



# **MARRIED OVER 19: The Success Stories of Stopping Child Marriage**

**Oxfam di Indonesia**

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Child Marriage**

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Penerbit Oxfam di Indonesia

## **Married Over 19: The Success Stories of Stopping Child Marriage**

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# **The Creating Spaces Project at a Glance**

“Creating Spaces to Take Action on Violence Against Women and Girls” is a project supported by GAC (Global Affairs Canada) through Oxfam Canada with the aim of Creating Spaces to Take Action against Violence Against Women and Girls. The project seeks to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Nepal. In line with Oxfam's Strategic Plan (2013-2019) to reduce the level of social acceptance and cases of gender-based violence, Creating Spaces (CS) has three main key focuses. The three key focuses include (1) the prevention key – engaging community actors to support and promote positive gender norms; (2) the key to responding – supporting women and girls who are survivors of violence and child marriage to get better services; and (3) the key to sustainability – building knowledge and capacity of institutions and alliances (networks) to influence policy change.

In implementing the CS project, Oxfam in Indonesia works closely with local partners in four provinces, namely:

1. Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI), with working areas in five districts in West Java (Bogor, Sukabumi, Bandung, Indramayu, and Cirebon).
2. LBH APIK South Sulawesi, with working areas in two districts and one city in South Sulawesi (Gowa, Pangkep, and Makassar).
3. Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), with working areas in three districts in East Java (Blitar, Bojonegoro, and Ponorogo).
4. Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI), with working areas in two districts in West Nusa Tenggara (West Lombok and North Lombok).

To date, CS has been running for five years (April 2016 – March 2021) and is entering its sixth year or year of project extension (April 2021–December 2021). The overall achievements of the CS project for 5 years are:

1. Increased commitment of key figures who can influence legal regulations at the village, district/city, and national levels. This is indicated by the success of the advocacy carried out. This project has contributed to the publication or dissemination of policies and regulations that support efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women, girls and child marriage. The hard work of CS partners with our network in advocating for Indonesian government policies in 2019 has led to the issuance of 3 (three) important regulations and policies in efforts to prevent child marriage, namely Law no. 16/2019 concerning changes to the minimum age for marriage to 19 years for both men and women, Supreme Court Regulation No. 5/2019, and the

National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Marriage (Stranas PPA). In addition to the national level, policies and regulations that are gender fair and support the prevention of child marriage have emerged in various project areas, starting at the provincial, district and village levels;

2. There has been a change in the attitudes and actions of influencers to become more gender-just;
3. Enhanced understanding, skills, and courage to speak out for women survivors in order to access and encourage the improvement of various legal services and fulfillment of the right to self-identity (marriage certificates through marriage approval (*itsbat nikah*)) and birth certificates for children born from unregistered marriages) ; and
4. Strengthening good practices and networks between the four CS partners and their networks, women's groups, and youth groups in using innovative knowledge related to the prevention and handling of violence against women, child violence and child marriage.

In its development, the resulting laws and policies do not seem to be enough to halt the increasing number of child marriages. The number of applications for marriage dispensation increased during January-June 2020, most of the requests were granted by judges of the Religious Courts. Although the number of child marriages due to the marriage dispensation mechanism increased quite sharply in 2020, there are many success stories and initiatives to prevent child marriage carried out, either by individuals, community groups, collaboration between community groups, the community with NGOs, the community with the government, as well as community groups-NGOs-Government; especially those carried out by CS-Indonesia partners and beneficiaries in the 13 districts/cities of the project area.

It is these stories of change, success stories, and initiatives of the Creating Spaces project that this book seeks to document. Hopefully this book can reach a wider audience so that it can inspire knowledge, understanding, and social norms of society, especially regarding changing the minimum age requirement from 16 years to 19 years, so that the number of child marriages can be reduced.

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# Preface

It is not easy to fight for justice on earth when the face of struggle is the face of women. It is clearly promoted by all independent nations that every human being has the same inalienable rights. It was called out loudly in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 after the bitter and painful journey throughout the world wars. It is a foothold in the history that unites various countries, nations and cultures to uphold the commitment to equal rights for humans without exception. In the spiritual journey, it is crystal clear that the expression of people's faith in the Creator is realized through justice. Justice for women. Justice for vulnerable groups. However, in the public sphere, women are often in an unfavorable position. The struggle of R.A Kartini, HR Rasuna Said, Dewi Sartika, Cut Nyak Dhien, Rohana Kudus, and other Indonesian heroes persists despite the modern life we live in now.

Oxfam appreciates the steps taken by the Government of Indonesia which has issued 3 (three) important rules and policies regarding the Prevention of Child Marriage since 2019, through Law No. 16/2019, Supreme Court Regulation No. 5/2019 and the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (Stranas PPA). However, the Covid-19 pandemic inevitably poses a great challenge to implementing

these policies. According to data from the Directorate General of the Religious Courts Body, in January-June 2020 the applications for marriage dispensation increased by 70% from 2019 which reached 34,000 cases. This data adds to the concern over the high number of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia.

In this worrying situation, there are growing hopes of groups of women and girls in the field. Various efforts and initiatives continue to be carried out by individuals, communities, and civil society groups together with local governments to halt child marriage in the field. As one of the efforts to grow these hopes, Oxfam together with Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI), LBH APIK South Sulawesi, Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), and Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI) and Konde.co initiate to write a book featuring stories written directly by the agents of change.

This book is dedicated to capturing the struggle for justice for vulnerable groups, especially women. Stories captured from the grassroots can be used as a reflection of whether justice has been realized, and whether women are supported to get empowered and to work, both in terms of social, economic, and political aspects.

Through this book, we would like to share the extraordinary efforts and collaborations carried out by the agents of change and all relevant stakeholders who have been creating spaces for improvement in the community. This compilation of stories of change is also expected to be a lesson learned and inspiration for similar movements to tirelessly encourage the efforts to prevent child marriages to eventually reduce the number of child marriages.

Oxfam in Indonesia would like to express its deepest gratitude to all contributors who took part in the series of capacity building activities that have supported the writing of this book.

We also would like to extend our appreciation to the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for the support for the efforts and the achievements. Progress in the struggle for justice for women and the protection of girls has been made possible through Oxfam in Indonesia's Creating Spaces project together with Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI), LBH APIK South Sulawesi, Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), and Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI) and Konde.co. The goal is to end violence against women, girls and child marriage in Indonesia.

Enjoy this book, we hope that it will bring about hope, inspiration and movement to continue to fight for justice for women and protection for children in Indonesia. We have a choice. Let's choose to be determined and act for change.

Salam,

**Maria Lauranti**

Country Director Oxfam di Indonesia



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# Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations, & Acronyms

<b>BPD</b>	: <i>Badan Permusyawaratan Desa</i> (Village Consultative Body)
<b>CS</b>	: <i>Creating Spaces to Take Action on Violence Against Women and Girls</i>
<b>Dinas P3AKB</b>	: Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak dan Keluarga Berencana
<b>DP3AKB</b>	: <i>Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak dan Keluarga Berencana</i> (Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning)
<b>DPR</b>	: <i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> (House of Representatives)
<b>GPMB</b>	: <i>Gerakan Pemasarakatan Minat Baca</i> (Movement for the Promotion of Reading Interest)
<b>HKSR</b>	: <i>Hak Kesehatan Seksual Reproduksi</i> (Sexual Reproductive Health Rights)
<b>IPNU/IPPNU</b>	: <i>Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama</i> (Nahdlatul Ulama Women's Student Association)
<b>Kadus</b>	: Kepala Desa (Village Head)
<b>KB</b>	: <i>Keluarga Berencana</i> (Family Planning)

<b>KDRT</b>	: Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga (Domestic Violence)
<b>KP2AB</b>	: <i>Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak Bojonegoro</i> (Care for Women and Children in Bojonegoro Community)
<b>KPI</b>	: Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Coalition)
<b>KPPAD</b>	: <i>Komisi Perlindungan dan Pengawasan Anak Daerah</i> (Regional Child Protection and Supervision Commission)
<b>KPPADM</b>	: Komunitas Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak Desa Medana (Medana Village Women and Children Protection Community)
<b>KTD</b>	: Kehamilan Tidak Diinginkan (Unwanted Pregnancy)
<b>KTPAP</b>	: <i>Pencegahan kekerasan terhadap perempuan, anak perempuan dan perkawinan anak</i> (Prevention of violence against women, girls and child marriage)
<b>LBH APIK</b>	: <i>Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan</i> (Indonesian Women's Association for Justice and Legal Aid)
<b>LGBT</b>	: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
<b>MKD</b>	: <i>Majelis Krama Desa</i> (Krama Desa Council)
<b>P3A</b>	: <i>Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak</i> (Women's Empowerment and Child Protection)
<b>PA</b>	: Perkawinan Anak (Child Marriage)
<b>PAP</b>	: <i>Paguyuban Anak Ponorogo</i> (Ponorogo Children's Community)
<b>PAUD</b>	: Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (Early Childhood Education Programs)
<b>PKM</b>	: <i>Pusat Kegiatan Masyarakat</i> (Community Center)

<b>PMI</b>	: <i>Palang Merah Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Red Cross)
<b>Raperbub</b>	: <i>Rancangan Peraturan Bupati</i> (Regent's Draft Regulation)
<b>RP3A</b>	: <i>Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak</i> (Youth Volunteers for Women and Children Care)
<b>P3A</b>	: Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (Youth Care for Women and Children)
<b>RUU PKS</b>	: Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual (Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence)
<b>SANTAI</b>	: Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (Tunas Alam Indonesia Foundation)
<b>YKP</b>	: Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (Women's Health Foundation)

# Millennial Sub-Village Heads Bring Changes to Stop Child Marriage

— *Working with millennial sub-village heads (kepala dusun or kadas) is such a great experience. We used to get rejection when offering a campaign to end child marriage. However, after establishing communication with them, it turns out that these millennial villages heads are nice and provide great support. The key is to build communication and getting to know each other.*

***Sarmini***

It was not that easy to work with sub-village leaders. At first we rarely talked, because I was just a woman who rarely contributed and not much involved in village events. But over time, we were developing relationships with the village administrators and we talked a lot.

My status as the wife of the village secretary makes it easier to get closer to them. The SANTAI (Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia) team had opened a door for us to discuss together, even giving us the opportunity to have direct dialogue with sub-village heads and village heads so that our voices are heard and can be included in the Village Regulation (Perdes) on Stopping Child Marriage.

Armed with data on the number of child marriages provided by the villages, I came to know that child marriage in our villages was due to the strong customs and rules and lack of knowledge about the impacts of child marriage in Taman Baru Village, Lombok. It is the reason why the practice of child marriage is still widely practiced.

The number of the child marriages indirectly affects the lives of people in the village of Taman Baru, the data shows that child marriage is still quite high. It triggers various social problems in the community, ranging from the high rate of divorce, violence to child neglect.

The number of child marriages in Taman Baru Village was high in 2013-2018:

SUB-VILLAGE	YEAR					
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
GELUMPANG	2	1	1	1	1	1
WEST KELEP	0	1	2	2	8	2
CENTRAL KELEP	0	1	3	4	1	0
BATU PUTIH	0	0	0	2	1	1
TIMBAL	0	0	0	0	4	3
PEMEGATAN	0	0	0	0	0	3
ORONG SANDAT	0	0	4	3	4	0
REPOK GAPIK	0	0	0	2	4	1
EAT PACE	2	3	0	0	1	0

To minimize the number of child marriages, we had a team from the SANTAI Organization in 2018. The SANTAI team provided guidance to us, that's how we first met. However, their presence arouse suspicions and was opposed by the people here

At that time, all the sub-village heads in Taman Baru Village were very reluctant to cooperate with the SANTAI as an NGO. They thought that if we were to cooperate NGOs, our activities would be hampered. It

is because NGOs have been labeled as people who try to find mistakes in the village. Thus, a lot of people rejected the SANTAI team when they first came here.

But after the SANTAI Team explained their purpose in coming to the village, namely to help us reduce the number of child marriages, the cadres in the village and I conveyed their goals to the sub-village heads and local village staff to give the SANTAI team a chance to carry out activities here.

Coincidentally, for 2021, my husband is a secretary in Taman Baru Village, so I got the opportunity to talk and convey the goals of the SANTAI team. After a month of discussions with the village head, sub-village heads and village staff, they still showed suspicious attitude, to the point that all sub-village heads were afraid of and didn't want to trust the SANTAI team.

The SANTAI team did not gave up, they kept trying to come and provided input to us women on how to be a leader. As a village cadre and the wife of the village secretary, I was the one who often met with the village administrator. We also started to have a little courage to talk about women's rights and began to influence the sub-village heads and began to introduce the effects of child marriage in our village.

And in 2019, all sub-village heads finally agreed to work with us, the women and the SANTAI team to prevent child marriage. The village administrator gave us a designated place to socialize about the impact of child marriage through the maternal and child health center (posyandu) and schools in the village.

We also tried to get closer to the sub-village heads because they were the key actors for indirectly reducing the number of child marriages in the village. By influencing them, we hope we can save the next generation from child marriage.



Taman Baru village consists of 4,234 people and 1,370 families. The overwhelming number of child marriages has motivated us to socialize the impacts of child marriage to date. Our targets are schools and posyandu in the village. Every time we do activities, we always invite the sub-village heads and school principals to participate in giving advice to the community and students about eliminating child marriage.

We were finally able to work with sub-village heads with different characters. At first it was difficult to build a communication with them, but we were able to come together with the same views when discussing the village regulation on child protection. All sub-village heads agreed to reduce the number of child marriages in our village.



Personal Doc.

Taman Baru village consists of 10 sub-villages, here is our story of the struggle to end child marriage in the village with young or millennial sub-village heads:

## 1. Gelumpang Sub-Village

Gelumpang Sub-Village consists of 59 families. The level of awareness can be seen from all the figures in the village, such as how they cooperate to organize the socialization and other activities. The sub-village head was very welcome to us as we carried out these activities because he is the key actor for providing advice to the residents.

The head of Gelumpang Sub-Village then helped to provide outreach to the community at posyandu and at Friday sermons, because these were the effective method to be implemented in the sub-village. In the span of 2019-2021, there are no more child marriages in Gelumpang Sub-Village.

## **2. West Kelep Sub-Village**

West Kelep Sub-Village consists of 149 family heads and is the second largest contributor to the number of child marriages. The sub-village head of West Kelep were getting more aware of child marriage and also provided counseling at the posyandu and Friday sermons, so that people who used to be conservative slowly realize.

It is further evidenced by the reduced number of child marriages in the village, which was up to 15 couples in 2013-2018, but successfully reduced to only 2 couples in 2018-2021. The change truly delights us.

## **3. Taman Sejati Sub-Village**

As the second contributor to child marriage, the sub-village represented by the sub-village head organized some nature-based learning activities by engaging youth groups in collaboration with KPPAD to create study groups and provide outreach at the posyandu. The rights of children and various matters concerning the rights and obligations of parents became part of the Friday sermon. The number of child marriages in this village in 2016-2017 was relatively high, reaching 15 couples, but after the change of sub-village head and the village regulation in 2018-2021, the number of child marriages decreased to 1 couple.

#### **4. Central Kelep Sub-Village**

The number of child marriages in Central Kelep Sub-Village reached 9 couples in 2016-2017, but after the change of sub-village head in 2018-2019, 4 couples were separated and 1 couple couldn't be separated.

#### **5. Eat Pace Sub-Village**

The head of this sub-village is a firm person, thus respected by the community. He also began to participate in the outreach on ending child marriage in collaboration with KPPAD and PKH assistants. Each facilitator conducted outreach to families for beneficiaries and provided materials on children's rights and how to educate children.

The marriage rate in Eat Pace Sub-Village in 2016-2017 was up to 8 couples in 2013-2018, but after KPPAD frequently conducted outreach and recruited children to join the children's forum, the children become the pioneers to end child marriages.

#### **6. Repok Gapuk Sub-Village**

It was not easy to approach the head of Repok Gapuk Sub-Village as he strictly adhered to the customs and the unrevised marriage law, namely minimum marriage age requirement for men of 19 years old and women of 16 years old.

However, after the issuance of the most recent Law No. 16 of 2019 as an Amendment to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage as mandated by the Constitutional Court (MK), he became more open to work together to disseminate information about the impacts of child marriage and the child marriage law.

Since the issuance of the revised law, the Head of the Repok Gapuk sub-village has always been responsive and quickly contact us in case of finding any child marriage. Currently there is only 1 underaged married couple, compared to the previous number of 6 couples in 2013-2018.

## **7. Batu Putih Sub-Village**

The head of Batu Putih Sub-Village is a young and passionate person. He really helped us in carrying out our duties, because he also participated in the KPPAD in the village, so it was very easy for us to work with him.

In the village, the tahfidz qur'an study group is promoted as an activity that is beneficial for young people.

## **8. Timbal Sub-Village**

Timbal sub-village significantly contributes to child marriages as there are still many children who drop out of school and their families still do not understand about family planning. This situation made the sub-village become a family planning village.

After the election of the sub-village head in 2019, he underwent many changes, such as the willingness to work together to reduce the number of child marriages. Until 2021, there is only one underaged married couple.

## **9. Pemegatan Sub-Village**

The head of Pemegatan Sub-Village is a very kind and firm person, he is never absent in every activity because he becomes to realize the impact of child marriage. He has immense influence on the progress of the sub-village and village. He was also elected as the head of the sub-village

in 2019, so it was very easy to engage him to prevent child marriage.

## 10. Orong Sandat Sub-Village

This sub-village consists of 70 families who have a religious sub-village head. At first, he was a bit difficult to engage in activities and work together to prevent child marriage as he still adhered to the religious view that compromises child marriage.

But gradually, he began to change his attitude to support us when we carry out *pembelasan* or separation activities in the neighboring sub-village. He gave his support for the couple to be separated. *Pembelasan* or *dibelas* is the process of separating the bride and groom so that they won't get married.

His support for the separation was indicated by his involvement the activity. We are very proud of his change of attitude because he had begun to realize the future of the children in the village.

He thinks that it will be very difficult to administer child marriage because the current minimum age requirement for the bride and groom is 19 years old.

After the changes of attitude of the heads of each sub-village and the outreach we frequently conducted, the community slowly began to accept and support our movement.

Thus, we hope that the movement to stop child marriage will keep going and can become a lesson learned for the society.



**Sarmini, S.Pd.**

*Born on 13 May 1990. Worked as a PKK cadre, posyandu cadre and PAUD teacher.*

## Join the Creating Space Program: I'm a Feminism and It's Cool

— *Some people seem to be allergic to the word feminism. Whereas feminism is actually a movement and ideology that fights for equality for women in politics, economy, culture, private and public spheres. After joining the Creating Space program, I feel that the struggle of feminism is cool.*

**Rezki Liana Putri**

Feminism. Many people think that feminism is something that is not commonly discussed. In fact, I've been interested in feminism for a long time, precisely since 2019.

It all started in 2018. I was part of Voluntary Corps (KSR) of the Indonesian Red Cross/PMI Blitar Regency. At that time, I was asked to attend an invitation from the Office of Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPKBP3A) Blitar Regency. It was an outreach on child marriage conducted by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP).

I thought there would be no follow up event afterwards, but I was wrong. Sometime later I was asked again to attend a 4 day training which was also held by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan.

As I never heard of women and children's issues before, I was very interested and excited to join the training because I was curious to find out what I could learn from the issues.

After completing the training, a group of young people was formed as a support group for Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan in the area, called Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (Youth Volunteers Care for Women and Children) or we often call them RP3A.

At the end of 2018, I got the opportunity to officially join Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan in the Creating Spaces program. I also participated in activities after activities until the beginning of 2020, one of which was writing training held by Oxfam in Bogor. Through the event, I met great and cool people, because that's where I got a lot of information about what feminism is.

Slowly I tried to understand feminism by following feminist group accounts, trying to accept new things even though they were different from my understanding so far. It was not surprising as in 22 years of my life, I grew up with a patriarchal culture deeply rooted in my family and my environment .

For example, my brothers always say that as a woman I must learn to cook because I will become a wife. Besides that, I always get asked when I will get married in big family gatherings. Not only that, when there is news circulating that a girl is pregnant, she will be immediately blamed and labeled as a naughty girl, I often find them all in my environment.

From there I came to know that being a feminist is cool, I can have more power over myself. Despite the fact that to get there, we have to fight for it.



Private Doc.

I also met someone who said, "Don't be too idealistic, being a feminist, being loud, you're not rich yet, it'll be hard to find a job, no one wants to hire a woman like you."

I fiercely replied, "I won't work for people who don't understand the gender concept" I said with a sarcastic smile on my face.

The more I define myself as a feminist, the more it hurts because there is so much to fight for. Like every time I talk to people, there is always someone who gets on my nerves, for example when someone suddenly discusses quite sensitive issues such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), abortion, polygamy and religious arguments, which they seem to be trying to corner me. After many discussions about these topics, I was then labeled as a person who violates nature, a person who has no manners, and many more.

I still have more to share about my experience to fight for feminism. Several years ago, I participated in a protest demanding the House of Representatives (DPR) to immediately ratify the Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence (RUU PKS). My friends and I took to the streets to take action to convey our demands. At that time since



it was not a holiday I left the class to join the protest. But who would have thought the next day when I was attending the class, the lecturer suddenly came to me and asked:

"I heard that that you took part in the demonstration and didn't attend the class yesterday, is it true?"

I answered, "Yes, because I feel the urge to take action, sir, I also didn't wear campus attributes so that should be okay."

It didn't stop there, I also received a lot of insults. People say that I try to look smart, that I just follow the crowd. And it ever brought me down. The more vocal I am, the lesser people befriend me. Being a feminist is so tiring, isn't it?

Another challenge is to find a friend I can talk to about this struggle. Just because I haven't found a good feminist partner, it does not mean that I decide to quit, I will continue to build my capacity, get more information and expand my network, hoping that I can collaborate with friends who also have the same goal.

And now, I really can't believe I get to this point. Now that I can prove that I'm not just a girl who try to look smart and follow the crowd, Creating Spaces has really made a big impact for me. In the past, I did not know anything about women's issues, but now I often become a speaker by bringing up women's and children's issues. It is undeniable that everything about me and feminism contributed greatly to my process of joining this program. I'm really happy for this achievement.

Another achievement that I am proud of is that I become a volunteer for Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (RP3A), which I mentioned before.

I live in a city where there are very few organizations concerned with women's issues, so with the RP3A, my friends and I have a big responsibility to disseminate information on women and children's issues to the public. All this time, Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan

dan Anak (RP3A) have become my movement partner and my only hope to be able to keep voicing women's and children's issues in my city.

My journey with Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (RP3A) is not always smooth, we also experience many rejections because of the issues we bring. The debate that often occurs when we target schools is when we display data on violence. Another thing, the clothes issue which I thought has been solved, it turns out that some people still have a problem with it.

Sometime around June 2021, I had the opportunity to greet students at several schools in Blitar district, in an outreach on preventing violence against women, girls and child marriage (KTPAP & PA). In one of the state high schools, at the moment of data presentation on cases of sexual violence, one of the male youth participants raised his hand and I let him speak to express his opinion.

He said something like, "Look, I want to tell you, I used to work in a cafe. Every time I saw a female visitor who comes to the cafe, I had a weird feeling. I don't agree with you telling us that clothes have nothing to do with sexual violence, because in reality men can restraint themselves more if women cover their *awrah* (body parts that must be covered in Islam), even those who has covered their body parts can still be harassed, the chance will be higher for those who wear mini clothes. "

Then a friend said, "The data that shows women and girls who wear hijab get harassed, it can be that they wear hijab at school but wear mini dress at home, that's why they get harassed."

Things like these often take me by surprise. However, my friends and I don't want to just focus on the things that hinder our journey because we really have to be patient to face these situations, that's our challenge right now.

Currently, Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (RP3A) through the Creating Spaces program have generated many young people who care about women and children issues. When I first met my friends, they didn't know anything about the issue of women and children, but as time goes on, we often hold casual discussions about gender equality, violence against women, child marriage and other women's issues that make our friends also talk more and more vocally about ending equality.

Recently I have also been asked to help resolve cases related to sexual violence, dating violence, unintended pregnancy, child marriage practices and others. I'm happy that people trust me to hear their stories and that means the people around me are getting more aware of these issues.

Although I do not have the capacity to provide assistance, I can provide information to the institutions whose cases can be referred to. It is amazing how I can network with great people around me, such as with the victims and survivors.

My encounter with Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan gives much more than I thought. Creating Spaces gives me the opportunity to establish a lot of relationships, to be dare to be myself and to not be afraid of insults due to my different views. I feel I get the space, the opportunity to speak out and increase my capacity.

Being a feminist isn't just about looking cool. More than that, being a feminist is one of my success in changing my mindset from patriarchy to gender equality.



### **Rezki Liana Putri**

*I'm 22 years old. a student of communication science at a university in Indonesia. I'm part of Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan as an SRHR activist. I actively advocate for the prevention of violence against women, girls and child marriage in the regions. I also manage a social media account for a youth forum called @youthvoice\_.*

# Men Talk About Women's Issues and Make Changes

— *Women talking about women is not unusual. But, what if it's men who talk about women? It sure is interesting. This is the story of Agus Ari Afandi, a man who fights for women's rights. He learns and teaches, moves discussion spaces and makes changes.*

## ***Rismawati***

It all started in 2019. Around February, there was a training on the involvement and role of men in efforts to prevent violence against women, girls and child marriage (KTPAP and PA) which was held by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP) in collaboration with the Bojonegoro Regency Government. through the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning (Office of P3AKB).

He is Agus Ari Afandi (46), casually called Ari, a Psychology Lecturer at a health campus in Bojonegoro Regency, East Java. He has been teaching for almost 15 years and often meets various types of students with different life backgrounds.

In the midst of a society with the patriarchal culture rooting in, it is considered taboo for men to have concerns on or speak loudly about women's rights. Starting from the notion of 'disappointing' or being

considered violating nature by fighting for equal rights for women. However, it is clear that this thought is misguided. This is what Ari's mission is: he wants to talk about women's issues more fairly.

For her, men talk about women's issues because the struggle for gender equality and justice is the struggle for all genders. With this standpoint, Ari decides to take on his role, a man who dared to talk about women's issues and the protection of child marriage.

"Actually, when we talk about the role of men in voicing women's issues, the question often asked is where should we start?," Ari told me on one occasion last week.

Ari said that the patriarchal environment seems to have formed a 'insulated wall' that separates the affairs of men and women. Therefore, when men voice women's issues, many of them are skeptical and confused: because all this time, patriarchal society has divided gender roles that are not equal for all genders.

The barriers to women's struggles that are still a burden for women too, were talked about by the Director of YKP, Nanda Dwinta Sari. She admitted that so far there are still many trainings that discuss women's violence, gender equality, prevention of child marriage, where the participants and speakers only engage women.



Private Doc.

In fact, the issue of violence against women and children should not only be an issue for women, but for everyone. So, men also have the right to take part in the voice and participate in the struggle.

For example, Ari said that there are still many assumptions circulating in the community, that reproductive health is only a women's issue. As a result, men play minimum roles. Therefore, there is a need for more effective ways to encourage men's involvement in this matter. Even men who do not have comprehensive knowledge about reproductive health can learn from each other and change their views.

"How can men also play a role in preventing violence, conveying information on reproductive health, and preventing child marriage. Men have a great privilege in terms of prohibiting his underaged children (under 19 years) to marry. He is the main decision maker in the family," explained Ari.

Aside from having a scientific background in psychology and working at the health campus, Ari also has an influence and actively contributes in disseminating the importance of information on reproductive health and prevention of child marriage to the academic environment and the wider community.

## **Challenges in the Women's Issues Campaign**

"Gender is defined as differences in roles, attributes, traits, attitudes and behaviors that evolve in society. The word gender can also be interpreted as roles constructed by the community as well as behaviors that are embedded through the socialization process related to the sexes of women and men," said Ari to the discussion participants when he became a facilitator.

Although it has been explained clearly, the concept is not simply accepted in the community. For example, during a joint dialogue meeting attended by various community groups in Pejok Village, Kedungadem District, Ari was almost overwhelmed in answering

questions from men and women who did not agree with the gender concept.

The most interesting thing was when a middle-aged man asked, "Women are by nature *wani di tata* (javanese), in Indonesian it means daring to be arranged. This means that women must obey men. What do you think of Mr. Ari?"

According to Ari, starting new practices such as listening to women's opinions, asking children what they want to eat are easy steps to give other people the right to voice their opinions, including women. Even in household relations, for example, not all housework should be done only by the wife. Starting from sweeping, washing, cleaning the bathroom, helping children to study and many other household chores that should not only be done all by women.

That way, according to Ari, we can slowly normalize domestic work, which is a life skill that can be distributed between husband and wife. So, men can also do it and not necessarily only for women.

Responding to the term *wani ditata*, Ari emphasized that it should not mean that all women's actions must be arranged by men. Women should also have equal rights. They have the right to decide what they want to wear, what they want to eat, what they want to do for a living. So men don't have the right to completely dictate women.

## Eager to Learn

In the struggle to voice women's issues and the prevention of child marriage, of course many parties encourage and help each other to get involved. Ari felt it when working with Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak Bojonegoro (KP2AB), particularly KP2AB in a village in Kapas District. Thinking that he has not mastered the reproductive health material, he asked his fellow lecturers for help to provide the material. It makes him more eager to learn again.

Getting out of comfort zone is a pretty good first step. It does not mean that being a lecturer is uncomfortable, but Ari is fully aware that one of his responsibilities, apart from being an educator or teacher, is to serve the community empowerment function that he must fulfill.

One of the students, Idatul (20) said that Ari is a cool lecturer and really enjoys presenting the material. She learns many things from Ari, mainly related to social problems exist around us. One of them is child marriage.

"I was surprised when I attended the socialization material on child marriage delivered by Mr. Ari. It turns out that the causes are quite complex, one of which is our understanding of reproductive health and psychological maturity as well. So far, many people think that getting married young is good, even though they don't know the negative impact is much more than just thinking about momentary pleasures. With unstable economic condition and emotion, early marriage may lead to divorce," said Idatul.



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Even recently, outreach activities conducted in junior and senior high schools, entitled KP2AB Goes To School, were also successfully



implemented. It is an activity designed by Ari with Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak Bojonegoro (KP2AB) whose members are men from various organizations and backgrounds, but has the same vision. It aims to end child abuse and child marriage. The enthusiasm of the participants became a booster that makes him more excited to do the next activity.

"Joining YKP and KP2AB helps me increase my reach in disseminating health information including prevention of child abuse and child marriage," Ari recently told me.

Opening a room for discussion and learning with the YKP and KP2AB communities help encourage me to engage male peers to discuss women's issues. So, talking about women's rights is not exclusive and easy to bring up in the men's circles.



## **Rismawati**

*Native Bojonegoro, born in 1993. He currently works as the Project Officer of YKP in Bojonegoro Regency, Pita Merah NGO, Bojonegoro Child Protection Institution (Lembaga Perlindungan Anak or LPA).*

# Successfully Reducing Child Marriage Rates, SANTAI Uses Local Wisdom

— *The tradition of abducting girls is considered not contrary to religious teachings for some religious and customary leaders. It leads to child marriages which are detrimental to girls. SANTAI has a surefire way to prevent it.*

***Suharti***

Fina, a teenager from Taman Baru Village, Sekotong Tengah District, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara is happy because she can help her peers not to get married.

The management of the Taman Baru Village Children's Forum actively saves abducted underaged girls from getting married. It happened on February 15, 2021.

Fina said that she encountered many obstacles to separate girls from her future husband. Families who do not understand the bad effects of child marriage are usually the stumbling block.

She just hopes that teenagers like herself don't get trapped in child marriages that greatly harm them. She wants more girls to go to school. "It's nice to see my friend can continue studying at a *pesantren* (islamic boarding school)," said Fina in Lombok on August 14, 2021.

Barriers separating girls from elopement have also been experienced by Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia or SANTAI in the last two years. The SANTAI activists together with the village government faced rejection from their families.

The girls' parents insisted that their daughters be married. Some did not want to listen to the advice on the bad effects of child marriage. They reasoned it was a disgrace to the family, afraid of getting terror and bad stigma from society.

Some of the people of West Nusa Tenggara see child marriage as a way to avoid adultery. In addition, some people label unmarried girls as not beautiful and not attractive enough for men.

Some community leaders reinforce this view, thus contributing to the high number of child marriages. Society views that women and men who have reached puberty, marked by menstruation and wet dreams, should be mature enough to get married.

Parents also feel that they will have completed their duties if they manage to marry off their children at a young age. This view reinforces child marriage. Some young Sasak people think that the *merarik* tradition in Lombok contributes to the high number of child marriages.

*Merarik* is a marriage ritual that begins with a man or boy abducting a girl or woman who will become his wife. This abduction tradition does not contain rules about the age allowed. Girls and boys who have reached puberty are eligible to carry out this tradition.

Tradition, lack of proper religious understanding, gender gap, and lack of understanding of women's and children's rights make child

marriages rife. Secretary of Sekotong Tengah Village, Rasid said preventing child marriage and violence against women in Sekotong Tengah Village requires serious attention and cross-sectoral cooperation.

SANTAI welcomed the concerns of village officials by providing space for village leaders to promote the movement to reduce violence against women and children. They also participated in stopping the practice of child marriage.

Since 2017, they have built a network with civil society organizations, local government organizations to change the situation. Running the program in four villages, SANTAI engages various groups to prevent child marriage. They named the program creating space.

Those involved are young people, women, village officials, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and community leaders. The four villages are located in Taman Baru and Sekotong Tengah in West Lombok Regency, and Singar Penjalin and Medana villages in North Lombok.

Various activities have been carried out by involving children, youth groups, women, village officials, religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, teachers, civil society organizations, regional apparatus organizations, and academics.

They carried out social mapping, identified key actors in the village, approached the village government, and leaders. Afterwards, they aligned the perspectives on the issue of child marriage, women and violence against women.

In addition, they provided capacity building through training and workshops. The SANTAI team accompanied children, youth, and women. They discussed intensely with key village figures and lobbied the district, regency and provincial governments. They strengthened the collaboration with non-governmental organizations network for the advocacy process.

Running a program to prevent child marriage was not easy. There were obstacles and challenges when they came to Taman Baru Village. The local village secretary stated that there were no cases of child marriage and accused SANTAI of searching for problems. A village head even said that the community considered it a disgrace if a child who had reached puberty did not marry.

The tradition of abducting girls does not conflict with religious teachings for some religious and customary leaders. It leads to child marriages which are detrimental to girls. Most of them are children who become victims due to the negligence of their parents.

In a bad economic situation, parents are forced to work as migrant workers. There are also children suffered from their parents' divorce, lack of knowledge about parenting, and low education. SANTAI continuously engages the village government, religious leaders, community leaders, traditional leaders, youth, women and children as the key actors who are directly involved in preventing child marriage.

The head of Sekotong Tengah Village, L. Saparudin, believes that the community will gradually accept and understand the actual bad effects of child marriage. He likens the effort to prevent child marriage to the socialization of the Family Planning program.

At first some people refused to do the family planning, but slowly they began to accept it. "Keep going and never get tired. Pros and cons are not unusual because they involve beliefs, culture, and customs," said L. Saparudin.

The solution is to build understanding, commitment, and cooperation with the village government to make policies. This collaboration gave birth to a Village Regulation on the Implementation of Child Protection and Advocacy of the Village Fund Budget for Child Empowerment and Protection Activities.

For a year, SANTAI and the village government discussed issues, problems, and prepared a draft team. They met the village head, the village secretary, the Village Consultative Body, and the sub-village heads. They also engaged women, children, and the Village Non-Commissioned Officer (*Bintara Pembina Desa* or *Babinsa*) and Community Police Officer (*Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat* or *Bhabinkamtibmas*).

The village regulation also passed the public test. It was not easy to push the village regulation because there were some people who refused it and were pessimistic that the regulation could reduce the child marriage rate.

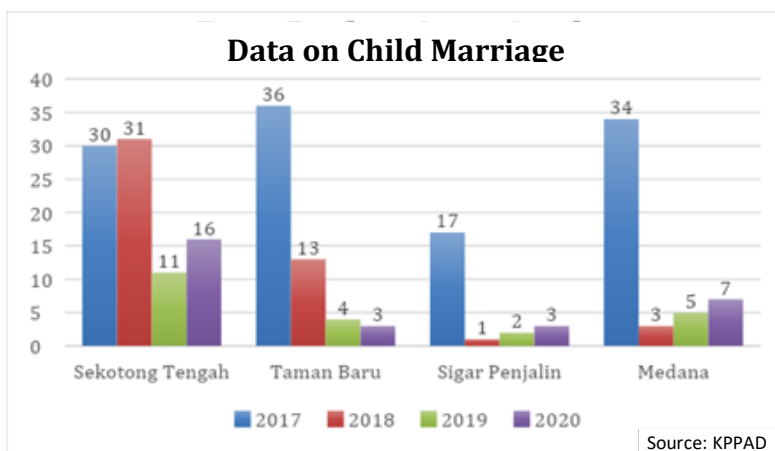
Through the village regulation, a Community Care for Village Women and Children (*Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak Desa*), a Village Children's Forum (*Forum Anak Desa*), and a Child Friendly Village Task Force (*Gugus Tugas Desa Layak Anak*) were formed, which were stipulated through a decree from the local village head. The issuance of the village regulation paved the way for the government to allocate village funds for counseling and outreach to prevent child marriage. They also provided capacity building for the Village Children's Forum and the Community Care for Village Women and Children or KPPAD.

Secretary of Sekotong Tengah Village, Rasid said that to achieve a child-friendly village, the village allocates 30 percent of village funds for health and community empowerment. The village provides children's playgrounds and child and women-friendly activities. "The number of child marriages in our village has decreased from year to year because of the program," said Rasid.

To prevent child marriage, various village communities also disseminate information to the sub-villages. Jafar, a young member of the Community Care for Village Women and Children, said that the community is increasingly aware of the dangers of child marriage. Jafar is a member of the Sekotong Tengah Village BPD who is actively involved in the child marriage prevention campaign.

In line with Jafar, Mugni, a young man from Sigar Penjalin Village said that the SANTAI program reduces the child marriage rate. There were no child marriages from January to July 2021 in all sub-villages in Sigar Penjalin Village.

People are increasingly concerned about preventing child marriage, indicated by reports of cases. The village government and SANTAI actively record cases of child marriage which were previously often covered up. The number of child marriages in these villages is decreasing.



The head of the Sekotong Tengah KPPAD, Feby, said that he had gain benefits from his involvement with SANTAI since 2017. He attended a training to build the capacity of cadres.

"Now I have the courage to accompany children's cases to completion," said Feby.

Director of the Indonesian Family Planning Association/PKBI, Ahmad Hidayat said that SANTAI used a strategy of local wisdom to prevent child marriage. Cultural approaches in Lombok to reduce child marriage rates are important as they faced challenges from local

customs. "Santi was the first organization to popularize the "*belas*" or separation efforts," he said.

The collaboration between civil society networks also gave birth to the West Lombok Regency Regional Regulation Number 09 of 2019 concerning Maturation of Marriage Age. There is also Regional Regulation Number 05 of 2021 concerning the prevention of child marriage in the West Nusa Tenggara Province. In addition, changing the behavior of key actors is the main approach to preventing early marriage. They become the agents of change in their respective environments.



### **Suharti**

*The Director of Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia/ SANTAI and a Lecturer at STIE 45 Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara/NTB.*





## Cinta's Story, Once a Victim, Now a Survivor

— *Getting married early and divorced did not make Cinta lose her hope. She later becomes an activist who fights for the end of child marriage.*

### ***Rai Askaraning Tias***

“Rai, I feel that I’m gonna divorce for the second time”, those words came from one of my friends, let’s call her Cinta, not her real name. Cinta is now 24 years old, we have the same age. When Cinta revealed her divorce plan, she was only 22 years old.

I met her for the first time at a social event in Sukabumi, a *takjil* (food for breaking the fast) sharing activity initiated by an interfaith organization there. Yes, it was the month of Ramadan in 2019, when I first met Cinta.

Cinta, at her young age, has to endure a very complicated life. Her first marriage was to a young man at the age of 17 years. She said that the reason she got married was only because Jaka, not his real name, proposed her. Ignorance and his family's economic factors finally made her choose to accept Jaka's proposal. She said, her parents always asked her to marry someone rich so that she could improve her family's economic condition.

"I actually didn't love Rai, I never felt the spark," said Cinta, reminiscing about her past.

Their marriage only lasted for 2 years. They divorced when Cinta was 19 years old. They got one child from the marriage and after the divorce, Cinta takes care of their child. The child is very cute, having big eyes, a resemblance to Cinta's eyes.

A few years after divorcing Jaka, Cinta married another man, let's call him Riki. He was still young, the same age as us. In 2019, Riki was just a 6th semester student. He studied in Sukabumi Regency, where Cinta and I live. They got to know each other in October 2018 and had intense communication for 5 months, before finally he proposed Cinta. At first she was hesitant, but he seduced Cinta and they got married in March 2019. However, their marriage only lasted for a year. In March 2020, Cinta was officially divorced for the second time at the Religious Court of Sukabumi Regency.

This kind of story doesn't just happen to my best friend, Cinta. There are so many women who have similar stories as a result of their decision to marry at a young age. They should have spent their teenage life with hanging out with friends, doing various favorite activities, and pursuing education, but here they are, stuck in such a difficult life: raising their children alone and being the breadwinner of their families.

"So it's true, Rai. If you wanna get married, not only economically prepared, you also have to be mentally prepared," said Cinta.

Now, Cinta is fighting for ending child marriage, that no other girls will be the next victims. She joined Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) in Sukabumi. Before joining KPI, we were never involved in policy formulation. But now, we are actively involved in fighting against child marriage in Sukabumi.

Child marriage brings a lot of bad effects: dropping out of school, becoming a victim of violence, divorced at a young age, increased stunting rates, and even causing death.

Through the Creating Space program, Cinta and I initially moved from Sukamanah village, Cisaat District, one of the villages in Sukabumi. There are a lot of child marriages in this village near the downtown.

At first, the community thought that child marriage was natural. They did not understand the aftermath. We advocated for a circular and Village Regulation to prevent and eliminate child marriage in this village.

The year 2019 was quite an encouraging year for us because Koalisi 18 succeeded in pushing for the revision of the Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 into the Marriage Law no. 16 of 2019, where the minimum age for marriage for women is the same as for men, which is at least 19 years. The news got us more excited to fight to stop child marriage.

In the same year, KPI in Sukabumi was involved in the formulation of the Sukabumi Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Parenting in the Family and Alternative Parenting. One of the points regulated in this regional regulation is the prevention of child marriage. Even so, we are actually not satisfied because it has not been specifically aimed at preventing child marriage in Sukabumi, and this policy has not been able to trigger the village government to make a Village Regulation on the Prevention of Child Marriage.

The year 2020 has been quite a tough year for us, funds for advocating for the prevention of child marriage have been cut on the grounds that there will be an election for Regional Heads (Pilkada) in 2020, in addition to a reshuffle in the office which is the leading sector for policies related to the Prevention of Child Marriage, namely the Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DP3A) of Sukabumi Regency. We have to work on our policy

advocacy from scratch. The Covid-19 pandemic spread almost all part of the world, including Indonesia, has made the situation worse. Our advocacy activities cannot be as unrestrained as before, the economy has also declined so that the number of child marriages has increased again.

According to data from the Religious Courts, in 2019 there were 19 cases of marriage dispensation, but the number of dispensations increased sharply in 2020 to 200 cases and in 2021, until July there were 151 cases.

Even though the budget was cut, we tried to maximize the available funds, sometimes the KPI members use their own funds. This is done to prevent child marriage. To be heard, we do not the work independently, we are assisted by other organizations in Sukabumi so that our demands can be heard by the government. We have also prepared several solutions, such as being willing to facilitate the discussion of the Regent's Draft Regulation (RaPerbup), and also preparing the initial draft of the Regent's Draft Regulation.

This collective action paid off, in March 2021, the Regent of Sukabumi ratified the Regent's Regulation No. 18 of 2021 concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage. Not long after, Sukamanah Village, Cisaat District, where we started advocating for the Prevention of Child Marriage policy, passed Village Regulation no. 3 of 2021 concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage, and agreed to allocate a budget in the Village Fund Budget for the benefit of children so that children are empowered and not married at a young age.

These regulations are a new hope for children in Sukabumi Regency. We are increasingly excited about socializing the prevention of child marriage so that more people, religious leaders, and children become aware of the existence of these regulations and the dangers of child marriage as well. Even so, there are some challenges left, the local government has not been serious about implementing the regulations on the grounds that they have no money for outreach.

These regulations are not the end of the fight against child marriage. Good and equitable implementation and outreach must be monitored so that no other stories like Cinta's story will happen. For the future of the children. Let's prevent and stop child marriage!

I learn a lot from Cinta, because after being a victim, she finally become a survivor and inspires us



**Rai Askaraning Tias**

*Activist of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI)*



## Koalisi Perempuan, the Organization Behind the Regent's Regulation on the Prevention of Child Marriage

— *The limited experience and educational background in the field of advocacy has indeed become the main obstacle in the struggle to prevent child marriage. However, this did not break the spirit of the women who are members of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) Bogor Branch. They finally succeeded in pushing policies at the regional level until the issuance of the Regent's Regulation on the Prevention of Child Marriage.*

***Mega Puspitasari***

"Miss, this is the original text of the Regent's Regulation that has been ratified," said Mr. Sudiyanto as Head of Child Protection Division of DP3AP2KB Bogor Regency while giving him a red map.



I reached out to take it, then opened the map. A golden Garuda logo is printed on the front of the paper followed by the words of Bogor Regent Regulation Number 39 of 2021 concerning Prevention of Child Marriage. I lit up when I read the title of the document clearly displayed in front of my eyes, relieved and touched to read all of this.

Four years ago was the beginning of the story of this struggle began. At that time I just found out there is an organization called the Indonesian Women's Coalition (Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia or KPI). I triggered me to find more about the issues that KPI was fighting for in the Creating Spaces program on preventing and ending child marriage.

I then tried to join a circle mostly consisted of women and met many mobilizing groups, mostly housewives. We gathered and learned together from scratch, then agreed to form the Bogor Branch of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia on December 9, 2021.

The high number of child marriages in Bogor Regency has become one of the strong foundations for the establishment of the Bogor Branch of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, the majority of which consist of housewives. As an organization engaged in policy advocacy, this is indeed a new thing for us to be directly involved in the advocacy process for the prevention of child marriage. For us, advocacy sounds foreign to us, something related to law, that's what came to our mind when we first heard it. We were just a group with absolutely no experience in conducting policy advocacy.

The limited experience and educational background in the field of advocacy is indeed a major obstacle. But it does not let us down, the women members of the Bogor Branch of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia keep advocating for policies at the regional level to the village level.

As an effort to overcome these limitations, the Creating Spaces program provides us a capacity building to develop strategies and

network with various parties to build strength in the advocacy process.

Slowly but surely, we began to talk in one forum to another to convey the condition of child marriage in Bogor Regency. We conducted network meetings with various government organizations and civil society organizations at the Bogor Regency level, such as the Children's Forum (Forum Anak), PIK (Information and Counseling Center) for Youth, Puspaga (Family Learning Center), P2TP2A (Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children), KPAD (Commission for Regional Child Protection), Motekar (Family Resilience Motivator), KNPI (Indonesian Youth National Committee), Karang Taruna, Fatayat NU, KOHATI (HMI Women's Corps), GOW (Women's Organization Association), IIDI (Indonesian Doctor's Wives Association), and IGRA (Raudhatul Athfal Teachers Association).

Not only that, we also held hearings and meetings with the local government of Bogor Regency such as DP3AP2KB (Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning), Health Office, Social Affairs Office, Education Office, Community and Village Empowerment Service, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regional Research and Development Planning Agency (Bappedalitbang), and members of the Bogor Regency Regional House of Representative.

We continue to convey that based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Java Province in 2018, Bogor Regency is the 3rd highest regency for cases of marriage in the age range of 16-19 years which can have a negative impact on the quality of life and future of children. It is necessary to have a policy that protects children in Bogor Regency from the possibility of child marriage.

We have continuously made these efforts for the last three years, inviting institutions for joint discussion one by one, visiting DPRD members one by one to raise the awareness of policy makers that the issue of child marriage is an important issue to pay attention to.

Unfortunately, these efforts have not generated significant results. Each meeting only produces pseudo recommendations without any clear follow-up. There has been no specific movement seen in efforts to prevent child marriage through regional policies. All of them agreed to prevent child marriage, but there have been no concrete steps to realize any recommendations made and tend to delegate this effort entirely to KPI Bogor Branch.

The struggle to push for special regulations related to child marriage in Bogor Regency has not yet been completed, in March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in Indonesia, making the issue of child marriage even more neglected because everything is focused on the Covid-19 mitigation.

But gradually, the Covid-19 pandemic has become a good strategy in conducting policy advocacy as it is identified that the Covid-19 pandemic may lead to higher number of child marriages due to the economic crisis and constrained educational activities. This can be seen from the increasing number of marriage dispensations both nationally and regionally, including in Bogor Regency.

Responding this situation, coinciding with 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Bogor Branch of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia held a webinar with the theme "Child Marriage Bears the Risk of Violence" which presented members of the Bogor Regency DPRD and youth as agents of change in the Bogor Branch of KPI.

"Marriage should be the union of two people as a form of worship. Therefore, to create quality worship, of course, it must also be prepared well. So it is necessary to consider physical, mental, financial readiness and other readiness. I personally agree if there is a Regional Regulation related to prevention child marriage in Bogor Regency. Later, the Bogor Branch of KPI can go to the DPRD, write a letter so that we will discuss this further later." said Teguh Widodo as a member of the DPRD.

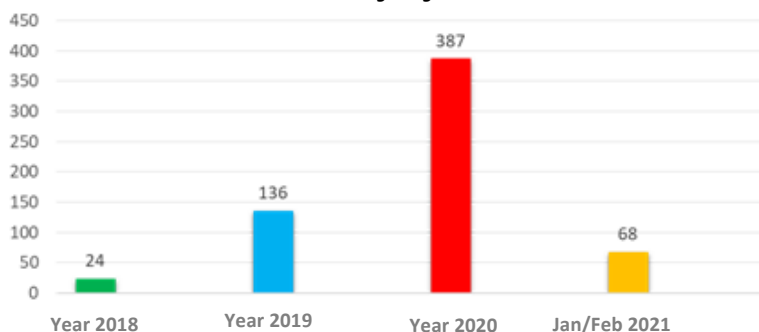
It was like a breath of fresh air, but the struggle didn't end here. On December 10, 2020, we decided to hold many network meetings with the relevant agencies. At the meeting, it was mutually agreed to advocate regional policies in the form of a Regent Regulation and the Community and Village Empowerment Office was ready to encourage the village heads to make Village Regulations if the Regent Regulation already existed.

“We really have to work hand in hand to move together to make regulations to prevent child marriage. In our opinion, it is better if we encourage policy-making that is easier to process and less expensive. Because in making regional regulations (Perda) required a large amount of money. So maybe we can make a Regent Regulation. Please, do you want it to be initiated by KPI or by us DP3AP2KB? We will have a meeting and discuss together what the next steps will be.” said Shinta Damayanti as Head of Child Protection Division of DP3AP2KB Bogor Regency.

A good response was also expressed by Miftahur as a representative of the Bogor Regency DPMD, “I agree with Mrs. Shinta and her colleagues here that we need regulations to prevent child marriage. It has been said earlier that in Bandung Regency there is already one, later we can see what the Regeant's Regulation looks like. Then it can be exposed by the Bogor Regency DP3AP2KB to become a Regeant's Regulation. After that, we will encourage the village head to make village regulations if there has been a Regeant's Regulation in place.”

### Data on Marriage Dispensation in Bogor Regency

Source: Cibirong Religious Court



Getting such a good news, of course we did not want to waste such opportunity. Learning from the experience of the previous year, where there was no further initiative to draft a Regent's Regulation, KPI Bogor Branch took the initiative to draft a Bogor Regent's Regulation on Prevention of Child Marriage. Despite some limitations, we tried to learn and took references from regions that already have regional policies on child marriage combined with local content in Bogor Regency. When finished, we again followed it up to the P3AP2KB office and distributed the draft Regent's Regulation to network partners for input.

However, before the completion of the discussion, we were shocked by the news of the sudden restructuration of regional officials in Bogor Regency, including the change of the Head of the DP3AP2KB Child Protection Division. It put us down, because it implied that we had to start it all over from scratch for lobbying and policy advocacy with a new head of the field.

Various assumptions lingered in our heads. We were worried that the new head of department would not have the same perception. But we realized if we didn't try, how would we know the result. It is better to try and fail than never to try at all. For us, what the most important is to try our best while mentally preparing ourselves if our journey may be even longer.

Thursday, February 4, 2021, we agreed to hold a meeting with the new Head of the Child Protection Division as well as conveying the previously established agreement and providing the draft Regent Regulation prepared. We were glad that we received a positive response, as the new Head of the Division working on this issue, Mr. Sudiyanta accepted our suggestion to hold a network meeting to discuss the draft Regent's Regulation that had been made. Finally, the discussion on the draft Regent's Regulation was carried out by presenting several network partners.

After getting input, we were tasked with improving the draft and then submitting it to the DP3AP3KB to be forwarded to the

Secretariat of the Legislation Section. It did not stop there, after this draft was put forward we were asked to clarify some of the points proposed in the draft. After going through several stages, finally in July 2021 we received good news that the Bogor Regent's draft Regulation on the Prevention of Child Marriage was officially approved by the Bogor Regent.

The long process of pushing for the issuance of Bogor Regent's Regulation Number 39 of 2021 concerning Prevention of Child Marriage has taught us many lessons, especially in addressing all the limitations that we faced. This is our starting point to continue our journey in reducing the number of child marriages.

Although within 3 years there has been a decrease in the number of child marriages in Bogor Regency every year, this Regent Regulation is expected to further strengthen the role of government and non-government institutions and increase the participation of the community and children in preventing child marriages. We hope this policy can be implemented properly.



### **Mega Puspitasari**

*an active member of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, she conducts policy advocacy, especially at the regional level. She is also active on the Youth Advisory Board in the Global Gen-G program representing Indonesia. In addition, she contributes to the STOP Child Marriage Movement in Bogor Regency which succeeded in pushing the ratification of Bogor Regent Regulation No. 39 of 2021 concerning Prevention of Child Marriage.*



# 'Love Can't Feed You', The Success of Youth in Lombok in Preventing Child Marriage

— *Obstacles arise from traditional leaders and merariq culture that are already rooted in the community. The Children's Forum raises solidarity and tirelessly provides counseling to villages and roadshows to schools to campaign to stop child marriage.*

***Dyah Ayu Suryani Setya P***

Gde Arya Dharma Putra, administrator of the Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum, North Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, is sad to see his friends marry young. Some of them dropped out of school.

Gde, 16 years old, is one of the teenagers who are passionate about fighting for children's rights. He strives for adults to listen and respect their voices to prevent child marriage. The fact that the village government did not support the campaign to stop early marriage agitated him.



Together with the forum members, he sought support from the regent of North Lombok by submitting a proposal so that the Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum immediately obtained legitimacy in the form of a decree. Gde also did not hesitate to convey the children's complaints to the regent.

Gde's involvement in the forum started from his interest in participating in Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia or SANTAI activities. He participated in various discussions discussing the impact of child marriage. Gde engaged the teenagers to join the activities so that the *merarik* tradition or elopement would never come across their mind.

Gde went to the regent's house and expressed his concerns. Apparently, the regent appreciated the efforts taken by Gde and provided support in the form of funding so that Gde could participate in a series of activities at the forum.

"It was a long struggle to get the Village Children's Forum Decree and budget allocation for regular activities," said Gde, Saturday, April 3, 2021.

In addition to telling about how Gde is trying to raise funds, he also mentioned a unique way to prevent his friends from marrying early. He approaches as many friends as he can in a fun way.

He tells his friends the reasons why he wants to get married young. His friend replied because of love. He proceeds to ask them, does love can feed you? If you marry young, you cannot play freely and cannot continue your education because you have to take care of the children.

In addition, Gde and his team painstakingly approach teenagers who want to marry young and visit their parents. They explain the bad effects of early marriage. "I also meet school teachers to give advice to teenagers not to get married too soon," said Gde.

Gde revealed that he build his courage thanks to SANTAI's mentoring. The Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum face various challenges to

fight for the campaign to stop child marriage, including the views and traditions deeply rooted in the community. However, the forum feels responsible for and reports cases of child marriages around them.



Personal Doc.

They are now a pioneer or a model for other children not to get married early. The Regional Commission for Supervision and Protection of Children accompanies the forum when conducting the process of *pembelasan* or separating children who have been abducted for marriage.

The success of the children's forum also encouraged SANTAI to push for the issuance of a Village Regulation on child protection in Sigar Penjalin Village. For the past five years, Santai believes that the tradition of child marriage called *merariq kodeq* is a trigger for children dropping out of school, child labor, divorced marriages, exploited migrant workers, and domestic violence. *Merariq* is a Sasak culture, part of a wedding procession where a groom abducts a bride. Kodeq is a term for children.

*Merariq Kodeq* is one of the contributing factors to the low development index of West Nusa Tenggara. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the tradition. The interpretation of *merariq* culture poses harm to girls, such as girls are prohibited from coming home after 9 pm. If this happens, then regardless of the

reason, the daughter must be married off because she is seen as a disgrace to her family. They are bounded by Awik-awik.

Awik-awik are social rules or norms that are mutually agreed upon by the community and community leaders applied in certain areas, including social sanctions. Because it is local, social sanctions are often used by boys who deliberately violate them to do the *merariq*.

SANTAI faced challenges in dealing with *merariq* culture as part of awik-awik which has become a generally accepted social rule in the community. Not to mention that the issue has something to do with religious interpretation. Some people think that when they get older and their children start dating, they must be married off immediately to protect the honor of the family as they are seen as a disgrace to the family, leading to early marriages. Some parents want to immediately release their responsibilities by marrying off their children. They are also under pressure from local customs.

SANTAI works closely with village and provincial officials to overcome these challenges. The Coordinator of the SANTAI Creating Space Program, Baiq Nuraini said that organizing and strengthening the capacity of young groups and communities with a concern on child protection was a strategy to prevent child marriage.

This strategy has become their core and has spread widely to various regions in West Nusa Tenggara, not only in the target area of the Creating Space program. We started to see the light at the end of the tunnel thanks to the collaboration to make regulations at the village to regency level. In addition to the regulations, young groups and the public were showing more courage to campaign to stop child marriage. Together with various groups in the district to the village, good practices for preventing child marriage were implemented in Sigar Penjalin Village.

There were pros and cons among village officials, religious leaders, hamlet heads and the community during the drafting of local

regulation in Sigar Penjalin Village. They believed that the regulation would destroy the social order.

SANTAI with the Regional Child Protection and Supervision Commission (KPPAD) did not give up and intensely held a workshop on drafting village regulations at the village office. In May 2021 all components of the village government agreed to ratify the Village Regulation on Child Protection in Sigar Penjalin Village. The village regulation is the village's commitment to support the activities of the Children's Forum and other support in the form of budget allocations.

Even after the issuance of the village regulation, child marriage is still practiced. The children's forum face challenges in the *pembelasan* process or the process of separating children who want to get married. Some parents think that children should play and learn instead of voicing their opinion, making a movement and fighting against social order.

Obstacles also arise from traditional leaders and *merariq* culture that are already rooted in the community. The children's forum still bears the responsibility and builds solidarity. Together with SANTAI, the Children's Forum develops some activities in the village, such as teaching and learning activities at the Community Activity Center (PKM). They also conducted counseling to villages and roadshows to schools to campaign to end child marriage.

Not only learning, the activities also include games such as making eco bricks, cleaning beaches, planting vegetables in villages and processing available resources. The movement made all parties support the activities of the Children's Forum.



Personal Doc.

To expand and strengthen the network of the children's forum, SANTAI also facilitates sharing of stories between children's forums in Tanjung District. Gde's movement with the Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum inspires the children of Tanjung District.

The impact influences the district and regency governments to be make the region more child-friendly. The involvement of Children's Forums in villages outside SANTAI'S work areas strengthens the voices of children and youth groups at the district and regency levels. Members of the Children's Forum are involved in activities in the regency.

They often share their success stories from each of the Children's Forums. Sharing these stories makes the children feel appreciated and more motivated to do their best.

The many meetings held by the Children's Forums sharpen sensitivity, increase enthusiasm, and foster leadership in children. Having them doing positive activities prevents the tendency to get married young.

They create a healthy space for children to have the right to live and grow and develop. "We also have the right to be protected and participate in the public sphere," said Gde.



### **Dyah Ayu Suryani Setya P**

*Born in Bantul, November 4, 1995. She is a member of Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI). She is moved to contribute her thoughts and experiences on the issue of child protection, prevention of violence against children and child marriage which are still prevalent in West Nusa Tenggara.*



# Ponorogo Youth Dare to Campaign to Stop Child Marriage and Gender Equality

— *This is the story of a young man named Esa, who actively accommodate children's aspirations and mobilizes many initiatives for them to enjoy their rights.*

***Ida Ayu Setyowati***

After almost 3 years involved in Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), I met Roudhotul Esa Maharani, an 11th grader at SMA N 1 Ponorogo. Our first encounter was during an advocacy training in Yogyakarta, an event organized by YKP in 2018.

At that time we went by a minibus, our regular mode of transportation used for group ride. There were several people in our group, namely the adult women's group from Gerakan Perempuan Ponorogo (the Ponorogo Women's Movement) and also the youth group. That's when I got to know Esa, she is such a smart and assertive girl.



Esa and I did many activities together, during our conversations, it seemed that she had been actively involved in organizations. She joined a student council in junior high school. In high school, she found a youth organization, Paguyuban Anak Ponorogo or PAP (the Ponorogo Children's Association), an organization under the Department of Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (P3A) of Ponorogo Regency, which collaborated with YKP. When we first met, Esa was still the member of the association. Until early 2019, she held the position of chairman of the PAP.

She shared, "I was interested in joining the children's forum because I wanted to expand my organization and relationships with people outside of school and I happened to be interested in social activities. At that time, joining the Children's Forum was a new experience, capturing children's voices, creating meaningful activities, doing campaigns, promoting and realizing children's rights. It means a lot to me."

Since she continued her studies to college, she has to migrate to other city. Now she is a freshman at a university in Malang. It does not stop her contribution as she is now an online LAP facilitator and joins the Children and Youth Advisory Network of Save the Children Indonesia, the advisory board for children and youth until 2022.

"I am actively collecting children's voices, conducting some activities for the enjoyment of the children's rights, for now I still live in Pare," she told me some time ago.

She was grateful that she had the opportunity to join Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan, after receiving the materials and attending the training held by YKP.

"I became more aware and concerned with cases of violence, how to protect myself from violence."

Esa also invites young people to empower themselves and not marry early. "I also think that the material on gender equality is very useful

because I used to think that men are above women, but after knowing that we are equal, it came to my realization that there are a lot of opportunities wide open for me.”

She dares to show herself in front of everyone because she believes that we have the same opportunity, she has more courage and can invite friends around her, especially girls, to dare to show themselves and not to be afraid because girls and boys are equal.

Esa once said, “I always believe in every action I take. Never stop and never give up halfway. I always believe in the strength of teamwork. Building morale and teamwork should be the top priority. Let's make a change!



**Ida Ayu Setyowati Utami**

*Currently an active member of Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP).*



## Village Cadres Can Prevent Child Marriage

— *Involving cadres at the village level is one way to prevent child marriage. They play an important role in youth organizations, students and PKK women. Some of them works as village officials and are members of Balai Perempuan KPI (KPI women's unit).*

***Nurlaeli***

In February 2021, a group of administrators of the Cirebon Regency branch of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) met with Cirebon Regency Government officials and members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) to discuss the regulation on the prevention of child marriage.

Cirebon has a solid network of non-governmental organizations. A number of legislators quickly responded to the problems of women and children.

In 2018, Regional Regulation Number 1 concerning the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children was issued after going through a series of discussions for several months.

The Coalition of Indonesian Women and Children and other NGOs feel the urge to fight for the realization of one of the mandates of the regional regulation, namely the regent to form a task force to prevent child marriage.

The regional regulation made KPI advocate the issuance of a Village Regulation on the prevention of child marriage to reduce the number of child marriages in the village.

However, village governments in the three program areas of Cirebon Regency have not given any response. For them, the regent's regulation should be enough. The Secretary of Gembongan Mekar Village said that in his village they had appointed someone to handle complaints about sexual violence or abuse, so there was no need for a village regulation.

Cirebon Regency is on its way to a child-friendly regency to improve their public services. The improvements include a child-friendly garden public space. In addition, they also pay attention to the practice of child marriage.

Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 states that the bride and groom must be at least 19 years old. It is three years older for girls compared to the previous regulation, Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974.

Data from the Regional Planning, Research and Development Agency of Cirebon Regency shows that the average student only attends school for 6.9 years. Referring to a news written by Pikiran Rakyat, the Health Office said stunting cases increased by 3 percent in 2021. Maternal and infant mortality cases reached 2.5% of a thousand child births, indicating that mothers were still not ready to reproduce.

The Cirebon community, which is a coastal community, is open to changes. However, the deep-rooted culture has prevented the community from fully receiving information about the adverse effects of child marriage practices.

The obstacle to socializing the prevention of child marriage is dogma or doctrine. For example, girls who have reached puberty are paired with boys. Some people think that girls who are already *baliq* (reach puberty in Islam) should have been ready to get married, even if the girl is only 11 years old.

In March 2021, good cooperation between NGOs and the district government resulted in the Regent's Regulation on the prevention of child marriage no 12 of 2021.

The regent's regulation does not necessarily eliminate child marriage, but at least Cirebon finally has a legal umbrella to defend the victims of child marriage. The regulation is a reference for encouraging villages to issue a village regulation on the prevention of child marriage.

KPI employs their cadres at the village level. They play an important role in youth organizations, students, PKK women. Some of them works as village officials and are members of Balai Perempuan KPI (KPI women's unit).

Village cadres play a role in stopping child marriage. The women's unit administrators are usually PKK cadres in their village. They often hold events at *posyandu* or PKK meetings.

During such events, they also socialize the prevention of child marriage to *posyandu* or PKK cadres who do not participate in the activities or those who have not joined *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia*. In addition, they always explain the dangers of child marriage to parents who have teenage children.

## **KPI Conducts Socialization to Prevent Child Marriage**

It was not easy to approach the village. Some religious and community leaders refused to increase the minimum age

requirement from 16 to 19 for women. In some meetings, KPI found cases of elopement and unregistered marriage.

KPI provided assistance to the residents of Gembongan Mekar Village, Babakan District, Kalimukti, Pabedilan, and Seuseupan District, Karangwareng. Balai Perempuan KPI dared to make and distribute a circular letter from Kuwu or the village head in Cirebon regarding the Prevention of Child Marriage in their respective villages.

The circular triggered the public to question the aim and purpose of preventing child marriage. KPI is optimistic that village regulations will soon be issued.

Gembongan Mekar Village as the program assisted area allocates part of the village funds for socialization activities to prevent child marriage. The village KPI women's unit is the budget manager. It is one of the village government's measures in supporting the issuance of village regulations.



### **Nurlaeli**

*Born in Cirebon, September 9, 1982. She is currently a branch secretary in Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI). She also works as a teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) and has experience as part of a Village Innovation Team.*

## Labeled as Violating the Rules, Balai Perempuan and Youth Groups Continuously Fight for Village Regulation

— *At first, many women activists were rejected by the community, even more by highly influential religious figures. However, after synergizing with village youth, the campaign to stop child marriage finally led to a Village Regulation.*

***Siti Halimatussa'diyah***

Balai Perempuan of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) in Krasak Village, Indramayu Regency is an organization that consistently campaigns to stop child marriage.

At first, many women activists were rejected by the community, even more by highly influential religious figures, because what KPI did was considered to have been violating religious rules. Many people used to believe that marrying their children off is the main solution for parents who are worried that their children will commit adultery.



The creating space program had been conducted in the region since 2017. Members of Balai Perempuan of Krasak Village then became the frontline to negotiate through discussions, explaining the importance of gender equality, children's rights, reproductive health for women and children. Community and religious leaders learned that every child has the right to live, to grow and develop, to receive protection and to participate.

But not all people accepted it, there were still many who thought and said: it's not your business, If my child gets pregnant before marriage, what will you do?

Such remarks are often heard by members of Balai perempuan. This condition was the reason for Balai Perempuan of Krasak Village as an organization in the village to more intensively engage the community to play an active role in the campaign to stop child marriage. Because from here it is hoped that there will be an agent of change who will spread information about reproductive health and the negative impact of child marriage to their peers, including in village youth organizations as a form of expression for their campaign to stop child marriage.

Data on child marriages collected by members of Balai Perempuan youth center of Krasak Village was recorded in 2018. There were 4 cases of child marriage through a marriage dispensation which was legalized by the religious court. Prior to 2018, there were 4 cases of child marriage, 3 cases passed by dispensation and 1 unregistered marriage. The current status is that some are still married and some are divorced.

The youths in Krasak Village then moved more aggressively and got more excited to campaign to stop child marriage. In addition, at that time the village government was committed to participating by issuing a Circular on the Prevention of Child Marriage Number: 005/028/ Ds.2018/ XXI/2018 which reads:

*“For the whole community, both community leaders, religious leaders in Krasak village, please take steps to prevent child marriage, including by not providing support for child marriage in both oral and written form, complying to the 12-year compulsory education, and not supporting the practice of child marriage.”*

It is proven that in 2019 there were no cases of child marriage in Krasak Village. The youth of Krasak Village were able to break the stigma about janda cilik (young widows) from Indramayu shifted into intelligent teenagers from Indramayu.

The support to prevent the practice of child marriage in Krasak Village did not stop there, by looking at the potential they have, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia of the Indramayu Regency Branch provided opportunities for the youth to take entrepreneurship classes. Then the teenagers who became agents of change collaborated with Oke Dharma to make handicrafts from wood waste. The wood waste were sourced from furniture waste in Krasak Village. The craft was marketed through the web, marketplace and social media. Some of the profit from the sale are used for the campaign to stop child marriage in the village.

“Alhamdulillah now, the youth of Krasak Village have some activities, both activities in the village as they are actively involved in the village development planning meeting, and activities outside the village government affairs. At least it can minimize the practice of child marriage,” said one religious leader during an interview.

He who used to strongly disagree with preventing child marriage, is now very active in warning and campaigning to stop child marriage in meeting forums in the village.

In 2020, the village government also made a change by issuing Village Government Regulation No. 04 of 2020 concerning Prevention of Child Marriage in Krasak Village.

Unfortunately, there was 1 case of child marriage in Krasak recorded in 2020 due to an unintended pregnancy, they could get married because they obtained a marriage dispensation from the religious court. It was followed by another case of child marriage with the same cause in May 2021, which then obtained dispensation letter administered by the court.

The pandemic makes it more complex. Youth activities are fewer due to the pandemic. It makes it harder to observe the teenagers.

## Our Homework: Stop Violence Against Women and Children

Data records at the beginning of the year (Cawalu 2021) of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia of the Indramayu Regency Branch, which have been released, recorded in data on handling cases of violence against women and children at the PPA Unit of the Indramayu Police, P2TP2A, Religious Courts and Balai PIPA (Center for Complaints and Advocacy) for Prevention of Child Marriage of KPI Indramayu.

**Data on Cases of Violence Against Women and Children  
Indramayu Police PPA Unit in 2020**

No	Type of Case	Number of Cases
1	Domestic Violence	44
2	Sexual Intercourse Against Children	30
3	Child Molestation	9
4	Trafficking	1
5	Child Abuse	21

**Data on Cases of Violence Against Women and Children  
P2TP2A DP3A of Indramayu Regency in 2020**

No	Type of Case	Number of Cases
1	Domestic Violence	3

2	Sexual Intercourse Against Children / Child Molestation	8
3	Child Custody	3
4	Trafficking	1
6	Depression	1

**Data on Cases of Violence Against Women and Children  
Balai PIPA KPI of Indramayu Regency in 2018 - 2021**

No	Type of Case	Number of Cases
1	BP Gelarmendala	12
2	BP Krasak	12
3	BP Cibeber	6
4	BP Totoran	4

**Data on Cases of Violence Against Women and Children  
Religious Court of Indramayu Regency in 2019 - 2021**

No	Data on Marriage Dispensation	Number of Cases
1	Tahun 2018	266
2	2018	266
3	2019	251
No	Data on Divorce	Number of Cases
1	2018	7,776
2	2019	8,365
3	2020 / August	6,712

The data above proves that there are still many cases of violence against women and child marriages that occur in Indramayu. This should be a special concern of the Regional Government, especially if we look again at the implementation of the Regional Regulation of

Indramayu Regency No. 18 of 2012 concerning Prevention, Protection, and Recovery of Women and Children as Acts of Violence in Indramayu Regency. Also in the Regional Regulation of Indramayu Regency number 6 of 2019 concerning the implementation of child-friendly regency.

But the struggle will not stop here, because women and children should play roles in the decision making process.



***Siti Halimatussa'diyah***

*An active member of Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) in Indramayu, West Java.*

## Children's Forum: Breaking the Negative Stigma of Young Widows in Lombok

— *Unmarried teenagers are often ridiculed as old maid. The old maid jokes made some women ashamed that they decide to practice child marriage. On the one hand, even being a divorced teenager cannot escape the stigma of young widow. The Children's Forum was formed to change that stigma.*

### ***Zohratul Maklumat***

F, he was forced to marry at a young age because of being scorned by the society. Unprepared for marriage, she struggles to make ends meet. Domestic quarrels are inevitable.

F (15 years), divorced. In the midst of her struggle to continue her life, she is often mocked and stigmatized as a young widow. As a result, F had to endure mental health problems.

"I am annoyed. Sometimes if I can't stand it, I tend to blame myself and shout out loud," she said to the Children's Forum in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, July 25, 2021.

In Lombok, some residents think that getting married young can prevent them from committing adultery. Unmarried teenagers are often ridiculed as spinsters. It embarrassed some women, so they decide to marry at a very young age.

They have to bear the double burden of having to raise children in the midst of economic hardship. Divorce within a short marriage is prevalent.

This situation moved dozens of administrators of the Taman Baru Village Children's Forum, Sekotong Tengah, West Lombok to socialize the movement to stop child marriage and stop bullying in schools and posyandu. They worked closely with the female administrators of the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan/PKH) and PKK cadres.

The administrators of the Children's Forum also planned activities to fulfill children's rights in Taman Baru Village. If they found a child who did not have a birth or marriage certificate, then the administrator reported it to the village government.

The Children's Forum was formed from mid-2019 based on the Decree of the Taman Baru Village Government. Its members are equipped with knowledge as pioneers and reporters. Taman Baru Village used to never involve children in the sub-village development planning consultations and village development planning meetings. The locals thought that the children did not understand anything.

Then, Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI) proposed cooperation with the village government by offering a program to stop child marriage and stop violence against women and children.

SANTAI made a commitment with the village government and village cadres to change the mindset of the community. They conducted advocacy and campaign in every school in Taman Baru Village.

The campaign to stop child marriage was not easy. Customs made it difficult for the Children's Forum to prevent child marriage. In fact, they were often cursed by the perpetrators of the child marriage.

However, they did not give up. In many forums, they explained that early marriage is not good for reproduction, the ovum is not ready to be fertilized, and the risk of death of pregnant children is quite high.

The Children's Forum continues to provide education to the community and some marriages can be stopped or the grooms and the brides can be separated. The toughest challenge is the number of parents who forbid their children from joining the Children's Forum. To win the hearts of parents, the Children's Forum held activities to write stories, make trash cans, work together at the mosque, and the most recent is an English course.

The children's forum initially consisted of five people. The Children's Forum started recruiting new members from ten sub-villages in Taman Baru so that currently it has 28 members.

The Secretary of the Children's Forum, Fina, hopes that there will be more members and they can build cooperation with other Children's Forums at the district or regency level to continue to work together to stop child marriage and violence against women and children.

Their hope is to become agents of change, starting from the sub-village level, village level to district level and also to be a movement that lasts and has the capacity to help and engage others to make changes.

"We started to move from this small community and we hope that we will be the pioneers of changes," said Ipan Zamroni as the Chairperson of the Children's Forum.



Members of the Children's Forum keep trying to find solutions and come up with strategies to stop their friends from getting married early. The Children's Forum has succeeded in cooperating with religious leaders, community leaders, and institutions in the village so that the child marriage rate declines from year to year. This movement will save the younger generation. The Children's Forum is also a place for them to express themselves and share ideas for making changes.

**The following table shows the number of child marriages collected by village cadres:**

SUB-VILLAGE	YEAR				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gelumpang	1	1	1		
Kelep Barat	8	2	1		
Kelep Tengah	1	0	3		
Batu Putih	1	1	0		
Timbal	4	3	0		
Pemegatan	0	3	0		
Orong Sandat	4	0	2		
Repok Gapuk	4	1	0		
Eat Pace	1	0	1		



### Zohratul Maklumat

*Born 9 May 1994. an active member of Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (KPPAD) at the village level. She teaches at a madrasah and is an Indonesian teacher school activist.*

## The Victims Who Always Cheer Me On: A Story of Caseworker

— *Being a caseworker for child marriage cases is not easy. The challenge actually came from my conservative family. I was almost beaten for having different views on feminism. My family even accused my organization, KPI, as the cause of the change in attitude that happened to me. But I never give up.*

**Saida Nafisah Abdullah**

A number of victims then cheered me on. Like one of the following victim stories. At a young age, they were busy taking care of children and the household. School uniforms, toys, and textbooks were just displays in the cupboard. They expressed their regrets and how they wanted to turn back time to me.

While holding her baby, N, a teenager in Bogor, West Java, expressed her regret over her marriage that forced her to drop out of school.

"My husband often gets angry and beats me because he thinks I'm slow at doing chores," N told me in early January 2020.

Along with two friends, I met some victims of child marriage. We met some teenagers who had dropped out of school, couldn't play rope hopping, congklak, and hide and seek. Most of them were 15-17 years old.

At a young age, they were busy taking care of children and the household. School uniforms, toys, and textbooks were just displays in the cupboard. They expressed their regrets and how they wanted to turn back time to me.



The experience was very memorable. My involvement in coming to the village and seeing teenagers getting married at such a very young age was partly related to my experience in previous organization. In March 2018, I, who was still a high school student in Cirebon City, was appointed by my organization to attend an invitation to strengthen the policy reform network for preventing child marriage formed by the Cirebon Regency KPI. In the event, I met many women representing non-governmental organizations, academics, and members of the legislature.

Holding the microphone, my voice trembled because the issue of child marriage was something new for me. I once assumed that child

marriage is normal in Indonesia. Confidently, I talked about the discussions I had in my organization at that time.

After joining the forum, I considered the issue of child marriage as an emergency. The three hours discussion for me was still not enough to understand the issue and develop a strategy.

However, from the past three hours discussion I had gotten a lot of basic ideas about how the practice of child marriage is slowly killing the character of the younger generation. I joined Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia to help run the Creating Space program which has been running to date.

Together with KPI West Java, I got a precious opportunity to formulate a Regional Regulation on Child Protection. As an observer, the first meeting is only normative.

The West Java Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning gave an introduction as the initiator of the regulation. KPI found that several points in the Regional Regulation on Child Marriage had not been integrated into the draft Child Marriage Law.

KPI continues to hold dialogues for the regulation to be integrated with the Draft Child Marriage Law, such as to consider Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning the addition of the marriage minimum age requirement.

In addition, KPI also found a number of word choices that could create a new stigma for married child victims. In February 2021, the regional regulation was successfully amended by members of the Regional Representative Council of West Java Province, namely Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2021 concerning Child Protection Providers.

The struggle to end child marriage was not easy because it had to adapt to changes in the staff of the West Java Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning (DP3AKB). KPI

also found other obstacles, such as discussions and dialogues that had to be carried out.

In fact, some of the West Java KPI staff and management were not domiciled in the city of Bandung. In addition, the discussion of the issue of child marriage was difficult because some people viewed that this issue is in the private sphere, which should not be interfered by others. They regarded child marriage as a domestic matter.

I pass on my experience at KPI to my relatives and friends. A number of friends are open to this issue. The challenge actually comes from my conservative family. I was almost beaten for having different views as I support feminism. My family blamed KPI for my attitude.

I did not give up and decided to close the discussion on religious interpretation so that there would be no bigger conflict. I thought it was my failure to explain my views and attitudes.

I think the diversity of views is not a big problem and we just need to understand each other. I try to understand my sister's disapproving views on preventing child marriage we often campaign for.

In addition, there are religious interpretations that perpetuate child marriage. Some people see child marriage as a culture that has existed since the time of the prophet. This situation made KPI West Java approach several religious figures who have the interpretation of protecting children's rights and preventing child marriage.

I gained a lot of experience in campaigning to stop child marriage from KPI. "I learned how to work with policy makers".



### **Saida Nafisah Abdullah**

*people called her Aida. A native Ende Flores, born in Soe (NTT) on September 2, 1996. Her hobbies are climbing mountains, reading (occasionally), and overthinking every night. She believes that women are not second class citizens.*

## Regarded as Mere Kids and Insignificant: Anti Mainstream Teenagers Prevent Child Marriage

— *A group of teenagers fights for the end of child marriage from village to village, faces many challenges, regarded as mere kids and insignificant. But they never give up.*

**Ahmad Fahrizal Aziz**

Mronjo, Blitar, December 17, 2020

“You're not married, that's easy for you to say,” said a man, followed by laughter from the audience, a total of around 50 people. Among them are local community leaders.

Unlike Irna as the meeting facilitator, she actually smiled wryly, her face annoyed, even though she tried to remain friendly. The other committee members, mostly teenagers, also showed the same expression. Aulya the note taker felt the urge to stand up from her seat, she refrained herself from giving a comment, she had to focus on her desk to take notes on the day's discussion.

Mrs. Lilik, the Coordinator of Family Planning of Selopuro District immediately stood up, asked for a microphone and responded.

"Yes they are teenagers, sir, but they have a concern," she said. The atmosphere became tense.



Not long after, Irna explained that the case of child marriage occurred because of a lack of understanding related to reproductive health. Children do not understand their rights as children, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and this results in UNINTENDED PREGNANCY.

A middle-aged man in a brown batik and a black hat with the symbol of a mass organization told his experience of helping handle cases of UNINTENDED PREGNANCY in his village, especially helping to obtain marriage dispensation for those who are still minors. He was a public figure.

"But in fact it's not that simple," he argued.

## **The birth of a group of teenagers advocating from village to village**

On March 21-23 2018, Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP) came to Blitar Regency to provide training to groups of teenagers and young people under the age of 22.

The YKP team sent out invitations to schools and youth organizations such as the Children's Forum, Insan Genre, Scouts and PMI to send delegates to become training participants. Among those delegated was Irnandini Putri, the head of the student council at SMPN 1 Kesamben.

They gathered at the Local Education Center (LEC) Blitar, Garum District. For 3 days they received material, discussions, played games and were invited to be more sensitive to the issue of violence against women and child marriage.

For Irnandini or usually called Irna, this activity became an interesting experience at a young age, knowing about sex, gender, sexuality, and sexual expression. Irnandini came to understand, safe and unsafe forms of sex among teenagers. She also realized how important it is for teenagers to understand their own bodies in order to avoid risky behavior.

In addition to training, YKP also created a space for them to convey this information to their peers, so that on March 23, 2018, a volunteer community was formed, named Relawan Pemuda Peduli Perempuan dan Anak or RP3A (Volunteers Youth Care for Women and Children).

"At that time the coordinator was Ms. Rezki Liana Putri, but because she was a YKP staff, I replaced her at the end of 2019. At that time, from a total of 24 members, most of them were no longer active," recalled Irna.





After being formed, RP3A frequently conducted socialization to their peers. Most of its members have also entered high school and college level. The youths held many agendas including gender discussions, outreach to schools, social services to remote villages, and youth camps. They are supported by YKP and Oxfam's Creating Space project.

Finally, an agenda was made at the village level. Selopuro District was selected as the youngest district in Blitar Regency which consisted 8 villages: Selopuro Village, Popoh Village, Jatitengah Village, Jambewangi Village, Ploso Village, Mandesan Village, Tegalrejo Village and Mronjo Village.

Irnandini herself resides in the village of Popoh, one of the villages where the child marriage rate is quite high.

"It's disheartening to see the high child marriage rate in my village, but whenever I voice my concern people always say 'she's just a kid, she knows nothing'," said Irna.

Irna is not alone, she is assisted by her peers, including Sabrina Salsabila, Aulya Nuramadani, Agasta Dicky, Karisma Okta, and Haniv

Avivu who are also activists of Relawan Pemuda Pemudi Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (RP3A).

They hope that the villages in Selopuro District have sustainable programs, especially in preventing violence against women, girls and child marriage.

Rezki Liana Putri and I helped communicate with the district government so that this program could run. By chance we have Mukhamad Muiz, one of a political party staff in Selopuro District who is also an SRHR activist. The District government was very supportive of our plan. The Selopuro District Head was even present to accompany the Head of the PPKBPPPA Office to open the inaugural meeting.

## **Obstacles in The Effort To Stop Child Marriage At The Village Level**



Personal Doc.

Support from the District did not necessarily make this event run smoothly. Discussions on child marriage in our meetings were more often concentrated on cases of UNINTENDED PREGNANCY, not on preventing risky sexual behavior.

Participants viewed that women who are pregnant out of wedlock must be married off immediately. Sadly, they preferred to marry in

an unregistered marriage if they have difficulty getting a marriage dispensation. Women who give birth without a husband were considered a family disgrace.

"There are children who are already pregnant, but it is difficult to get dispensation because they are underage, how can we get it (dispensation)?" asked one of the participants, which made us frown.

On the other hand, many considered cases of violence to occur because of moral and behavioral problems.

"Our daughters must also be taught to look modest so that they don't look inviting," replied another participant.

The most painful response, of course, was what Irnandini and his friends feared, namely that they were regarded as kids and inexperienced to discuss marriage. This kind of response brought them down, after the meeting agenda we discussed the "mental burden" in running this program. Sometimes we even shed tears during evaluation meeting.



"But don't worry, our goal is to prevent child marriage, on how the village can make a program to prevent child marriage, right?" I said firmly.

In the midst of the sadness, it turned out that quite a lot of people were supporting us. The youth from Karang Taruna, for example, or from youth organizations.

Niken, Galuh and Fauzi were some of the youth who supported us. At the second meeting, Niken and Fauzi represented community groups to present recommendations for the prevention of child marriage in front of the village heads.

This meeting was attended by representatives of the Village Consultative Body (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa or BPD). Mrs. Ulfa from BPD Tegalrejo gave her appreciation and explained that the program had been budgeted for but no one had implemented it.

Likewise with the village head of Mandesan, he budgeted funds worth Rp 5 million from other programs that have not been absorbed.

"You can be use the budget as no one does the work," complained the Mandesan Village Head.

It gave us a glimmer of hope that the child marriage prevention program could be realized in every village.

After that, we held a Youth Camp for 3 days in Batu City, where most of the participants were Selopuro youths. They were equipped with knowledge as they will be the pioneers at the district level.

The volunteer team also discussed whether to propose village regulations or the formation of volunteer teams in each village. Muiz, who also worked in the district government and knew the real conditions in the field, expressed his opinion that making village regulations is not an easy thing, especially since no one initiates it in every village.

It was a heated discussion. The effectiveness of the issuance of Village Regulations on the minimum marriage age requirement was still questionable, not to mention the legal procedures.

The village regulation regarding the minimum marriage age requirement was actually one of our goals in this meeting, because it strengthened the implementation of Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage. However, we recognized that prevention is equally important.

Finally, the volunteer team decided to organize a training at the district and village levels to form these youth groups, hoping that someone would run the village program.

"We form RP3A branches in every village," said Irna, who was very excited about the idea.

Finally, at the fourth meeting, we discussed the issue. Representing the committee, I gave a speech and conveyed the results of consultation with the volunteer team.

## Small But Sure Steps



"Don't you want to get smarter?" said the Selopuro Village Head that afternoon, when Irna and Muiz as facilitators asked the participants for support to support the program to form a youth group that cares for women and children in their village.

After commenting, the village head of Selopuro signed the commitment. According to him, spending a budget to educate the people themselves is a positive thing.

The other village heads had not yet taken a stand, even though they had been represented by the BPD. However, since the program was first launched, it was the youth groups who responded the fastest. They were even ready to be part of the district RP3A.

The head of the PPKBPPPA office, Eka Purwanta, hoped that this program could be monitored continuously until the realization.

"I also hope that YKP will extend its program with us, because the struggle to reduce the number of child marriages requires a shared responsibility, including with men and women in the village," hoped Eka Purwanta.

One day, RP3A received an invitation to be a resource person in an activity conducted by the village Nahdlatul Ulama Women's Student Association (Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama or IPNU/IPPNU). The community began to be more aware of the importance of Reproductive Health.

Mrs. Lilik, coordinator of the District Family Planning, had also started to massively revive the Village Children's Forum, so that activities involving children and adolescents can be more accommodated. Discussions related to the Village level Children's Forum became an important part of the 4 meetings in the village.

Coincidentally, for 2 periods, RP3A activists were also the heads of the District Children's Forum. During this period, the Blitar Regency Children's Forum was chaired by Sabrina Salsabila Wahab.

RP3A was preparing to hold a village-level training. The village head and BPD had responded positively to support the agenda. It was a great momentum because youth groups were getting more attention, especially attention to capacity building and knowledge related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

"We hope that Selopuro District will become a model for other districts in Blitar Regency to be more concerned with the issue of child marriage," said Irnandini.



### **Ahmad Fahrizal Aziz**

*A blogger and entrepreneur. Since 2019, he has been an SRHR activist who later joined Komunitas Laki-laki Peduli Perempuan dan Anak (Men's Community who Cares for Women and Children). He is also a literacy activist and is a member of Gerakan Masyarakat Minat Baca or GPMB (Movement for the Promotion of Reading Interest) of Blitar Regency. Can be reached via his personal blog at [www.fahrizal.art](http://www.fahrizal.art).*

# Not Always a Victim, Indah Becomes a Survivor of Child Marriage

— *Indah, not her real name, is a girl who became a victim of the practice of child marriage, as a result of being raped by her boyfriend. Supported by her parents, Indah decided to keep her unborn baby, gave birth and took care of her child. She also decided to work and continued her education. She chose to forget her irresponsible husband.*

***Siti Noor Ainie***

The tiny house in the corner was quite humble. There was a board measuring by 1 meter across blocking anyone from entering the house. There were 2 babies there.

A woman was lying in the living room which also functions as a family room. A pile of clothes piled on the chair. When I arrived, the woman who was sleeping her baby woke up, immediately tidied the room and invited me to sit down.





She was Tiwi (45), not her real name, the mother of Indah (18). Indah was forced to marry young, before completing her high school education.

Dating Doni, not his real name, made Indah pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. The baby boy, who had not reached 1 year old, was taken care of by her mother because she had to work as a laborer in a beverage stall, to meet their end needs.

Indah once told about incidents of sexual violence and child marriage happened to her.

"I dated Doni because my friend introduced him to me. Actually I wasn't into him. But as his friend tricked me, Doni raped me in my boarding house," said Indah, starting her story.

Telling the story made her recollecting the sexual violence. Too much sadness in it. While occasionally serving customers at her employer's shop, Indah continued her story. Doni is 1 year younger than her, she got to know him through social media and through her friend. She ended the story and asked me to talk about it further at her house the next day.

We continued the conversation the next day.

"I was pregnant, but my parents did not know because we lived in different cities. I called my mother when I was going to give birth at the hospital. Of course she was surprised, but she accompanied me when I gave birth," Indah started the story at our second meeting at her home, accompanied by her mother and father, Agus (50).

She did not know that having sexual intercourse will lead to pregnancy. She just realized she was pregnant when she was 6 months pregnant. She found out because she had not had her period for 6 months. Then Doni bought her a pregnancy test, which turned out to be positive. Of course she was afraid and worried. Doni asked her to abort the baby, but she refused.

One afternoon when they were drinking coffee at a coffee shop not far from a private hospital, Indah felt contractions in her stomach. She did not know that it was a sign that she was about to give birth. Because her stomach pain was getting worse, Doni carried her on a motorbike and took her to the nearest hospital.

"It turned out it had been on the 8th opening, then the doctor told me to tell my parents, because I was 18 years old. Terrified, I called my mother, and finally she came to wait for me to give birth," she recalled the bittersweet moment.

Her parents then accepted any decision she made to her baby, but not with Doni's parents. Doni's parents blamed Indah for what happened. It hurt her. The boy, younger than Indah, also did not want to be responsible for her pregnancy and their baby. After her delivery, Doni had not appeared again.

"When my son was 4 months old, then we got married. It was also because my father and my family forced Doni to marry me. We got married only for getting the status of husband and wife, but I was the only breadwinner, my husband did not care," explained Indah.

Her wedding in the small village was attended by neighbors and relatives of 100 people. Relatives and family warmly welcomed the wedding, especially with the presence of a baby boy who was the first grandchild for Indah's family.

"Even though she has a child, we still married them off. Many neighbors came, relatives were all kind to us. No one left us just because Indah already has a child" said Tiwi, Indah's mother.

It was not easy for Indah to get the status as a wife. However, she doesn't want her child to have no father. Her boy will definitely ask her who his father is.

With her father, Indah tried to obtain the marriage papers. Indah also had to face Doni and his family, who were increasingly hostile to Indah. Regardless of all that, Indah and her father managed to meet

all the marriage procedure requirements, including attending the marriage dispensation trial at the Ponorogo Religious Court.

“At that time my father dropped me there, and Doni was accompanied by his relatives. We didn't greet each other there. Because basically Doni did not want to marry me,” said Indah.

Indah is the eldest of the 4 siblings in a city in East Java. Her three younger siblings were still very young, her mother still breastfeeds the youngest child, and at the same time takes care of Indah's child. Her father works as a casual laborer with uncertain income. It was hard for them to feed 7 people in the family.

Not wanting her siblings to end up like her, Indah warned her three younger siblings to be selective in making friends and to continue their education to the highest level possible. Because having children at a very young age will be very detrimental to women.

“I always advise my younger siblings, they must be successful. They have to attend higher education, get a job and help our parents,” Indah repeatedly said it in front of her younger siblings.

## **Wish to Go Back to School and Move On**

Now Indah works in Surabaya, not living in her hometown. She also regularly goes home to see her son.

Indah stated that she had moved on and no longer wanted to think about her husband who was never responsible for their child. Their marriage is just a status, they never live together, let alone him be responsible for their children.

"I don't care about him anymore. My priority is to work, take care of children and continue my education,” she explained.

Indah also has a plan to continue her education, as she has not finished her senior high school. Just before a final exam on the second grade in 2020, she had to drop out of school because she was pregnant. Now she has the access to the package C, equivalent to senior high school. Indah will go back to school.

In this non-formal school which is equivalent to senior high school, she will continue her education online. Because the online learning system at SKB is available for 24 hours, from Monday to Friday, Indah can work while attending school. Pursuing package C is one of the means for underprivileged communities, as well as those who cannot continue to formal education. SKB is a form of educational institution that provides services to the community.

"In this SKB, the learning process is through online platform available for 24 hours, because the students are those who are already working or any other circumstances. Currently, the school is free. If you register now, you can attend the school this year."

Actually, her parents wanted Indah to stay in their hometown and work whatever she can do. But Indah refused, arguing that the salary in their hometown was too small, especially for a junior high school diploma. For this reason, she is determined to continue her education to help improve her family's financial condition.

"There the salary is not enough, only IDR. 800 thousand, while in Surabaya it can reach IDR 3 million," explained Indah excitedly.

She works to buy milk, diapers and food. In the midst of the problems she faces, Indah does not want to give up, she has moved on as a victim of sexual violence and has a job while continuing her education.



### **Siti Noor Ainie**

*Secretary of GPP (Gerakan Perempuan Ponorogo) an organization formed by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP).*

# Pioneer of a New Men's Group in Blitar Regency: Mu'iz's Story

— *We, the men who fight for gender equality in Blitar, will continue to make efforts to make impact to the environment. Ranging from exchanging opinions, collecting data and information, writing for changes, to documenting them in various media.*

## **Mukhamad Mu'iz**

There are so many gender injustices around us. In the patriarchal society, women are often positioned unequally to men. They are forced to be the second class citizens. It culminated in violence, with the perpetrators being predominantly male.

Tracing back to 2009, in Blitar Regency, East Java, there was a case of sexual violence that led to a murder of a woman with special needs. The suspect was a married man. In 2018, there were also reports of the arrests of a perpetrator who raped a 7-year-old girl from Selokajang Village, Srengat, Blitar.

I feel ashamed, but at the same time I become more aware and moved. I am determined to break the chain: men must be educated

and participate in the fight against all forms of gender injustice, including violence against women. The method I take is to participate in pioneering a group of men fighting for gender equality in the neighborhood I live in, Blitar, East Java.

You can call me Mu'iz. A 23 year old male, wearing eye glasses with thick eyebrows and straight black hair. Born in Blitar, East Java, and like most Javanese: brown skinned.

## **The Moment of Change**

The wall clock showed 08:00 AM GMT+7. In a room on the 3rd floor of the Blitar Lama Regency government building, on Jl. Sudanco Supriyadi, Sanan Wetan District. At that time in 2018, a training was being held by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan/YKP.

The training was held for three days, starting with an introduction to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, violence against women and girls and child marriage, gender equality, to advocacy. The number of participants was around 30 men, coming from various organizations and different backgrounds.

As happened in my village, the Head of the Office of Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Blitar Regency, Wahid Rosyidi, said that cases of violence against women were still high. In 2017, there were 85 cases of violence against women and children in Blitar Regency, including sexual harassment and domestic violence.

Meanwhile, part of the training that really moved me was what conveyed by the Chairperson of the Daily Executive Board of Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan/YKP, Zumrotin K Susilo. He said that socialization about sexuality education and reproductive health is often rejected by community groups because of misunderstandings. Most people think the education on sexuality and reproductive health teaches promiscuity.

I reflected and silently listening. I agree with what Zumrotin said: the struggle for gender equity is also closely related to education on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), there are still many obstacles in the field.

At the end of the training, I became more anxious. I was motivated to investigate: What can I do? How to play a role in conveying a gender equal message which is relatively new in my environment? What should I do to get my message accepted and not be ignored?



Personal Doc.

Having the opportunity to develop actions after the training, I was excited to participate in mobilizing men's groups as volunteers to care for women and children. My sole intention was to be able to spread the spirit of the movement for the men's group. Invite them to fight for gender justice. Including, against all forms of violence.

Slowly but surely, I started actively make a training movement in a discussion forum related to gender equality entitled 'Men and women have equal rights.' Did it goes smoothly right away? Of course not!

In the middle of the presentation, one of the community leaders interrupted, he said "There is no such thing as equal rights between men and women," he said.





Kesetaraan Gender

HKSR

Stop Kekerasan Terhadap  
Perempuan dan anak  
perempuan

Stop Perkawinan Anak



Not without reason, in our environment, women are still widely regarded as 'kanca wingking' or companions, unreliable, and unstable. In social status, women are also expected not to be leaders or have higher positions than men. While in the realm of marriage, women should only work on the domestic sphere.

For me, this kind of thinking makes gender inequality even worse. Not to mention misogyny as a behavior that creates extreme hatred or dislike for women, increasingly perpetuating patriarchal culture. So how to change it?

## **Collaboration To Drive Changes**

I was lucky to meet Irna, a female colleague from the same regency. We were also brought together in a movement with volunteers caring for women and children. We talk about our experiences and struggles in the field.

She said a sentence that moved me--as a man who fights for gender justice. "There are many good people in this world, if you can't find them, be one of them," she said.

In this connection, it is also important to make efforts to bring out female figures in the male dominated world, so that patriarchal culture of society can be slowly eroded. Furthermore, it can also strategically target policy makers.

In the movement, collecting data and information about an issue in the region as well as writing documentation of cases related to women and girls, is the most difficult thing for me.

I once had a dialogue with one of the female figures in Blitar. Titim Fatmawati is the name of the founder of Sapuan, a women and children institution. She told me that she had been rejected by a community group in one area. She must have permission to dig up information to the victim.

Not all questions got answers, either out of shame or disgrace. Another challenge, sometimes there were some figures who seem to cover up and even give inappropriate answers. I met them, gave an explanation, and finally they understood.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide the right knowledge on sexuality and reproductive health education to the community.

As I had collected the information and data, I was accompanied by a group to dare to propose my area as one of the pilot area and to intensify socialization related to Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning the minimum marriage age requirement.

This step is an important benchmark in our movement, that with public discussions between the district government and community groups and accompanied by assisted groups, we can reach a consensus to end the violence against women and girls.



Personal Doc.

What really excites me is the fact that I could invite many people, including young people, to get ready to make changes in their environments. They also signed a joint statement against violence against women and girls in society.

Although this is just the beginning, there are still many stages that I have to go through, but I am happy that slowly changes can be made.

Most importantly, the common vision, mission and goals. There is also collaboration from various circles of society.

Thus, it is proven the campaign and socialization of the law drive changes. At least from early January to mid-March, cases of violence against women and children in Blitar Regency experienced a downward trend compared to the same period last year.

Quoted by Mayangkara News (15/03/2021), Head of the Office of Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Blitar Regency, Eka Purwanta, said that from January to March, there were 4 cases of violence against women and 7 cases of child abuse. This figure is lower compared to in 2020 which reached 11 cases in the same quarter.

Based on data from the Selopuro District KUA-PLKB Selopuro District, the number of child marriages in the sub-district has also decreased. As of January to June 2021, there were 8 cases, compared the previous year in 2020 with 25 cases.

Eka Purwanta said the decline in cases at the beginning of this year was also due to the fact that people were more aware of avoiding problems that led to cases of violence. For example, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual harassment.

He ensures that they will be proactive in handling cases, such as providing psychological assistance for victims and mediation for the problem-solving process.

Meanwhile, we, men who fight for gender in Blitar, will continue to make efforts to have an impact on the environment. From exchanging opinions, collecting data and information, writing for changes, to documenting them in various media.

We hope that we can ignite the spirit of gender justice. Together with the community and assisted groups, we will also be able to overcome various difficulties. That's the beauty of collaboration!



## **Mukhamad Mu'iz**

*A young man from Blitar, East Java. Born in 1995, he is currently an active member of RP3A Blitar Regency, Blitar Koi Club, PPPKBP3A Office Blitar Regency. He is also a youth volunteer caring for women and children in Selopuro District, Blitar Regency.*

# The Children's Forum Has Changed the Face of Our Village

— *The presence of a children's forum has changed the face of our village. The high number of child marriages has been declining and become a concern for the village because the youth are concerned about this condition*

**Wiwin Tri Komala**

It all started with an encounter with Muzayyin, my best friend who had been a cadre of Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia (SANTAI), I began to join some social activities. It was around the end of 2018, after the Lombok earthquake.

My fellow teenagers and young people and I actively distributed social assistance for earthquake victims. In the midst of these activities, we were offered by the SANTAI Organization through Muzayyin to establish a child-friendly post in Tembobor Daya Sub-Village as a trauma healing space for the surrounding children.

This activity encouraged me to continue to play an active role, especially since it was not much different from my job as an early childhood educator (PAUD). From the beginning, in every training, I

was only a backup participant because I have other duties and responsibilities as the Head of PAUD and as a housewife. However, everything went smoothly and well managed.

My husband even supported my activities, as long as it's for the benefit of many people, as he said. Until finally, in October 2018, I was asked to become a SANTAI cadre to replace Zawil Fadli who became the Head of Sigar Penjalin Village.

In 2019, SANTAI invited us to initiate the formation of the Village Children's Forum in Sigar Penjalin Village. We did this because child marriages were still rampant in these remote sub-villages.

In this children's forum, we then mapped out a number of factors contributing to the high rate of child marriage. One of the contributing factors to the occurrence of child marriage in our area was the mindset of parents who want their children to get married quickly in order to reduce the family's economic burden, it was the starting point for the many problems faced by children, particularly girls. Many problems occurred in their marriage which eventually led to divorce. The girls have to bear the consequences and their parents have to help take care of their grandchildren. Instead of being a solution for the family, it brings new complicated problems coming from economic and social factors.



Personal Doc.

Moved by the conditions, we, the activists of the Children's Forum, provide some materials to the children at the Children's Forum to provide socialization to sub-villages and schools. We think these are highly strategic places for conducting outreach to children, women and the public. On the other hand, we also schedule mutual cooperation activities to mosques in Sigar Penjalin Village to introduce to the community that Sigar Penjalin Village already has a forum for the children.

Through these activities, the number of members of the Children's Forum are growing and reaching wider area. Now there are 50 people scattered in all sub-villages in Sigar Penjalin Village. Interestingly, the village government begins to open up to the issues that we offer.

## **The New Village Decree and Regulation**

About three months later we fought for the Decree (SK) of the Children's Forum. In July 2019 our struggle paid off, we finally got the approval of a decree from the Sigar Penjalin Village Government.

With the legalization of the decree by the village government, we become more active in the Children's Forum. At first we carried out outreach to all sub-villages in Sigar Penjalin Village on the topic "Stop Child Marriage" and "Stop Violence Against Women".

In addition to issuing a decree, the village government also issued a Village Regulation (for Child Protection). We need to face many challenges before the village government issues the Village Regulation on Child Protection.

One of them is the difference in understanding of child protection and women's protection. At that time we proposed the protection of children and women, because these two things are interrelated and inseparable. However, there is a different statutory mandate to reduce it to a village regulation.





Forum Anak Desa  
Sigar Penjalin

Forum Anak Desa  
Sigar Penjalin

Child Protection is regulated in the Child Protection Law, while Women's Protection is regulated in the Women's Protection Law so that the formulation of the Village Regulation cannot be combined immediately. In addition to differences of opinion, there are many other priority activities at the village level that need attention so that it becomes one of the obstacles in the issuance of the Village Regulation on Child Protection.



Personal Doc.

Likewise at the Public Test stage which include the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and the Village Head. It turned out that there was still resistance at that time coming from a member of the Village Consultative Body/BPD and regional representatives. They argued that because there had been no village regulation which could be a basis to make a further village regulation related to the submission of the village regulation on the Protection of Children and Women, this advocacy could not be continued.

However, this can be responded to and re-explained, because the making of a village regulation does not require an authoritative village regulation. In a sense, with the inauguration of the Village Head, it can be directly stated that he already has the inherent authority.

The long journey finally paid off, the village regulation was finally signed, both by the Village Head and the BPD. I am very grateful for

the commitment and consistency of the Children's Forum members who continue to oversee the village regulation process until it is realized.

What makes me and other Children's Forum members happier is when we also received a program budget from the village that was sourced from the Village Fund, implying that the village increases their support for this program.

However, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, which requires the village government to allocate program funds into cash transfer (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai* or BLT) assistance funds due to budget refocusing, the fund has not been realized until now.

The active involvement of other institutions in the village also a breath of fresh air to this important movement. Take, for example, the Village Courtesy Council (Majelis Krama Desa or MKD) which has started to aggressively fight against child marriage, by including stopping child marriage and violence against women in the form of Awik Awik Desa regulations. Village officials also have the same understanding as the village regulation that has been signed, where regional officials have started waiting for socializations from the Children's Forum to strengthen them when facilitating child marriage. In their view, apart from the village regulation, the members of Children's Forum is expected to be peer facilitators when socializing or mediating child marriages to the sub-villages.

With the Village Regulation on Child Protection and the active role of the Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum, which continues to actively provide socialization and education for parents and their peers, it turns out to be quite influential in reducing the number of early marriages in Sigar Penjalin Village. We can observe that from 2018 to 2020 there was a decline of around 25% from previous years. This is also supported by the increasing number of members of the Children's Forum from year to year. The members of the Children's Forum are scattered in all sub-villages in Sigar Penjalin Village.

The Children's Forum has also begun to dare to show itself to the village government by socializing the agenda of activities in the past year.

During this pandemic, we invite the members of the Children's Forum and our fellow teenagers to learn to make masks to help the elderly and vulnerable village communities. In addition, we also made a work program to distribute Takjil during the month of Ramadan in front of the village office, and worked together in 13 sub-villages in Sigar Penjalin Village. By carrying out such activities, it becomes a strategy to gain trust from the community. In fact, we hope that their children will join us to learn and work together at the Village Children's Forum. In the future, the Village Children's Forum wants to make Sigar Penjalin Village a Child Marriage Prevention Village.

## **Incorporating Women's Activities In The Village**

From the whole process that I went through as a SANTAI cadre, I learned an important and challenging lesson when I dared to approach the Majelis Krama Desa (MKD) on behalf of the PKK to include child marriage age to the awik-awik (customary law).

Another change that SANTAI made was related to the training to increase the capacity of village facilitators and many other trainings, thereby increasing my confidence to carry out dialogues through the Village Regulation. I also participated in the village PKK as the head of working group 2 for Education, Sigar Penjalin Village PKK and Team 11 of the Village Medium Term Development Plan/RPJMDes. In addition, I also act as a facilitator of the Sigar Penjalin Village Children's Forum and join the advocacy team of Kaukus Perempuan. Everything I do is not far from my activities as an early childhood educator who put concerns on child and gender equality.



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One aspect that we are targeting through women's advocacy is the involvement of women in every village meeting. Because in 2018 the 30% quota was never met at every meeting in the village. After dialogues with the Sigar Penjalin Village Government, the village finally involved 30% of women and fulfilled the quota in every sub-village meeting, village meeting and village development plan meeting (Musrenbangdes). In addition, I also provide active assistance to village women to get to know Information and Technology/IT in obtaining village development information through their Android and Non-Android mobile phones.

The women in sub-villages can also access health information and other information on development by simply calling the village code number.

I also partner with PKK working group 4 in the health sector, I propose a program for PMT (Supplementary Feeding) for pregnant women. The purpose of PMT itself is to tackle the high stunting rate in Sigar Penjalin Village. In addition, I also propose the assistance of nine basic commodities / basic necessities for the elderly, people with disabilities and others because the poverty rate is still high.

Through this program, Sigar Penjalin Village is now a village under the PKK of West Nusa Tenggara Province. One of the programs that we also run is the socialization of PUP (Marriage Age Maturation) for teenagers. We conduct this program by roadshows to schools and watching movies about the dangers of getting married young. On the

sidelines of the event, we usually provide games to make it more interesting for our younger siblings to be able to stimulate the material they receive.

In order to continue to accommodate the Children's Forum programs that we will offer every year, I applied to be a member of the BPD and was finally elected. This is due to the self-confidence built through SANTAI activities and programs as well as the knowledge and capacity that I have gained through the trainings at SANTAI.

All of that fosters a sense of sensitivity and concern for us to the social problems of society. Of course, these important spaces should be used as a means of our movement. My presence in the BPD is important to network with the village government. Not only that, I continue to work with the community to fight against child marriage by joining the social affair office as a village counselor which gives me the space to meet the community directly and work with SANTAI to stop violence against women.

Wiwin Tri Komala, that's my full name. People often call me Wiwin. Born to a humble family on a small island (gili) named Gili Trawangan, Gili Indah Village, Pemenang District, North Lombok Regency. Since I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a teacher. However, the development of tourism in Gili Trawangan has led me to continue my education to high school in the tourism sector and actively contribute to our village to this day.



### **Wiwin Tri Komala**

Before being engaged in the village issues for 13 years, she was already engaged in early childhood education as a pioneer and principal of one of the PAUD schools in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. In addition, she is a drafter of the RPJMDes in Sigar Penjalin Village and as the chairman of working group 2 PKK. Active as a facilitator for children's forums and in Kaukus Perempuan as part of the advocacy team.



# No More Child Marriage: A Survivor's Story

—— Domestic violence, divorce, to the hardship of being a single mother, are some of the negative consequence of child marriage. But she never gives up, because life must go on

**R.A Kartini**

“No other girls should get through what I got through” said a woman with a red hijab, with a trembling voice. The room was silent for a moment. All eyes were on a woman named Reski Rosmaria, 41 years old.

The woman from Kanjilo Village is a survivor of child marriage. At that time, she married her boyfriend at the age of 17 due to an unintended pregnancy.

After getting married, Reski lived in Kanjilo Village to follow her husband because her family did not approve the marriage. A year of marriage, Reski still felt the happiness of her small family. But after that, many other things about her new husband were revealed: his drinking habit and his affair with another woman.



They began to quarrel a lot, which led to domestic violence suffered by Reski. She could not stand it, so she filed for divorce at the Sungguminasa Religious Court.

After the divorce, Reski began to think about how to feed her two children with her junior high school diploma. She then began to become a cadre of the Kanjilo Village PKK and a road construction/repair committee in her village. It was not easy to do the job, she often gets ridiculed and insulted because she only graduated from junior high school.

In 2011, Reski finally decided to take package C through the Learning Activity Center in Pallangga District, until she passed the exam. Armed with this diploma, Reski eventually became an officer of the Population Census held by the Gowa Regency Statistic Office and a teacher at Aisyiyah Kindergarten.

Reski then got married in 2012. Thanks to the support of her husband, she applied for a state university and was called to take the Out-of-School Education exam at the Makassar State University. She passed the entrance exam and got an undergraduate scholarship.

After four years of study, Reski also completed her undergraduate education in 2016 with the Cum Laude predicate. Such a great achievement. After graduating from her bachelor degree, she began teaching functional literacy for dropout children at the elementary and junior high school levels at the Learning Activity Center in Pallangga District.



In addition, she also carries out women's empowerment activities related to producing cheese sticks in Biring Kaloro Village, Pallangga District, which mainly targets women victims of domestic violence and is active in working group 2 PKK Kanjilo Village in charge of implementing training for women and Bina Keluarga Balita (Family Development for Toddlers).

In 2017, Reski Rosmaria was appointed as Chair of the PKK Mobilization Team in Kanjilo Village. At that time, LBH APIK South Sulawesi was to run the Creating Spaces program in Kanjilo Village, Gowa Regency.

## The Beginning of Making Changes

The Creating Spaces program run by LBH Apik covers 3 areas, namely Makassar City, Gowa Regency and Pangkep. Kanjilo Village is one of the program intervention areas in Gowa Regency. It started from a

regular discussion on preventing violence against women and child marriage, she was very interested to participate in the discussion.

According to her, the material that was the subject of discussion was very relevant to what she experienced and what she saw happening around her. She began to realize that what she was experiencing at that time, was the impact of child marriage. Sge dropped out of school until she became a victim of domestic violence which eventually led to a divorce.

The toughest situation in her life at that time was her eldest son also died in 2017, after more than a year of suffering from bone loss. Reski did experience pregnancy complications. This made her very sad, and even decided to take a hiatus for a few months from activities in the community. But in the end, she made up her mind to become an agent of change.



Personal Doc.

Reski began to actively participate in the Creating Spaces program activities at LBH APIK. She also began to actively build networks with the Village Government, community leaders, religious leaders and female cadres in Kanjilo Village. She realized that to make changes in her village, she had to work with these figures.

Is the journey of change easy? Of course not! Moreover, the patriarchal culture in Kanjilo Village is still very strong, in fact it is often associated with religious teachings, where women are a symbol of shame and disgrace for the family. If there is a girl who gets closer to a boy, she will immediately be married off to avoid adultery or *silariang* (elopement).

Armed with the focus of her study in college, Reski then became more active in providing socialization to youth groups around her environment. One of the most important things is how to make friends with less risk and the impact of child marriage.

She is not alone in carrying out her activities. She is often accompanied by Mutiara, an 18 year old girl. Mainly, every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, when lectures are off.

They usually do socialization to teenagers in Camba Village. To break the ice during the discussion, Reski and Mutiara sometimes also give games or quizzes with prizes of tumbler souvenirs that they bought personally, so that the participants become more interested.

Seeing Reski's consistency and determination with other cadres, the Kanjilo Village Head also provided support. One of his support is to accommodate her proposal on empowerment activities in the form of capacity building for housewives and strengthening groups of young people, representing the working group 2.



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This is important because there are more than 900 families who belong to the poor group, so it is important to build economic strengthening at the household level. It is undeniable that child marriage also contributes to the increasing poverty rate in Kanjilo Village, before 2018 many teenage girls married at the age of 14-15 years, they dropped out of school at the junior high school level.

After the discourse on the amendment of the Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, in the middle of 2019, Reski together with community leaders, village officials and religious leaders who have received capacity building are more intensively conducting socialization, even becoming a team for drafting the Kanjilo Village Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children from Violence which in one of the articles stipulates the prevention of child marriage in Kanjilo Village.

The *Imam* (religious leader) of Kanjilo Village said that from 2019 to 2020 there had been 10 child marriages for which he had rejected because the brides and grooms were still underage. There were even 2 families who finally canceled their child's marriage after being visited and educated by Reski, the village *imam* and the head of the sub-village.

## Keep Determined

Some time ago, I received a call from Reski. She reported that she was invited to be a resource person at the webinar 'Gempita Kebaikan Sulawesi Selatan' which was supported by UNICEF and U-report Indonesia. Reski was asked to talk about Child Marriage from a Cultural and Religious Perspective.

She was so happy. However, there is something troubling. She admitted that she did not really know what to share in the forum. She also felt insecure, even more because this event was said to be presenting prominent speakers from the provincial level. Meanwhile, she only comes from the community, who speaks from village to village.

"Many friends suggested to reject the offer, but I want to ask Mrs. Kiki's opinion," Reski said to me, with a little hesitation and asking for input.

"Just accept it, Reski, the capacity building that you have received so far is very sufficient to become a resource person for the event. Public speaking skills can be improved if you dare to speak in public spaces," I said firmly.

I also convinced Reski to believe in herself. As a person who has been in the community with her, I know her very well, she has experience and knowledge that is also qualified. Especially when it comes to child marriage.

"I will help you with reference materials, as long as you want to try it. You can relate this to your experience as a child marriage survivor, what conditions you experienced and your observations of the environment around you at that time," I added.

She finally decided to speak in the forum. She thanked me and asked me to allocate time to discuss with her.

On the day of the webinar, Reski at that time looked so beautiful on the laptop screen. She was well-dressed wearing her hijab, with a touch of make-up and a sweet smile plastered on her face. Although she seemed a little nervous at first, she slowly got excited and became more confident to talk about Child Marriage, its causes, impacts and experiences which she associated with Makassar cultural and religious perspectives.

After several tens of minutes of material presentation, she closed her talks with the last sentence, "I am determined to be an agent of change, because I don't want other girls to experience it. No other girls should get through what I got through," she concluded.



## **R.A. Kartini**

*born in Makassar in 1990. Active as Program Staff of LBH APIK South Sulawesi (Program Coordinator of Creating Spaces LBH APIK South Sulawesi). She has been involved in the movement to prevent gender-based violence and child marriage.*

# Feminism is Not Only for Women, Men Can Also Be Feminists

— *Actually men can be feminists. The following sentences show how men can also be feminists: "feminism is not only for women, the character of feminism must also be owned by men. Because men also have to be gentle to anyone. Men who are born with a feminist character is lucky, you are blessed with various great characters."*

**Rian Adi Kurniawan**

There is a man, let's call him gondrong. Gondrong is an Indonesian word for men's long hair as his hair is long and slightly wavy. He pondered, confusion lingers in his mind. He is finding something new that he just learned: gender issues.

During his time as a student at one of the Islamic boarding schools, Gondrong had never heard of the word gender. It was only in college that he heard it.

Gender is a social construct that shapes men and women. This construct is dynamic, which means that it can change or can be



exchanged, is not a gift from God but the result of the labels created by humans which is influenced by education, culture, environment and local traditions.

Gondrong silently mumbled, "Hmm, gender, what kind of food is it? How come it's never been written in the yellow book (book of teaching materials in Islamic boarding schools), how come men want to be equated with women?"

It is conflicting, but he never stopped learning. He kept trying to find out everything he didn't know, until finally along the way he experienced many dynamics, he slowly began to understand it.



Personal Doc.

Gondrong has fellow activists including: Nita and Marni. Nita is an active member of Student Executive Board (BEM), while Marni is an active member of the Indonesian Women's Islamic Student Movement Corps (Korps Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia Putri or KOPRI) or PMII women's forum.

Before hearing the word gender, he had ever opposed the women's forum in the organization. His reason was simple, Gondrong viewed that the existence of such a forum will narrow the women's movement. For him, women and men should be able to contest

freely in leadership, but since the existence of women's organizations, it seems as if it creates a division, women are busy with women's affairs only, and men must be busy with their own affairs. So with that reason, Gondrong strongly opposed.

He kept opposing it to the point where always argue from one forum another. There was a time where there was a debate between Gondrong and some of his female friends.

"Wouldn't the existence of a women's forum narrow the women's movement themselves?," Gondrong asked his female friend.

"How come?," Marni asked back in surprise.

"Yes, as if they have created a division between men and women so that they cannot compete freely in the struggle for leadership," Gondrong replied in a high tone.

"It might be true," said Nita as if to accept his opinion.

"Oh no, this women's forum was formed to accommodate female cadres in the process of increasing their capacity, so they are really ready to contest," said Marni to Gondrong.

"Do you want to increase your capacity or to gossip more?," said Gondrong to Marni.

"You have never experienced the process of being a woman, one day I will definitely prove it," said Marni.

"Okay," said Gondrong and Nita at the same time.

They left.

## Participate in Training on Gender

Suddenly Gondrong was chosen to be one of the participants in the training on the involvement of men in the socialization of prevention of child marriage organized by Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan/YKP.

He was surprised because he had never heard of such training before. Although shocked, Gondrong still attended the training as a representative of one of the student bodies.

It was located in the Hall of the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection & Family Planning. In the training, Gondrong met various participants with different backgrounds. Gondrong as an activist, Ari as a lecturer, Lasmin and Khoiri with a youth organization background, Arif as a teacher and Rio is from a street children's forum.

The composition of the participants was very interesting because they came from various backgrounds, so they indirectly shared a lot of experiences with their respective backgrounds.

Gondrong finally found something memorable when one of the speakers explained the topic of reproductive health. He was told to come forward to wear props made of cloth with detailed pictures of the structure of the vagina and penis. In addition, there were also two other props, the first was made of wood to resemble a penis, while the second was made of cloth to resemble a vagina.

His face showed it all, Gondrong felt very awkward because it was his first time holding the props. He found many new lessons, especially about reproductive health. The lesson was able to break the taboos that had been stuck in his mind. Gondrong began to open his mind, he slowly understood reproductive health issues.

Reproductive health is a condition of physical, mental and social health that involves reproductive functions, systems, processes and organs. The male reproductive system includes: penis, scrotum,

testes, epididymis, urethra, prostate gland, and Cowper's glands. While the female reproductive system includes: vagina, cervix, fallopian tubes or tubes, ovaries, and uterus.

Penis is a male genitalia that functions as a urinary tract or urine as well as a place for sperm to come out, the penis itself has two parts, namely the head and body. Furthermore, the scrotum which functions to maintain the temperature of the testes to be suitable for producing sperm in the scrotum which consists of two testes. The testes have the function of producing sperm, it is the internal genitalia. The epididymis is a temporary storage area for sperm and a tube that exits the testes. The urethra functions as the outlet for urine and sperm, it is the last tube. The prostate gland produces an acidic fluid, it is located under the bladder. Finally, the Cowper's glands produce mucus and alkaline fluids, which function to neutralize the urine remaining in the urethra so that sperm remains protected.

Furthermore, he also studied about the female reproductive system which includes: the vagina which is the place where menstrual blood flows as well as a tube that connects the uterus with the outer body. Next there is the cervix, which is the lower uterine structure that narrows and opens towards the vagina. The fallopian tube, also known as the oviduct, carries the egg from the infundibulum to the uterus, and each woman's body has a pair on the right and left. The ovary is a place for a collection of cells called follicles, the follicle is also where the ovum is developed, it also produces the hormones of estrogen and progesterone. Finally, the uterus serves as the place for the fetus to develop after the egg is fertilized by sperm.

After the training, Gondrong reflected what he studied, he imagined how complicated the structure of the reproductive system is, it turns out that men and women have different structures. He tried to talk to himself, it means that the handling and treatment between men and women should also be different.

His mind began to focus on the debate a few months ago with Marni about women's forum. This time he thought about the importance of a forum for women, at least to handle the affairs of the reproductive system independently.

Men and women are indeed different from a biological point of view, so they require different treatment. But it should not be a reason to discriminate because in terms of social structure, men and women still have the same roles and functions.

Gondrong also felt lucky to gain this kind of knowledge, he is aware that men and women are biologically different creatures. This difference requires different handling.

Thanks to the training, Gondrong also has a concern for women. After that, he always campaigned for women's reproductive health, both in coffee shops and in other women's trainings.

One day Gondrong was having coffee with his two male friends who were also in his class. We can call them Jokun and Qomar, they are both activists who have accompanied Gondrong in the organization' from the beginning to date. The three of them had a conversation in the coffee shop.

"Bro, yesterday I finished a training, and the training was very uncommon," Gondrong opened the conversation.

"What was the training like?," said Qomar curiously.

"It must be like any other trainings," added Jokun in a slightly curt tone.

"This is really new, the training was titled the involvement of men in preventing child marriage, one of the materials was reproductive health."

"Huh, reproductive health?," they answered, dumbfounded.

"Yes, reproductive health is important for us to know, apart from relating to ourselves, it is also related to the lives of many people," said Gondrong, hoping that this conversation would not be tense.



Personal Doc.

This kind of conversation are now his daily talks for Gondrong. In the past he was against women's forum, now he cares about women.

Anytime he gets an opportunity to speak in forums on gender, he always provides input on reproductive health and gender so that others can learn more about it.



## Rian Adi Kurniawan

*Is a man born in Bojonegoro in 1996. He is currently an active member of Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia(PMII) and Komunitas Peduli Perempuan dan Anak Bojonegoro (KP2AB) at YKP. The young man who is often called Gondrong, was the Chairman of the PMII Commissariat Sunan Giri Bojonegoro for the 2018/2019 period and one of the KP2AB declarators.*



# How SANTAI Counselors Fight Against Child Marriage in Lombok

— *Domestic violence affects the children who witness and even often experience it. The children imitate the behavior of their parents, how they speak harshly and act violently outside the home. SANTAI Counselors share their stories in assisting child marriage cases in Lombok.*

***Yulisda Ainun***

Siti, not her real name, a grade 6 elementary school student in West Nusa Tenggara dropped out of school because she was forced to get married. Born into a family of scrap collectors, Siti and her family did not have sufficient knowledge about the dangers and risks of child marriage.

The quiet 13-year-old girl got pregnant with her boyfriend, 16 years old, in June 2019. she hid the pregnancy for six months from her parents for fear of being scolded. Together with neighbors, the skinny girl came to her boyfriend's family house to ask for an answer.



The local sub-village head heard the incident and informed the village counselor and child protection agency. After getting treatment from a counselor, Siti still wanted to get married. She refused to go home. "I am ashamed of and afraid of being hit by my father," said Siti.

The counselor then put Siti to a safe house in Mataram. The midwife in the sub-village examined Siti intensively to determine her gestational age and health condition.

A month later, Siti's parents then processed her marriage dispensation because she was categorized as a child. She lost her hopes of getting an elementary school diploma as she got married before she graduated. Siti was embarrassed to take the final school exam because she was pregnant. She surrendered and believed the pregnancy was her fate from God.

Two months later her baby was born. She had to get up in the middle of the night to breastfeed, bathe, and take care for her young child. Her teenage years that should have been spent playing and studying have been robbed.

Siti lives in the same house with her husband and in-laws. Her husband is unemployed. "Being a wife is not as easy as I imagined," Siti said to me while holding her baby.

In Lombok, child marriage is not uncommon. Some people consider quarrels, verbal and physical violence as part of marriage. The settlement is through a mediation by the sub-village head, concluded with a peace agreement, that should be enough.

In fact, domestic violence has an impact on their children who witness and often experience the violence. The children imitate the behavior of their parents, speak harshly and act violently outside the home.

A village chief said he had married off hundreds of minors before the marriage law was revised. For him, marrying a couple who are still

children triggers an inner conflict. But, he couldn't reject them because some of them still had familial relations with him.

Siti is one of the children born to a family with poor economic conditions. She lived with six siblings and parents in a very small and slum house. His father worked as a casual laborer. He worked as a fisherman and a waste picker.

Siti's family is one of the beneficiaries of the Family Hope Program. The amount of the assistance is too small and not enough for their daily needs.

Lack of attention and affection from parents makes Siti trapped in an unhealthy relationship with her boyfriend. Siti also does not know about the importance of reproductive health. Siti's husband was also born into a family with a low income. Like Siti, her partner who is still a child also dropped out of school.

I am a housewife who has a daughter from my marriage to a man from the land of Bima. Living in Lombok for nine years, I accompany children who are victims of early marriage.

Siti is one of my assisted children, my first encounter with Siti was not that good, when I accompanied the process of separation, Siti wanted to marry the man who impregnated her.

Siti had rejected me, because in her mind I would take her away from the person she loved and the father of her biological child. Feelings of sadness and anger welled up inside her. I picked her up that night to take her home.

After successfully bringing Siti home, the midwife and doctor checked her pregnancy.

Then I took Siti to the Safe House in Mataram. I also persuaded her family to accept her situation at that time and finally the family could accept it. Siti's parents and I then took her to the safe house.

Persuading Siti to continue her education was not easy because of the economic condition and limited understanding of the importance of education. I hope one day she can continue her education.

Her condition after giving birth was worrying because she is still not used to the status of being married at a young age. Not to mention her family's low economic condition. I often visited her and brought baby necessities and groceries.

Together with Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia in North Lombok, I accompanied her as a counselor. Aside from being a counselor, I am a cadre of mobilizers who have worked for five years to assist Medana and Sigar Penjalín villages in reducing child marriage and ending violence against women and children.

I joined SANTAI since 2017. Due to my concern for the rampant cases of Child Marriage and Violence against Women and Children in Medana village, I moved with my friends who support and share the same spirit, campaigning to stop child marriage and violence against children and women.

SANTAI supports us in creating a community so that the village has a place to accommodate residents' complaints. We formed the Medana Village Women and Children Protection Community or KPPADM.

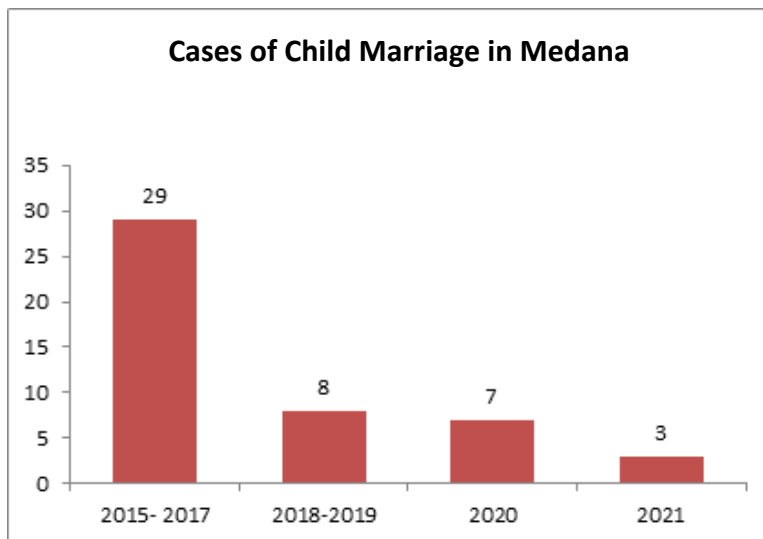
Established on December 17, 2018, the community consists of people who have a concern in preventing child marriage in the village and stopping violence against women and children.

This community was formed thanks to SANTAI's collaboration with Creating Space. Both focus on preventing and stopping violence against women and children as well as child marriage in the villages of Medana and Sigar Penjalín.

SANTAI has started assisting Medana Village since 2016. The activities are outreach to every sub-village, forming cadres who can connect the village government with the community to protect children.

Medana was chosen as the assisted area because it is the largest contributor to child marriage in North Lombok.

SANTAI's assistance paid off as the number of child marriages in Medana Village declined. Before 2018, the number of child marriages in Medana was 28 cases. A year later until now, the average child marriage cases are 2-7 cases, per year. As shown in the table below:



Public awareness to prevent the practice of child marriage continues to emerge. In addition, there are also village awiq-awiq on the protection of women and children. Awiq-awiq is a joint regulation agreed upon by all elements in the village, including religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, youth and children leaders, and women leaders in the village. The joint agreement is to stop all forms of violence against women and children, as well as child marriage in Medana village.

There is also a Village Regulation on the Implementation of Child Protection. The head of the sub-village begins not daring to marry off its citizens who are at the age of children. SANTAI's involvement helps

the work of child counselors. The community dares to report all forms of violence experienced by women and children around them.

The challenge is to open people's minds and public awareness that children are not only assets, but God's gift that must be protected. Some of the victims I assisted were children who did not get enough attention from their parents. They were neglected.

Child marriage is a serious problem that needs efforts to stop it. It takes the cooperation of many parties to make it happen. If one could save just a pair of children, then it would have saved a pair of golden generations, future successors.

Strengthening communication within the family will create a harmonious family, taking care of each other with love and affection. The family plays an important role in maintaining household harmony. Parents are in charge of protecting their children from harm. We should not just surrender to fate, as religious people, we can also change our fate as God has promised to the people.



### **Yulisda Ainun, S.Sos.**

*Born in Balikpapan, July 11, 1984. Now she lives and works in North Lombok Regency, precisely in the village of Medana. Joined Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia since 2017. Due to her concern for the rampant cases of Child Marriage and Violence against Women and Children in Medana village, she started to carry out a movement with friends who support and share the same spirit, namely caring to move in campaigning for Stop Child Marriage and Stop Violence Against Women and Children in the village.*

# EPILOGUE

## Creating Stories of Changes

*Feby Indirani*

Social changes always start with narrative changes.

Telling --and creating stories-- is a long-standing way of producing, conveying and passing on knowledge. Stories are used to preserve traditions, communicate social and ethical codes, spread ideas and experiences, signify group ownership, as well as to entertain. But we know, stories are never neutral, but always reflect people's power relations, identities, norms and ideologies. What story or whose story? Who or what can tell or illustrate the story, and who is the audience? How is knowledge built, maintained, and negotiated through stories?

Activists for the elimination of child marriage in Indonesia must deal with ancient narratives rooted in our society, which are intertwined with religious traditions and teachings. Efforts to eliminate child marriage inevitably lead to discourses on gender justice, women's reproductive rights, feminism, which are still foreign to many people. Rejection and judgment often block the journey. Activists from Selopuro District, Blitar, East Java, for example, often burst into tears when sharing their experiences during program evaluations.

From Sukabumi, Indramayu, Bojonegoro, Ponorogo to Lombok, the experiences of these activists are similar. Tired, frustrated and fed up when their efforts were opposed by community leaders with

conflicting opinions or changes in policy and officials at the bureaucratic level which regress the social movements. But even in the midst of it all, there were always 'small' victories. Meetings with the sub-village head went smoothly, village leaders and religious leaders who initially refused were getting more open, friends of survivors who rose up and empowered others, and so on.

Then later, greater victories were achieved. Advocacy carried out by activists from Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) at the regional level and the Yayasan Tunas Alam (Santai) which endorsed the legalization of village regulations in Sukamanah, Krasak and Sigar Penjalin, and which is currently in process in Taman Baru. The realization of the Regent's Regulation in Bogor and Sukabumi after four years of the journey with all its ups and downs, is an inspiring achievement.

Stories like these are important to write and share. Through stories, everything is framed and interpreted, individuals and groups are connected and can strengthen each other. The achievements of Koalisi 18+ at the national level to encourage the revision of the Marriage Law and increase the minimum marriage age for girls have become a source of encouragement for activists in many regions, as stated by Rai Askaraning Tias in Sukabumi. We can also see that collective narrative changes go hand in hand and parallel with individual transformations and narrative changes as told by Muhammad Mu'iz and Reski Liana Putri (Blitar), Rian Adi Kurniawan (Bojonegoro), and Wiwin Tri Komala (Lombok). Diving deep into the stories of these activists, we learn that by telling stories, they are building agency, shaping identity and driving action, including being able to get more people to join the movement.

Of course there is a lot of important work – apart from telling stories – that activists do in the process of social change. Networking, holding hearings, negotiating and lobbying, advocacy, reporting and recording, even the most passive work like waiting. However, in the last two decades, studies and research in various countries have revealed the importance of storytelling in social change movements. For example, ethnographic research from sociologist Elizabeth

Borland (2014) on the process of ups and downs of the activists of abortion rights legalization movement in Argentina, the majority of which are conservative and Roman Catholic.

Borland's research reveals how Argentine activists often resort to storytelling when faced with various obstacles and disappointments with politicians and experienced a number of setbacks in the course of 15 years of the advocacy process. Activists narrate the challenges they face, try to make sense of what happened, and sometimes that's all they need to keep moving. They analyze, take lessons, and turn disappointment into new strategies. In January 2021, the victory was achieved, Argentina officially became the largest Latin American country to legalize abortion.

There will always be obstacles along the journey, maybe the occasional setback. There will be good days and bad days. Telling and creating stories helps establish context to connect the past, present, and future of the movement's journey. Strengthening us to achieve our goal: a more just Indonesia, free from cases of child marriage and gender-based violence.



### **Feby Indirani**

*A journalist and writer. Feby is popular as a short story writer and has published a collection of short stories entitled *Bukan Perawan Maria* (Not Virgin Mary) which has been translated into English and into Italian entitled *Non 'mica la vergine Maria* and published in mid-June 2019 by the Add Editore printer. Feby teaches creative writing and journalism classes.*



Working with the millennial heads of sub-village is such a great experience. We used to get rejection when we campaigned to end child marriage. However, after establishing communication with them, it turns out that these millennial heads of sub-village are friendly and provide great support. The key is to build communication and get to know each other.

(SARMINI)

Some people seem to be allergic to the word “feminism.” In contrast, feminism is a movement and ideology fighting for equality for women in politics, economy, culture, private and public spheres. After joining the Creating Space program, I feel the true meaning behind the feminism cause.

(REZKI LIANA PUTRI)

The formation of youth groups that struggle in many villages to end child marriage faces many challenges, from being regarded as mere kids until considered insignificant. But they never give up.

(AHMAD FAHRIZAL AZIZ)

We, the men who fight for gender equality in Blitar, will continue to impact the community—ranging from exchanging opinions, collecting data and information, writing the story of change, and documenting them in various media.

(MUKHAMAD MU'IZ)

Experiencing domestic violence, divorce, and the hardship of being a single mother are several negative consequences of child marriage. But she never gives up because life must go on.

(R.A. KARTINI)

