

Outreach

Development of Indonesia's Outlying Areas



FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN REMOTE AREAS

Inadequate oversight has caused corruption to run riot in many rural areas of Indonesia. But a few courageous people finally decided to fight back. In Lampung, a legal aid foundation trained citizens to be paralegals, who succeeded in putting some corruptors in jail. In a West Kalimantan village, a young woman started monitoring and noting down the government's infrastructure spending. And in Semau Island, East Nusa Tenggara, a subdistrict chief led citizens to fight officials who misused development funds. They confronted the corruptors and reported them to the authorities. *Tempo English* presents the following report on the occasion of Anti-Corruption Day on December 9.

NYEMAS MAISAROH TEACHING HOW TO FILL AN INFRASTRUCTURE BOOK.



FIGHTING BY RECORDING

Nyemas Maisaroh has fought corruption in Menpawah Hilir district through an infrastructure book. She learned from her bad experience.

The table at the Sengkubang Multipurpose Center was covered in piles of books, bills and receipts. The air smelled of glue. Suyatno, 51, bent down behind the papers. His hands trembled slightly as he transcribed the information therein into a notebook, filling in columns for number, date, amount of money and name of goods. “The information written in the columns must conform to the contents of bills,” he told *Tempo* two weeks ago.

Yatno, as he is known, does this every day. The chairman of Sengkubang village’s Activity Management Team (TPK) calls that special tome the ‘infrastructure book’. Its pages contain information on every development project in Sengkubang, which is located in Menpawah Hilir subdistrict, West Kalimantan, about two hours from Pontianak. In Sengkubang, Yatno is in charge of recording the details. All data are completely noted, from sums of money received and spent to winners of procurement tenders to material specifications, receipts, bills and financial accountability reports.

While clearing the table of spilled glue, Yatno said he was finalizing the infrastructure book for the construction of a Pre-School building in Simpang Tiga hamlet. The budget was more than Rp198 million. The funds came from the Community Empowerment National Program (PNPM) for Rural Self Reliance, a government scheme for poverty relief in villages. The recording activities has been underway since 2010. “Unless it’s neatly recorded, rural aid will be reduced next year,” he said.

Bachtiar Yasir, chair of the Menpawah Hilir Inter-Village Cooperation Agency, said the infrastructure book had helped control the budget. “Before we had this book, incoming and outgoing development funds were difficult to track,” he explained.

Yatno observed that with the book, the quality of development in his village has improved. “Previously, landslide levees built on village roadsides lasted for two years at most,” he said. “But the walls constructed in 2010 have so far remained solid.” Contractors no longer dare to change building material specifications at will because all the details are recorded.

The infrastructure book was initiated by Nyemas Maisaroh. The 31-year-old woman lives in Landak regency, some 200 kilometers from Menpawah Hilir. She was named a PNPM facilitator in Menpawah Hilir in 2009. Nyemas, a civil engineering graduate of Tanjung Pura University, Pontianak, is tasked with controlling the development of public facilities. To prevent misappropriation of aid funds, she designed the infrastructure book to serve as a kind of development journal, compelling the public to keep the public from any hanky-panky behavior.

The idea arose from her experience managing public facilities development in Menpawah Hilir in 2009. On her first day on the job, Nyemas was confused. The chair of the Financial Management Unit (UPK) was in charge of arranging all lines of rural activity funding, from counseling and pub-

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lic facilities construction to women's credit-savings activity. There was no planning and recording, nor any program activity report. "He was like a dictator," said Nyemas.

Nyemas lodged a protest. "There should be a special team to manage funds," she said, arguing that the task was too overwhelming for a single person and that aid would be reduced if the district was considered incapable of managing its finances.

In response, the UPK chief gave Nyemas the silent treatment for two months. The news spread throughout the subdistrict. Many people came to her with their grievances. "They frequently got no response when applying for aid funds," she said.

Nyemas discovered many discrepancies in the field. A construction material supplier once delivered wood which did not comply to specifications. The planks which should have been eight centimeters in diameter turned up with diameters of only five or six centimeters. Nyemas returned the wood without paying.

The next day the supplier paid her a visit. "How much do you want to get paid?" Nyemas recalled him asking her. After she had sent back the materials five times, the supplier finally delivered what she had ordered.

Another problem were fake NGOs who came asking for money. Normally Nyemas responded to them by saying, "Please assist us in village development, the funds will surely be obtained."

She presented all the issues to an inter-village consultation attended by village, subdistrict and community leaders. She also reported the UPK chairman's working method. After that, her cell phone was flooded with threatening messages. Only during the third village consultation did the meeting, supported by community members, agree to order the UPK chairman's withdrawal.



After that, Nyemas had greater freedom to evaluate the use of subdistrict funds. She discovered a list of unpaid debts by members of the women's credit-savings group amounting to a total of Rp100 million. To find out why the outstanding debts were so large, Nyemas paid them each a visit.

It turned out that everyone had actually paid their dues. So Nyemas gathered receipts from the members and took them to the subdistrict treasurer, Sri Wulan Dian Anggraini, for re-verification. The treasurer became flabbergasted. "She eventually admitted to having used the money herself," Nyemas said with annoyance.

The subdistrict gave Sri Wulan a month to repay the money she had embezzled. But not a single rupiah was returned. The public reported her to the



NYEMAS
MAISAROH.

police, and the Pontianak Anticorruption Court found her guilty.

Learning from these experiences, Nyemas asked each village and subdistrict to compile a detailed book for all development programs. She named it the infrastructure book.

Nyemas trained some 25 representatives from five villages and three subdistricts. They were taught to understand what kinds of information they should record. When building a bridge, for instance, the rapporteur must write down construction material suppliers, material specifications, names of goods, dates and amounts of money spent in all transactions.

Every month, all the subdistrict's book recorders are required to gather and examine their notes together. "I hope there is no more fund misappropriation such as the one committed by the treasurer," said Bachtiar. So far, the system seems to be working.

Last year Nyemas was transferred to Landak regency, her birthplace and around 150 kilometers from Pontianak. But she knows her system will live on. "When the public feels its positive impact, the system will definitely be continued," she said.

■ SYARI FANI, ASEANTIY PAHLEVI (PONTIANAK), BUNGA PADMA PUTRI (JAKARTA)

CORRUPTION ERADICATION, GRASSROOTS STYLE

The Lampung Legal Aid Office has trained thousands of local people to become paralegals. Some of them have sent embezzlers to jail.

Five people were erecting a small tent on a roadside in Sidomulyo village, Mesuji regency, Lampung. Fajarullah, who lives about an hour and a half from the site, happened to pass by on his way home from visiting a friend. Without being asked, he hurried to lend a hand, assisting with embedding the bamboo pillars and helping stretch a blue tarpaulin around them. “This tent is to protect construction materials from the rain,” he told *Tempo* two weeks ago.

The Sidomulyo residents were building a bridge, the construction of which had been neglected for almost a year. The local administration had frozen an aid fund in the wake of an embezzlement case concerning small-enterprise credit savings money worth nearly Rp200 million.

Thanks to Fajarullah, on November 15 the funds were finally dispersed. He managed to send the embezzlers to prison. “I’m happy to see development in Sidomulyo running again,” he said, beaming with satisfaction.

The 38-year-old man is a paralegal, one of 40 who actively help tackle corruption cases in poor villages around Lampung. The paralegals were trained by Muhammad Syarif Abadi, director of the Lampung Legal Aid Office (KBH). “I hope local people who are already legally literate can join hands to control development efforts in their villages,” said Syarif, 35.

Tisnanta, a law professor at Lampung University, praised the Lampung KBH’s initiative. People with knowledge of the law, he reasoned, could recognize corruption when they saw it. “Without being told, they will surely act right away,” he said.



The idea to train paralegals arose when Syarif heard about the case of Darmajaya, the chief of Bukit Kemuning subdistrict, North Lampung regency, in 2006. He had only been sentenced to a year in prison after misappropriating a Rp125-million development fund. His trial had also been delayed for four years. It turned out he had a lot of connections. “He’s the brother-in-law of the head of the local prosecutor’s office,” Syarif said. “Some regional councilors are also his cousins.”

At the time, Syarif thought that if villagers had been more conscious of the law, the case would not have gone unhandled for so long. “They would have urged the prosecutor to speed up the trial,” he said. That is when the idea struck him to organize paralegal training for locals.

Trainees from villages with large development-fund allocations were prioritized. Lampung KBH activists instructed them. For a week, the participants studied select criminal and civil laws. They also learned how to make case chronologies, offer solutions and connect victims with attorneys and NGOs.

The training began in Pringsewu, a poor regency with a high unemployment rate, and ended up covering nearly 500 villages in the province. As of 2013, the Lampung KBH had arranged almost 400 training courses with 10,000 participants in total!

Fajarullah stood out. In 2013, the same year he underwent the program, he assisted with the embezzlement case in Sidomulyo. It came to light when a Sidomulyo official reported that women’s business groups were heavily indebted. The official brought up the matter at an annual regency consultation in Mesuji at which Fajarullah was present, representing Wayserdang subdistrict. As the only one with



adequate knowledge of law, he was prepared to give assistance.

At the consultation, the community agreed to form a team to check those listed as in debt. Things quickly became more complicated. Of the 50 women's groups, four did not even exist. The relevant women had no business practices. It turned out that four people—two community figures, the village head and a village official—had used the women's identity cards to apply for loans. Each of the groups had obtained at least Rp20 million. The women whose names were 'borrowed' only received small rewards from the swindlers who masterminded the scheme.

When confronted, the embezzlers denied it. They claimed to have never received any money. Two community figures, Yoyo and Abu Ali, challenged Fajarullah to report them to the police.

At first, Fajarullah stayed silent while he racked his brain for a solution. He asked the women who had been listed as members of the fictitious business groups to testify. "By then they had been getting threats, so at first they refused my request," he said. So Fajarullah asked them to repay the money. None of them were ready to do that, either. Finally they testified before the police. Yoyo and Abu Ali were eventually named suspects.



Some 200 kilometers from Fajarullah's home, Agus Tri Wahyudi, a paralegal in Margodadi village, Pringsewu regency, also sent a 'government officer' to jail. It started when Agus, 50, received a complaint from Ahmad Jubaidah, chief of Adiluh village, which borders Margodadi. Ahmad told Agus that an agricultural counselor had accused him of embezzling fertilizer aid. For his own 'safety', Ahmad would have to give the man some money.

Incensed, Agus asked Ahmad to trap the trickster. He told Ahmad to make an appointment with the man. When the fake officer arrived, local people who had been asked to gather and wait for the man captured him and took him to the police.

Since the incident, at village meetings Agus always warns the crowd against believing claims by just anybody who say they work for the government. "Without proof, we can file a lawsuit for defamation," he said.

Sadly, few graduates of the KBH program have actively served as paralegals like Fajarullah and Agus. The main reason is that the work gets no pay. "Sometimes the cadres sent to training courses are not selected. They are not always activists in their villages," said Sofyan, the head of the Inter-Village Cooperation Agency in Wonosobo subdistrict, Trenggamus regency. Moreover, they have to be ready to face many adversaries, many of them influential people.

Tisnanta shared that view. Based on his observation, many paralegal training alumni avoid cases that involve the livelihood of the population. They prefer to handle personal affairs such as cases of fighting between individuals and domestic violence.

Syarif acknowledged the weaknesses. He saw no way of forcing every trainee with little education to become a paralegal. But he was not totally disappointed. "At least they've gained legal knowledge," he said. To familiarize more people with the law, he plans to compile a guidebook for prospective paralegals. "So villagers can teach themselves," he said.

■ AMANDA SIDDHARTA, WANDI BARBOY SILABAN (LAMPUNG)

A PARALEGAL COURSE IN WAYSERDANG, LAMPUNG.

MUHAMMAD SYARIF ABADI.



WANDI BARBOY SILABAN FOR TEMPO

COVERING UP FOR A CORRUPTOR

Development on the island of Semau in East Nusa Tenggara stopped when a local official was found to be stealing public funds. The villagers had to pay back the money themselves.

Some 10 wooden boats with outboard motors dashed smoothly on the waters off Onansila seaport on Semau Island, East Nusa Tenggara. Traveling 15 knots an hour, the boats carried passengers, crops and motorcycles to nearby Timor Island. The cargo belonged to residents of Kupang, Timor's biggest city.

Semau resident and onion grower Wempy Adrianus Tapa, 35, had just harvested three tons of his crop. Brokers from Kupang had come to buy from him. "Onions have become a promising commodity," he said. "The price can surpass Rp40,000 per kilogram."

Before Onansila was built two years ago, Wempy and other farmers could only sell to local residents for Rp1,250 per kilogram. The price was low because many people cultivated the same plant and they could not sell outside Semau because the trip was too expensive.

"Don't even talk about going to Kupang," said seaweed grower Yusuf Thon, 54. "Just going out of our houses happened very rarely." Streets and roads were muddy, making it hard for vehicles passing through. Villagers had to walk if they wanted to make a trip. There were no schools, health centers nor street lights. Walls and roofs were made of thatch.

The island was also shrouded in an eerie myth. It was said that residents were frequently ill and that anyone who entered it would not go home alive. The island, with a population of 8,000 people, appears dry and barren when viewed from the sea.

Semau received a bit of attention in 2005 when the government trained people to cultivate seaweed. Only two years later was the relevant infrastructure built through the National Program for People Empowerment (PNPM) in Rural Economic Independence, one of then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's initiatives.



DAVID JONI ATI (IN THE MIDDLE).

A 2012 corruption case almost terminated the aid. Semau might have been left unattended if not for the subdistrict head, a Semau native named David Joni Ati. "We are determined to save our island," he said. Now David can smile with relief. "Our region has begun to be developed," he said proudly.



David, 54, received a scholarship to pursue a master's degree at the Swiss Mechanic Polytechnic of the Bandung Technology Institute in West Java. After serving as schoolmaster at vocational schools in Kupang, he returned to South Semau—one of the island's two subdistricts—to become subdistrict chief. "I had a moral obligation to go back home," he said.

Almost immediately, he received a startling report: funds from the Women's Credit Union had been embezzled. This case was exposed by Marco, the subdistrict facilitator, who had also just assumed his post. "The position had been vacant for six months," David said.

Marco noticed some inconsistencies as he examined the bookkeeping of PNPM's financial management. No reports had been kept on people's reimbursement of their loans, while in the field debt collectors had kept on working. Right away, Marco reported his suspicion to the subdistrict chief.

PHOTO S. PRIVATE DOC.

He also approached each group. It turned out that people had actually fulfilled their loan payments. And everyone had their receipts as proof.

David launched an investigation. He held internal meetings with subdistrict facilitators, technical facilitators, the Inter-village Coordinating Agency (BKAD), the Subdistrict Audit Agency—all units within the PNPM.

In June 2012, the subdistrict facilitator conducted a first-stage audit. The result was reported to the BKAD and the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK). The amount of money embezzled came to more than Rp170 million.

After the investigation, it was found that soft loans had been embezzled since 2009 by the secretary of the Activity Management Unit (UPK), Yeser Laitabun. Every month he collected Rp5-6 million from 22 female activity groups. But the money was never deposited to the UPK treasurer.

The subdistrict facilitator, who should have been supervising the bookkeeping, never checked the incoming revenue. Every year someone new held the post, making supervision all the more loose. “In fact, I only have the authority to take action if there is a report from the facilitator,” David said.

In response, David led a special deliberation with the district and financial facilitators. They decided that the wrongdoer must return the money. But it was not only Yeser who suffered from the crime. The district government froze financial aid from the National Program for People’s Empowerment in Rural Economic Independence for all sectors. The cash-freeze would be unblocked if at least 30 percent of the embezzled money was returned.

As a result, the Onansila seaport project, which was 80 percent complete, was abandoned, with the subdistrict unable to pay the contractor. All infrastructure projects were stopped.

David needed to come up with a way to save his homeland from isolation. Then he remembered the Semau tradition of *nakamu*. For events like weddings or funerals, residents typically join together to help one another by contributing money or labor. Maybe residents could do the same to pay the debts.

At a village meeting, David asked residents to contribute. The money he collected was handed over to the PNPM. The subdistrict chief also diligently visited residents’ houses to collect the money. People protested at first. Why should they have to pay for Yeser’s embezzlement?

To persuade them, David pointed out that if the debt was not repaid, their aid would be cut off permanently. “In fact the annual total value of the aid could reach the amount of Rp2 million,” David said.

Reluctantly, the residents considered his advice. They ended up contributing Rp20,000 to Rp1 million each. Yusuf Thon, the contractor who built the seaport, even contributed Rp40 million. “I borrowed up to Rp10 million from my uncle,” he said. He was afraid that the PNPM would freeze the aid for good and consequently his expenditures for the construction of the seaport would not be repaid.

That did not mean Yeser was off the hook. His family had to come up with Rp13,750,000, which they did by selling furniture and belongings like a TV, chairs, table and wardrobe. Valuable documents they owned, such as house and land certificates, were confiscated by the subdistrict facilitator.

Within four months they were able to collect Rp140 million in *nakanu* money, which was circulated as soft loan. Yeser was thrown into prison. “We do not plan to imprison him, but he must take responsibility for his action,” said Yorrimati, a South Semau elder. To avoid getting cheated again, David always warned his residents to learn from this fiasco. “The district facilitator must write down every single expenditure and incoming funds on regular basis,” he said.

Development has since gone relatively smoothly. The Onansila seaport is now going to be expanded and the quay enlarged so big vessels can dock. “In the near future, cars can visit our island,” David said. ■ SADIKA HAMID, BUNGA PADMA PUTRI (JAKARTA)

ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN SEMAU ISLAND.



ZAINAL ARIFIN MOCHTAR DIRECTOR, ANTI-CORRUPTION STUDIES CENTER, GADJAH MADA UNIVERSITY

WE NEED SOLIDARITY-MAKERS TO FIGHT CORRUPTION

Fighting corruption is nothing new in Indonesia. But the battle fought by people in rural areas may be something that is little known by the general public. According to Zainal Arifin Mochtar, Director of the Center for Anti-Corruption Studies at Gadjah Mada University, efforts by villagers to fight corruption have to be considered significant, because so far, awareness about fighting it is mostly present amongst the middle classes in urban centers.

Urban communities are generally better informed and they are abetted by the many anti-corruption activists in towns. But when anti-corruption figures in the country's remote areas begin to emerge, it is a most important development.

Zainal, 36, a lecturer at Gadjah Mada University knows well about fighting corruption in Indonesia. In 2007, he was a member of the Task Force which set up the Corruption Court. Syari Fani of *Tempo English* interviewed him two weeks ago. Excerpts:

Under what conditions do these anti-corruption activists usually emerge?

They emerge when the public have become sick with the conditions or when there have been many victims. For example, when the local government is corrupt, there's bound to be a movement to raise public awareness. They are called solidarity-makers, people who urge people to fight.

What exactly is the role of these solidarity-makers in fighting corruption?

We have a very complex problem. Our bureaucracy and existing regulations provide opportunities for corruption. Fundamentally, we need to change the (relevant) legislation. So, the small victories are important to maintain. What the anti-corruption fighters are doing in the villages are exactly that—winning small victories. Such participation must be encouraged so that it can expand. It's like sand, when you slowly build it up to become a mountain. We just need to coordinate to ensure it becomes effective.

What do you suggest they do to ensure these small victories are truly effective?

The state must facilitate these small struggles, so it becomes a system. We are concerned that when the actors (activists) leave, there will be no more opposition. This is where coordination becomes important to make the system sustainable, to ensure people's participation are not consumed by the state or that it doesn't become more than a street battle.



What kind of system should be built?

When the anti-corruption activists report a case, they should not be afraid of threats because they would be protected. Coordination must be developed. Today, we have the Victim and Witness Protection Program, and a decree by the Police Crime Unit saying if they get a report of a corruption activity, followed by a report of charges of defamation, this will not be processed first. This is already going on, but the coordination is still lacking. There's no grand design on eliminating corruption, everything seems to move haphazardly. For instance, every ministry have overlapping regulations.

What would be the best way to create an anti-corruption leader, especially in remote areas?

Education is important, but more important is building and maintaining collective awareness that corruption is public enemy number one. One way is to form a group of anti-corruption activists. In West Sumatra there's the West Sumatra Care Forum which has become an entity to fight corruption in the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD).

Are you suggesting people should not be lone activists?

That's what I mean. Alone, you can die or disappear. We must create a systematic way of fighting corruption.

What threats would such a movement face?

This is the standard formula: the harder the eradication, the more negative elements there may be. They usually blackmail people. For example, they would create a false KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission). Good movements should not die because of such infiltrators. ■