. Kegiatannya adalah partisipatif." Both men and women walked through their own village to map the borders. Many of the women realized that they have lived in Gerduren for decades, yet they still didn't know the exact borders of their own village. *"Benar-benar menjadi pengalaman baru. Karena meski setiap saat lewat, tetapi kan tidak memperhatikan. Ada juga perbatasan desa yang sebelumnya tidak kami ketahui."* It was an enlightening experience, as Narsem stated.

Interestingly, while mapping Gerduren, the locals came across an area that has border issues with Tinggarjaya Village, and for 20 years had no clear status of usage. The women involved in the negotiation process, and once the matter was resolved, it became the highlight of their experience. *"Pada saat perempuan ikut melakukan pemetaan dan ada daerah yang disengketakan dulu, maka mereka tampil ke depan. Itu ada tanah yang selama 20 tahun, statusnya tidak jelas. Sehingga perlu dirampungkan, kalau tidak bisa-bisa berantem terus tanpa berhenti. Maka, ketika terselesaikan, itu menjadi salah satu poin penting. Apalagi negosiasi dilakukan oleh sebagian besar perempuan"* said Surti Handayani, member of the Steering Committee of Dedicated Grant Mechanism Indonesia (DGMI), which supported the initiative through Samdhana

¹ Located in Purwojati Subdistrict, Banyumas, Central Java

Institute. She attributed the presence of women as one of the factors that the negotiation with Tinggarjaya ran smoothly without further conflicts.

Surti also mentioned, during the discussion to manage the local ecotourism in Gunung Pertapan, the women were more ready and objective about future plans. The women now are more confident to show their abilities. *"Salah satu yang kini digeluti secara serius adalah mengelola Gunung Pertapan sebagai ekowisata. Pada saat diskusi awal, ternyata perempuan lebih siap dalam merencanakan ekowisata. Mereka lebih mantap dalam berargumentasi maupun rencana-rencana yang bakal dilaksanakan. Sehingga pada saat aksi di lapangan, para perempuanlah yang lebih tampil di depan,"*



● Mapping activities by women and youth. (Samdhana/Rizkiah Ma'mur)

The women learned that their village has a lot of potentials and are more excited to manage it. The village forest has a total area of 285 hectares. With such a space, there is an immense potential to improve the local people's livelihood significantly. A Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) was created by the Village Head, Bambang Suharsono, and the women create ideas and manage the site were given the opportunity to participate openly. According to Bambang, this is because the women are eager to create ideas and manage the site.

The village hoped that their tourism site could be developed further, and that more women can gain work from it. *"Memang, nantinya tidak hanya menggarap Gunung Pertapan. Wisata di lokasi itu memang sangat penting keberadaannya, untuk menyatukan semua potensi. Kami siap untuk membuat produk olahan atau hasil kerajinan yang menarik supaya bisa dipasarkan di lokasi wisata. Apalagi, saat sekarang sudah mulai ada peralatan yang menunjang membuat produk olahan."* Narsem stated that Gerduren's Gunung Pertapan tourism has rekindled new hope for the locals, especially the women. The women felt the positive impact in reducing the village unemployment, not just for the locals, but also for outsiders who come to work in Pertapan.

Surti hoped that the experiences will benefit, not only this generation of women but will continue on to the future. Mothers

and even teenage girls should be encouraged to participate to continue the journey. *"Jangan sampai tidak melakukan kaderisasi. Sebab, tanpa kaderisasi, maka bisa saja nanti kan mandek. Oleh karena itu, kami terus mendorong kepada para perempuan untuk juga mengajak para ibuibu yang sudah tua untuk berpartisipasi juga, tentu sesuai dengan apa yang mereka bisa. Keterlibatan mereka juga sangat penting."*



<https://bit.ly/3u0gYlb>



Stimulating the Youth Movement for Eco-friendly Learning

How can children and the youth continue learning in the restrictive and sometimes, desperate situation that the Covid-19 pandemic brought about?

This was the challenge that faced Sekolah Alam Manusak (Manusak Nature School). School activities were now being conducted online using materials presented via e-learning. However, in Manusak, East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT), they dared to start their school development project despite the pandemic. Sekolah Alam Manusak dreams to become a model for ecological education, and education-based tourism in NTT. They built the school on the concept of learning by playing, and using recyclable materials.

Yahya Edo, the school's founder stated in a press release to Pos-Kupang, that this is a movement to create a school that could make the students happier. Children learn with nature, and use

recyclable materials, forming an ecologically conscious perspective. It is a media both for learning and playing. The materials are used items, such as plastic bottles, plastic cups, oil bottles, jerry cans, and other unused kitchenware. Rather than throwing away these things and accumulating waste in the community, which would be difficult to decompose, these materials are transformed into teaching tools. They are also given new life as flower pots and other useful items. Scrap wood, used tires, and unused children's toys were transformed into chairs and tables for studying.

In July and August 2020, Sekolah Alam Manusak organized the **eco-edu-tourism** alongside the school's community. The people, especially the young, learned the concept of an environmentally-friendly sector and how it can be implemented in their tourism site in Manusak, Kupang, NTT. Given the pandemic restrictions, only a few people



● *Teachers and students activities at Manusak Nature School, Kupang. (Photo courtesy of YRBI)*

were allowed to participate. However, the school continued to campaign in the local community via social media and direct messages for them to donate their unused things that could be utilized. The community members were active in collecting the recyclable items. Sekolah Alam also organized a workshop on developing learning materials from recyclables, and provided training to its teachers.

In October, Sekolah Alam launched its first-ever Idea Festival, to promote more widely the continuing development of the nature school's facilities and its learning media from recycled items, based on the "lopo belajar" (learning house) concept. The school did not have enough budget for all the construction fees, thus, they asked the youngsters to contribute labor for their lopo belajar. Most of the youngsters studying in Sekolah Alam work daily as farmers, help their parents in the farm or tend to livestock. They volunteer and contribute their time during the evening, which resulted to delay in the scheduled activities. However, they were happy that the youngsters are able to increase their ownership

of the nature school through their time and effort volunteered.

The Manusak Village administration strongly supports the initiative of the nature school. Sekolah Alam was also supported by Yayasan Rumah Solusi Beta Indonesia (RSBI), NTT and Samdhana Institute.

You can visit more stories about Sekolah Alam Manusak at:

Radar NTT - <https://bit.ly/3u8R52m>, Samdhana Institute Blog Stories - <https://bit.ly/3as3pmB>, Tribunnews Kupang - <https://bit.ly/37oTvjl>,



<https://bit.ly/20GdJPr>



Kopi Netra: A story in a Cup of Coffee

Resti, selecting the perfect beans for her specialty coffee. (SAMDHANA/Anggit Saranta)

Drinking coffee has been attached to human life for centuries. In the current society, drinking coffee together became a new mode for people to communicate with each other, besides coffee being a source of enjoyment in itself. The story of growing and producing coffee has also added value and media sensation of drinking coffee for the coffee connoisseurs and for the public. The stories begin with the farmers, the location where the coffee is cultivated and its surrounding natural conditions, the process of growing, harvesting, and processing. Many of the stories also celebrate the brewing art and various techniques in roasting and serving coffee.

Kopi membawa cerita (roughly translated as: coffee tells a story) is a concept that was also adopted and promoted by Resti, a blind barista selling coffee with her motorized coffee cart. Resti started an independent coffee business in front of her house by offering her own unique blend. Her excellent skill in brewing also keeps attracting customers.

She offers a range of menu in the mini bar of her motorized coffee cart, named Kedai Kopi Netra, and shares the coffee stories through her podcasts. *"Kedai ini adalah konsep nya dengan bar dan ada sepeda gowes nya di belakang, yang suka di pakai keliling-keliling, kring kring"*, Resti laughs while sharing on how she started the shop.

Being blind, her biggest challenge is finding a job whether in government or in the private sector, like many people with disabilities. She wanted to create more job opportunity for people with disability, so she opened the Kedai Kopi Netra. She also wanted to motivate other blind people to learn how to brew and mix coffee. It is not as difficult as people imagine. *"Kalau Aku aja bisa, teman-teman lain juga pasti bisa, iya kaan,"* Resti added.

She invites people to come to her shop to provide coffee directly from local farmers, and shares a brief history on the coffee gets to your cup. On other days, she will share a story on the brewing techniques that create the distinctive taste on each coffee bean. Resti trained in the Blind Coffee Brewing Class and the Gowes Coffee Blind Barista Business Training. The Blind Coffee Community (KKTuNet) provided the training session to inspire blind baristas. Resti hopes that in the future, there will be equality between people with disabilities and those that have none. She hopes more will follow in her footsteps creating jobs for fellow persons with disabilities and even for other people.

More story on:



<https://anchor.fm/restia-wati/episodes/Kedai-kopi-ala-tuna-netra-engphf>



<https://open.spotify.com/episode/78Q0oLneussN2sva2cW0XW>



<https://bit.ly/3jWMXOD>



If Not Us, Then Who? Indigenous Youth Action

The group Anak ng Tribu Higaunen-Talaandig in Baungon, Bukidnon. (Courtesy of Anak ng Tribu)

“Padulong na sa pagkawala tungod kay wala na’y mga bantan-on nga mopursige sa pagtuon sa paagi sa tribu. Maka moderno na kaayo ang sistema,” [They’re vanishing because there are no youths who want to learn the culture and ways of our tribe. The system has become very modern,] Anilao lamented.

Twenty-one-year-old Anilao observed that their Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices or IKSP as a Higaunen-Talaandig people have unfortunately been disappearing at an alarming rate. With the advancement of technology and modern conveniences, indigenous communities across Mindanao¹ are finding it harder to share and continue their living heritage with the younger generation. This is a story of a group of young *lumad* who dare to dream to find and revive their identity. This is where their journey starts:

Dying heritage

The group **Anak ng Tribu Higaunen-Talaandig** in Baungon, Bukidnon was originally formed to encourage and sustain the interest of the young people in their community in the tribe’s traditional

dances and music. Their dances and music are their main expression of their identity and heritage, but they understood that these are only a part of a bigger system of culture and tradition.

The mechanism and opportunities for learning and imbibing the Higaunen-Talaandig culture were missing. There were very few interactions between the young people and their elders. *“Mismo ang mga kabatan-onan nga lumad mag discriminate sa mga katigulangan,”* [The Lumad youth themselves discriminate the Elders (in favor of the more popular lifestyles).] Anilao said. He observed that more and more young people of their tribal community opt to not practice their traditional ways. *“Daghan wala kabalo unsa ilang mga katungod. Kung wala’y magpadayon, mawala na ang IKSP,”* [Many don’t know their rights. IKSPs will disappear if no one will continue them,] he adds.

In addition, their ancestral territory has been encroached by settlers who don’t conform to their traditions, including the high regard that the tribe has for the forest and the environment. *“Amo nang simbahan, merkado, ug tulon-anan,”* [It’s our church,

¹ the southern supra-region in the Philippines

market, and school.] he said. But at present, crucial decisions about their communities are not always aligned with the indigenous perspectives. *“Aduna’y mga panagbangi sa pamaagi sa panggobyerno...”* (There are conflicting ways of governing.) Anilao added.

While these issues are not easily articulated by all the young members of the tribal community, there are still among them that saw how their culture and their tribal identity have been neglected, and feel the strong urge to change the situation, to learn once more and understand about their traditional heritage and continue living in its ways.

There he met a staff from Samdhana Institute, who himself is of the Higaonon tribe. The chance meeting created the bridge for partnership between Anak ng Tribu and Samdhana. They were invited to the first Indigenous Youth Eco-Cultural Camp co-organized by Samdhana with Higaonon and Bukidnon ancestral domain communities. Setting the directions for a programmatic engagement with Samdhana, they were able to lay-out their youthful ambitions into a five-year strategic plan. They used the first support to improve their organization, agreeing to focus beyond being a cultural performing group, to take on other goals for their development and organize themselves.



● Interactions between the young people and their elders. (Courtesy of Anak ng Tribu)

A chance meeting

In 2018, Anilao was attending a Panalawahig ritual, in honor of the guardian spirit of the water.

They are already starting to implement their five-year plan, which Anilao said, addresses two main concerns: environmental protection and hunger mitigation. *“Two of seven (plans) namo kay na*

implement na. Nag abri mi og at least four communal gardens. Organic ug integrated farming na,” [Two of the seven plans we have are already implemented. We started at least four communal gardens (located in four different barangays). We are practicing organic and integrated farming.] Anilao said. The communal gardens not only provide food for the members and their families, but is also their venues for learning their traditional agricultural systems. “Gi promote namo mga traditional crops sama sa lutya, adlai, ug traditional nga coffee. Naka purchase ‘mi og miller para sa adlai, humay, ug mais,” [We promote traditional crops such as taro, Job’s tears, and traditional coffee. We were able to buy a miller for the adlai, rice, and corn.] he added. Anilao said they intend to plant indigenous tree species, and they already have nurseries for lawaan (Dipterocarp), balite (Ficus), and an indigenous nut tree. “Pag adto sa kinaiyahan, ibalik ang prinsipyo sa kagpangalasan. Mao ni ang pagtuon

sa kinaiyahan, pahibalo sa mga kabatan-onang lumad. Ang lasang mismo ang among eskwelahan, pinaagi sa mga elders,” [We want to revive the principle of kapangalasan. This is the study of nature, the education of the indigenous youth. The forest is our learning environment through our elders.] he said.

Prospects for the future

Anilao said that he is confident that they will be able to see their plans through, their organization having existed for the last six years. “Hunger mitigation ug kagpangalasan-nasugdan na namo before, pero mas mikusog tungod sa suporta nga nadugang,” [Hunger mitigation and nature conservation – we have already started these before but our efforts were strengthened because of the added support] he said. ###



(Courtesy of Anak ng Tribu)



<http://bit.ly/2NHQDHD>



Finding Resilience in the Time of Crisis

Conversation with the Menuvu youth. (SAMDHANA)

The Menuvu Tribe in Southern Bukidnon and North Cotabato, in the Philippines were struggling more than usual with their needs in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic had cut off their usual sources of income, like working as farm laborers. The KITAPID (Kirinteken, Ilentungen, Talaandig, Pulangiyen, Ilebaken and Dungguanen) Federation represented the Menuvu subtribe communities in Southern Bukidnon. Despite the increased needs of all members of the community, they dedicated to help the elderlies in the communities who are dependent on other family members for food. Many of these elderlies, aging from 70 years and older, were considered the most vulnerable in the community, and among those who hold valuable knowledge of history and practices in each community. Through the support of EarthAction, and in partnership with Samdhana, KITAPID was able to distribute food assistance, which was a 25k pack of rice, for around 475 elderly individuals in their various communities.

The pandemic had worsened the issues which the Menuvu Tribe had been facing, most significantly the conflict coming from claims of ownership from non-indigenous people in the Menuvu's territory. Some community leaders have already received death threats because they asserted their traditional ownership and rights to the contested land, while there have been cases of land conflict-triggered deaths and violence. Some village authorities refuse to recognize the Menuvu territories. The pandemic

and quarantine protocols made matters worse because authorities were using this reason to monitor the community members' movement. They could not go to other villages even if it is within their ancestral territory because of the strict travel requirements imposed at the geo-political boundaries of the villages and municipalities.

The quarantine also affected the women in the communities. It was difficult for them to earn sufficient income which took a toll on their mental health. Many of them worried about how to find food for their family, the health of their children and their husbands who venture out to gather whatever food they could bring.

While the food assistance was a small initiative, distributing the rice supplies was not as easy. Some communities perceived the KITAPID's intention negatively. In Menuvu communities that were divided over the land conflict, they regarded the KITAPID leaders as opponents, while others thought it was a political ploy. Thus, the rice assistance was not welcomed; and KITAPID had to re-strategize to redistribute the other rice packs to other communities. Travel restrictions delayed the distribution activities; however, the leaders managed to gain the trust of community members who also cooperated in receiving and relaying the rice supplies to the elderlies who truly needed it. ###



<https://bit.ly/3qG08Gh>



The **Samdhana Institute** is dedicated to the rights and values of indigenous peoples and local communities. We envision a future in which natural, cultural and spiritual diversity are valued, where communities can enjoy fair and equitable access to land and full recourse to the rule of law. Working alongside local communities, leaders and civil society, we address barriers to social and environmental justice, by facilitating support and helping to build resilience. Together, we are committed to the wellbeing, dignity and development of indigenous peoples and local communities in Southeast Asia.



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