

Big Changes Begin with You

A Story of Empowerment from Lombok Barat

Presenter

Jumilah, KAHURIPAN Group
Juharistani, SANTAI Foundation

Everybody has an equal role, the potential to be recognized, and valuable knowledge to share so changes for the better will be ongoing

Jumilah, as she is known, is a humble woman from Duduk Bawah village, West Lombok Barat district, West Nusa Tenggara Province. She worked as a housemaid since she was a teenager and continued when started her own family, and she lives her life as a regular woman in the village. Like many other uneducated village women, she often advises her children to stay in school and study hard.

Within the circle of her family and community, Jumilah was seen as just a woman without a significant role. Jumilah did not have the courage or ability to contribute other than contributing her energy in community activities (“gotong royong”). In 2002, however, Jumilah’s life met a turning point.

Her sense of curiosity was kindled during a community meeting held by Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI). Noticing the difference compared with the many other previous meetings held in her village, Jumilah enjoyed joining the subsequent meetings and started to feel a strong desire to create a change in her village. She then decided to quit her job as a housemaid to start something new in her life.

Yayasan SANTAI introduced a program that aimed to improve the welfare of poor households in several areas in Batu Layar village. At a glance, this program may not be that different compared with other poverty alleviation programs. This program, however, applies a CLAPP (Community Led Assessment and Planning Process) approach that was utilized when formulating and exploring the concept. This program did not propose only increasing welfare in terms of meeting household needs, but also fulfilling the basic rights of the community, including enhancing the community’s capacity in identifying various problems and finding sustainable solutions independently without abandoning local knowledge.

As Jumilah became increasingly active in the program, she was elected to manage KAHURIPAN, a local institution that serves as a learning group for entrepreneurship. Gradually she began to study more, especially learning arithmetic. As she became more active in KAHURIPAN, her confidence built up and so did her courage to speak in public.

Her consistency and commitment to continue changing and improving herself motivated Jumilah to invite her friends to establish a study group in the village. This study group was later known as Jumilah’s School. There are now five study group posts spread out in Lower Dusun Duduk and Upper Dusun Duduk hamlets in Batu Layar Village.

Students in Jumilah's School are children who don't or can't attend public school, those who married early as teenagers, and illiterate adults. Today, there are 40 children and about 20 adults every month who participate in the learning activities of this school. Initially, it was Jumilah who taught reading, writing and simple arithmetic/ counting; nowadays, there are several community members who take an active role in teaching at the school. The students learn not only to read-write-count, they are also introduced to forest and environmental management concepts, livestock management, household economic management, and other simple entrepreneurial skills.

One of the study groups in Upper Dusun Duduk has been recognized by the local Education Department, and was proposed to be established as a Branch School, which will be managed by the local sub-district administration. Moreover, the adult students and study group tutors will be able to take an equivalency examination through Paket A, B, and C.

The study group that embraced local community members as tutors is self-sufficient, cost-effective, and effective in terms of alternative education development and its sustainability at a sub-village level. Learning activities do not always have to be in the classroom and can be carried out in any place and at any time. In addition, the community was encouraged to begin the changes within themselves, not merely for capacity building but also for enhancing economic self-sufficiency.

Jumilah, who once took on a role as single parent because her husband went away to work in Malaysia, did not stop her activities at alternative education. She further encouraged fellow villagers to start finding solutions for the clean water crises that long burdened the village. With her humble and courteous manner, Jumilah approached fellow mothers to chat about the importance of clean water and the best way to bring it in to their village.

Along with KAHURIPAN group, Jumilah instigated a wellspring water system by utilizing water tanks/vessels and pipes to bring in clean water that was very much needed by the villagers. Together the community and KAHURIPAN working group began lobbying the private sector, government, and other institutions/agencies so that more villagers are able to obtain clean water. This effort was successful and they raised hundreds of millions rupiah of funding in order to fulfill the clean water needs.

To date, Jumilah remains active and sensitive in identifying basic issues facing fellow villagers. Together with the KAHURIPAN group, she continues to devote herself in developing and expanding networks to respond to various challenges her village is facing. Her spirit and enthusiasm have become a motivating force for many people in other villages to continue enhancing individual capacity in order to bring about positive changes in their villages.

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