

A healthy village in more than just name in Bone-Bone

Location

Desa Bone-Bone,
Kecamatan Baraka,
Kabupaten Enrekang,
Sulawesi Selatan

Contact Person

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Ishak Iskandar
Promosi Kesehatan
Dinkes Kab. Enrekang

Beneficiaries

796 peoples (138 households)

- From all of the unhealthy behaviors, smoking is one of the unhealthiest, not only for people, but for the environment. However, this habit is one of the ones that is most tolerated.
- According to the BPS, on average each poor household uses half of its income on cigarettes. Average income per household is Rp 10.000 to Rp 20.000. In one year, the money spent on cigarettes by around 12 million poor families is Rp23 trillion. This is equivalent to buying 5.8 tons of rice and greater than expenditure on health and education.
- Enforcing smoking bans is not difficult. The difficulty lies in the bureaucrats and rules implementers who also smoke.

A sign reading "You are Entering A Healthy Village" welcomes anyone who visits the village of Bone-Bone, Baraka sub-district, Enrekang district, South Sulawesi. The natural and scenic mountains and fresh air of the village located on the slopes of Mount Latimojong seem to justify the text.

Located at an altitude of 1,300-1,500 meters above sea level, a thick, cold fog always blankets Bone-Bone. This makes cigarettes a pleasant way for the people of this village to warm themselves and as an accompaniment to everyday conversation in their families and meetings with village officials. Moreover, this village is also a regional producer of Arabica coffee, judged the best coffee at a national level. It was very difficult for the residents of Bone Bone to stop smoking.

Beginning in 2001, Muhammad Idris, the Village Head of Bone Bone, began to be very concerned at seeing the negative effects experienced by residents because of their smoking habits. A lot of money was wasted just on buying cigarettes. In the long term, more and more children began to adopt their parents' smoking habits at village events or meetings.

"We started with issuing the rules to ban smoking in the village offices and other public facilities. We also brought together all the leaders and citizens who supported the ban to discuss how to make the village is completely smoking free," he said. "Then we encouraged the owners of kiosks in the village not to sell cigarettes," explained the father of eight children.

Muhammad Idris acknowledges breaking the habit of smoking is not easy. "When the rule was first introduced, many people were not satisfied. There was one man who stated he could not be a carpenter if he wasn't allowed to smoke", said Idris. Patiently, he explained to the man that his expertise would not be lost if he quit smoking.

The forty-year-old Village Head was determined to continue to apply the ban as a first step towards a healthy village. Every day Idris walked through the village, greeting residents and asking whether they had quit smoking or were still in the process of quitting smoking. "I never forced them, but every time I met with the villagers I invited them to chat as usual and continued to warn them that smoking is without benefits and harmful to their health," said Idris.

Advice to quit smoking was not only given through the personal approach of the Pak Idris to the inhabitants, but was also passed on in village meetings, and at Friday prayers and village events. In addition to persuasion, there are also sanctions. If there are villagers caught smoking in the street, then they must clean up the mosque and village streets. Sanctions have proven effective in helping villagers stop smoking.

Idris' work was not in vain, more and more villagers became aware of the adverse effects of smoking on health. Those who had quit smoking also began to feel the benefits to the economy of the family. "The money that we once used to buy cigarettes, now can be used to buy children's school supplies, and to purchase seeds and fertilizer," said one mother.

The most exciting change is the declining number of patients with respiratory and lung diseases in the region. "Today, fewer and fewer people have respiratory diseases," said the nurse on duty at the Bone-Bone Puskesmas. As of 2007 there are no Bone Bone residents who still smoke; that health endangering habit is no longer found there.

The Bupati of Enrekang, Haji La La Tinro Tunrung, greatly appreciates the efforts of Pak Idris and Bone-Bone. Apart from giving an award to Pak Idris, the Bupati also replicated the Smoke-free Village program in two neighboring, Kadinge and Kendena. In these two villages, the Bupati invited the Village Heads, community leaders and religious figures to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a legal umbrella to apply the Smoke-free Village program there.

In the village of Bone Bone, all activities associated with smoking have been banned, but in the two new villages which are replicating this initiative, restrictions only apply to smoking in public facilities and government buildings and providing special areas for smoking.

"I really appreciate this initiative. Even I've quit smoking now," said the Bupati, who has helped to advise the staff of the Enrekang Government to reduce and stop smoking. Welcoming the initiative of the Bone-Bone to be a healthy village, La Tunrung Tinro then included the program in the Medium Term Regional Development Plan 2009-2013. The Enrekang District Health Department also has designated all villages in the sub-district of Baraka as Smoke-free Areas in 2011. Six other sub-districts in Enrekang will be smoking free by 2012 and the entire district by the end of 2013.

After successfully initiating the Smoke-free Area, Muhammad Idris continued taking steps toward a healthy village by creating two new rules, the ban on trade of and raising chickens injected with hormones and a ban on foods and beverages made with preservatives and dyes.

"I see a lot of hormone injected chicken that die suddenly due to illness. I'm afraid a lot of chickens are affected by bird flu and will infect chickens in our village. This is very dangerous," Idris said. "And so are the colorful food and drinks. It probably tastes good, but the effect on our children is bad. Their teeth are damaged. In addition, children become lazy in consuming vegetables and fruit. How can they be the next smart and healthy generation if they suffer from malnutrition?" Idris asked.

Many places in the world identify themselves as the healthy regions, healthy cities, or healthy villages. In more than a few, this is merely rhetoric, but Bone-Bone has proven itself as a village that is truly healthy. "My thinking is simple. I just wish the inhabitants of my village are healthy so we can develop," repeated Pak Idris with a sincere smile. Perhaps Pak Idris is not aware that his thinking is in line with the thoughts of Winston Churchill, a statesman and the only British prime minister who won the Nobel award for literature, "Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have." ■

Notes
