

EMPOWERMENT IN RUA VILLAGE



Rua is a coastal village in south Sumba. The village supplies sea produce to Waikabubak (the capital of West Sumba regency) and also attracts many foreign and domestic tourists because of its natural beauty. An Australian has built a hotel there called Nih Watu and a lot of other land has been bought up probably due to the tourism potential. The buyers are foreigners and Chinese business people. The expansion of foreigners in the village has only further marginalized the locals who are already poor. Yayasan Wahana Komunikasi Wanita, a partner of ACCESS, started the CLAPP II program which is now in the program implementation phase. The following article is a passage from an interview with Mr. Agustinus S. Goga (Implementation Team Chairperson) and Ester Rambu Awa (a member of the Implementation Team).

What is the most impressive thing from the CLAPP program?

AGS: In this program, there is one thing in particular that is really beneficial. There have been other programs previously but they have never addressed our needs. This program has taught the community and myself that NGO's have different methods. The program started at grass roots and the facilitators were committed to providing a more intensive facilitation and not just thinking about their fee. This lesson has had a very positive impact. One example is that the community, particularly the women in two neighborhoods (Pantai and Watumbelar), has

become confident in public. The community now has the confidence to protest against the corruption in the distribution of rice.

What's interesting in your story is the change of behavior in the community. Do you have any other examples you could relay?

ASG: Men used to go alone to the market to buy the basic family needs. Now that has changed and men give money to women to go and do the shopping.

CLAPP uses an approach called GPI, which prioritizes women and the poor. Mama Ester, what were your impressions as a part of the focus group?

ERA: After four months of attending this program, women have become confident to speak and they have learnt about themselves. I am my husband's love and not his maid. As a woman, I don't just accompany my husband in the program because women themselves are directly involved.

In CLAPP, women must also be involved in the decision making process. According to you, Agustinus, how much were women involved in decision making since the beginning of the CLAPP program.

ASG: I have a concrete example where women were involved in decision making. It was regarding selling livestock offspring. I wanted to sell the animals we had but my wife was adamant she didn't want to. In the end they didn't get sold.

There is a tool in CLAPP for measuring the division of work which is called the Daily Work Calendar. In this process, what do you think the balance of work was between men and women Mama Este?

ERA: After the assessment process there already was change. The change was that daily work became the responsibility of both men and women, for example, women brought back pig food and men brought back fire wood from the land.

What is your strategy, Agustinus, as the implementation chairperson in motivating the group members and the community?

ASG: I involve religious figures, government personnel and community figures so that they can motivate the community to strive towards attaining our aims.

How would you measure the success of this program?

ASG: An example is the distribution of pitch forks. They were so happy to get them even though they haven't been used yet because it is just the beginning of the program. This is so different to all the other programs. I can say this because all aid in this village has to go through me.

How is the balance of gender in the implementation team?

ASG: There are four men and four women on the Implementation Team so it is balanced. We agreed to provide women with pitchforks too and it was successful.

Why do you say it was successful and in what way?

ASG: I say that it was successful because the pitchforks are what we all really needed. We have always thought that women couldn't do anything but this is proof that they can.

Through the program, ACCESS has tried to prevent increasing women's work burden. Do you think that the activities achieved that Mama Ester?

ERA: It wasn't an additional work burden. This was educative for women. Well, it did involve a bit of work but it was no problem. Anyway, work is something normal. It's a woman's duty.

Actually, I didn't mean did women's work burden increase but how can you work it out so that there is a division of roles between men and women in work. What roles do you think need to be divided Mama?

ERA: Like when you get up in the morning, the wife boils the water and makes coffee while the husband goes and feeds the ducks, chickens and pigs.

Have you changed as a result of the CLAPP program Agustinus?

ASG: I was always known as a dictator but since attending CLAPP I'm not anymore. I have become participative.

What will the Implementation Team do so that the knowledge you gained can be put into everyday practice in the wider community?

They need to constantly circulate the ideas at every meeting.

Has there been any opposition to the changes from community figures or other traditionalist parties?

ASG: In the beginning there was opposition. It was very difficult. The community didn't want to accept the program but finally after a long process, they slowly started to attend.

(This interview took place on April 2005 with Steph, Y. Bahtera and with the help of Naomi Wada, the Y. Wahana Program Coordinator.)