

# MAMPU KITA

KABAR DARI KITA



**BIMONTHLY UPDATE OF MAMPU PROGRAM**

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## GRASSROOTS WOMEN FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Facing COVID-19, an Invisible Enemy

[Told by Faridah Hanum, PEKKA North Sumatra]

Sentang Village lies on the coast of Batu Bara Regency in North Sumatra. Most residents work in the fishing industry. Faridah, a member of the PEKKA Union, owns a seafood processing and trading business.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, all business activities and seafood trading has stopped. The novel coronavirus caused people to panic. Residents were worried about how to avoid being infected, but were more worried about how they would survive and meet their basic food requirements.

"We are actually scared of dying, not because of the coronavirus, but rather because of hunger," said Faridah, a mother of seven.

Before the pandemic, Faridah and other PEKKA members would prepare and sell seafood. They would, for example, shell and then sell prawns to larger export businesses. Now all import and export activities have halted due to social distancing requirements. There are no stocks of seafood and consequently, Faridah has no work.

Faridah, like other women in her village, has faced other difficulties during this time, such as a broken water pump which forces



residents to buy their freshwater daily. Despite the work of social assistance programs, such as the Staple Foods Assistance (BPNT) and the Family Hope Program, Faridah hasn't received any welfare or support for over three months. She is unable to make repayment installments on the loan she took out as business capital.

Faridah often asks herself: "When will these hard times be over? When will we all be able to earn a living again?"

### Food Security During the Pandemic: The Story of a Sumatran Woman



#### Communities exchanging food

At the end of March 2020, the Governor of Bengkulu Province formally declared that his territory was a 'red zone' for COVID-19 transmission. The crisis has had big impacts on various groups of people in this region.

In Sumber Urip Village, Rejang Lebong Regency, a group of women vegetable farmers are among those impacted. These women have experienced a significant decrease in their income. Before the pandemic, the group would earn up to IDR 200,000 per day. After the local government imposed social distancing requirements, their average income has ranged between IDR 60,000 and IDR 80,000 per day. Their decrease in income has been caused by a turbulent market, competition between farmers, and the falling prices of palm oil and vegetables, all direct results of the pandemic.

Suhartini [47] lives in the village and is the local Chair of the Harapan Perempuan Credit Union initiated by Cahaya Perempuan Women's Crisis Center — which forms part of the PERMAMPU Consortium. The Credit Union has collected data on the impact of the pandemic on residents' health and economic situation.

"The data from each of the respective families are reported to the village midwife and the community health centre (Puskesmas) to be followed up because there are a number of people who are suspected to have contracted COVID-19," said Suhartini. In the first week of April 2020, 10 suspected cases of COVID-19 had been documented in Sumber Urip Village.

WCC Cahaya Perempuan is developing various educational materials to inform locals about how to best prevent the spread of COVID-19. These materials are disseminated through instant messaging applications, such as WhatsApp.

"The Credit Union is working with the Puskesmas, community police, other village authorities and the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) to teach residents how to make disinfectant to clean their homes," she said.

The Harapan Perempuan Credit Union has initiated a food security program to assist women farmers in Sumber Urip Village who have suffered a significant economic loss as a result of the crisis. Through this program, women farmers can trade the yields of their crops for other goods, such as fish, to provide for their own and their families' basic nutritional needs.

Suhartini hopes this initiative will continue for the duration of the pandemic, At least to meet our needs until the situation improves and can return to normal activities," she said.

### Village funds for vegetable seeds

Meanwhile, in Karya Mulyo Sari Village, Rokan Hilir Regency, Riau Province, Ruslia, a mother of one who works as both a teacher and food vendor began to feel the impact of the pandemic in mid-March.

Ruslia was afraid that she could be infected with the novel coronavirus while interacting with her customers and decided to move her business online. She realised that from the beginning of the pandemic significant economic hardship was being experienced by her whole community. "To meet the needs of my family, I took out a loan from the cooperative. I know that other residents must also be facing difficult situations."

Before the pandemic, the average income of members of the Mutiara Rokan cooperative was between IDR 1.5 and IDR 3 million per month. However, economic difficulties since the pandemic began have caused their income to fall below IDR 1 million per month.

"I proposed to the Village Head that residents should be assisted to be able to grow vegetables in their homes. The proposal was approved by the Village Head and there was a Village Fund budget allocation for the purchase and distribution of plant seeds," Ruslia said proudly.



The seed distribution program, which began on 5 April 2020, contributes to food security objectives for residents of Karya Mulyo Sari Village. The program distributes five types of vegetable seeds such as eggplant, lettuce, broccoli, chilli, long beans, mustard greens and tomatoes to each household.

Ruslia hopes that the seed distribution program will continue to ease the economic burden faced by families during this difficult time. "This program helps save household expenses, and hopefully can help to meet nutritional needs during the pandemic."

### From fields to sewing machines

Afriyati (53), is a member of the Women's Small Business Group (KPUK) assisted by PERMAMPU member LP2M in Padang Pariaman Regency. Afriyati and her husband have for many years grown and sold medicinal plants and vegetables. Their clients are local residents to whom they market their crops by word of mouth. She said that since the outbreak began, people had stopped visiting her and buying her produce. "However, by planting vegetables my husband and I don't have to go to the crowded market very often," she said.

In contrast to Afriyati's story, in Pangian, Tanah Datar District, Padang, West Sumatra, Zilnovita, a member of an LP2M supported group, lobbied the local government and the Village Head to provide cloth face masks for all residents as a preventative measure for COVID-19. This has provided new economic opportunities for the community. "So far, I have always tried to meet my family's nutritional needs, but that is not enough. We need personal protective equipment for when we have to do activities outside," said Zilnovita.

In Tanjung Bonai Village, Misdar, a woman who has grandchildren in her care, also experienced a change to the amount and source of her income. Before the pandemic, Misdar worked as a farmer and tailor, now she only continues the sewing business to meet her family's needs. Misdar has felt the effects of the decline in residents' purchasing power.

"Now, my only hope is to make a living from stitching cloth masks to order. I and the group asked the Head of Tanjung Bonai to facilitate income for the local women's group by ordering masks." Misdar always tells her grandchildren to practice good hygiene, not only to avoid COVID-19, but so that they have longer healthier lives.

In addition to making face masks, together with groups assisted by the MAMPU Program through PPSW, Zilnovita and Misdar also support local farmers who have suffered heavy losses by helping to market their produce through WhatsApp and Facebook.

## BSA is Encouraging Gender-Sensitive Pandemic Response Cooperation with the Village Government



Pipit (42), lives in Licin Village, Sumedang, West Java. Every day, she works as a principal and teacher of the local village playgroup. Pipit and members of the local Balai Sakinah 'Aisyiyah (BSA) — a women's network supported by the MAMPU Partner Aisyiyah — have felt the impact of the pandemic not just on the village economy but within the resident's daily routines.

Pipit and other BSA members encouraged the Village Head to form a COVID-19 task force and to conduct comprehensive data collection on the distribution of social assistance during these times.

"Initially, because there were fears that many of the citizens who had returned to the village after working, or studying in different regions could have the virus, I proposed the establishment of a COVID-19 task force to the Village Head," explained Pipit.

In addition to the task force, the BSA Group of Desa Licin also lobbied to establish the COVID-19 data collection post to better organise the response to the coronavirus. The group has also created and distributed face masks, and begun providing community education programs to inform locals about how best to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In Kartiasa Village, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, Surima, a BSA member, has been engaging in similar activities to Pipit. Surima explained that the BSA in Kartiasa Village had already produced and distributed about 600 face masks. "We made the masks and distributed them in the community, especially to people with disabilities, the elderly, and the poor," said Surima.

The scarcity of face masks in Kartiasa Village motivated Surima and friends to initiate the production and distribution of face masks until eventually their work was recognised and officially supported by the Kartiasa Village Government. "The Village Head plans for one family to receive six masks so the entire community of Kartiasa Village will

require approximately nine thousand masks," Surima said.

The local BSA group will continue to work to support the 'nine thousand mask program' initiated by the Kartiasa Village Government. In addition to helping to prevent transmission of the virus, the face masks also have the potential to provide income for women who have lost their income due to the pandemic.

"Thank God, sewing masks has provided an income for 20 women because the village government pays IDR 1000 per mask," Surima said.

BSA also actively shares information and advice about how to use and clean the cloth face masks. "We educate people that these cloth masks can only be used for four hours, after that it must be washed with soap, dried and ironed before it can be used again." The distribution of face masks complies with the recommended social distancing requirements and prioritises the safety of the local community.



Pipit and Surima have demonstrated the importance of listening to and involving women in the planning and implementation of the response to the pandemic. The protection of women as important actors in public health efforts is a fundamental step, especially when women carry out strategic roles that underpin public health efforts during the pandemic.

## Constituency Groups in East Lombok are Fighting COVID-19

[By Baiq Titis Y. & Baiq Indira F.]

### Berbagi Paket Nasi dan Sabun untuk Menghadapi COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic which is now sweeping the world has claimed many lives, including in Indonesia. After the central government declared the situation in Indonesia to be a disaster,

local governments and communities started to work together to break the chain of virus transmission.

In Selong District, East Lombok, Nursihum, and other members of the MAMPU supported Constituent Group (Group) have participated





in the local emergency response. Nursihum and the Group are trying to strengthen the community's economy. Motivated to prevent the transmission of the novel coronavirus, they produce and sell liquid detergent and bath soap, an activity which is also a source of income.

The Group has also taken the initiative to distribute free rice every Friday to ease the burden on their community. They distribute food packages along with the soap and herbal drinks they produce.

"This is what we can do for the community. Providing rice packets, hand washing soap, and herbal drinks. Hopefully, it can help the government overcome this pandemic," Nurmihsun said proudly.

The Constituent Group distributes aid packages to poor people in several villages in East Lombok Regency, such as Kaliasan Village, Serewe Village, Sembalun Village, and Bumbung Village.

### Village Head Responds Quickly to COVID-19

In Kembang Kerang Village, East Lombok, Yahya, the former Chair of the Constituent Group now the Village Head, has taken various measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in his village. Since early February, Yahya has been following and monitoring the spread of COVID-19 through various news channels.

"At that time, I thought that if there were positive cases in Jakarta, then there was a possibility of the virus spreading to other areas, including to my region. I must act to protect my community, with or without instruction from the central government," said Yahya.

On 16 March 2020, the East Lombok Regency Government declared COVID-19 an emergency. Yahya immediately coordinated with local authorities and the Regional Head. They agreed that they needed to restrict access in and out of Kembang Kerang Village and impose stricter obligations for residents who had recently returned from other regions to report each day to the Neighborhood Head. People who had returned from COVID-19 'red zones' were required to self-isolate for 14 days with medical supervision.

The Kembang Kerang Village Government provides food packages for the community, sprays disinfectants at public facilities once a week, provides soap and handwashing stations in each street, and is preparing 7,000 locally produced face masks to distribute. The village government has also agreed to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical workers and has formed a local COVID-19 Task Force. The village's COVID-19 Task Force is the front guard of COVID-19 prevention and treatment. The team is tasked with providing information about COVID-19 to the community and conducting examinations if anyone has symptoms.

The public relations section of the village administration disseminates information through a variety of channels, including through houses of worship and through social media, to keep the community aware of the latest developments.

Initially, Yahya planned to disburse welfare payments to orphans and the elderly early during the emergency response period. Unfortunately, the disaster response budget allocated through the Village Fund was insufficient, therefore, Yahya proposed changes to the Village Budget (APB) to cover COVID-19 response efforts.



Yahya who is also the Chairperson of the Village Head Association (IKADA) of Aikmel District, coordinated with other Village Heads to work together against the pandemic. IKADA sent a joint letter to district and provincial governments urging the governments to isolate and quarantine people entering West Nusa Tenggara Province.

The East Lombok Regency Government welcomed the proposal and obliged all people who entered East Lombok to undergo a health check at the Regent's Office Hall. Those who are indicated to have COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately quarantined in Rusunawa, Peringgabaya District. While those who are in good health will be able to return to their village to undergo monitoring.

Yahya believes that solid cooperation is the best way to fight COVID-19.

## Women's Schools in the Pangkajene Islands Remain Active amid the Pandemic

There are 18 Women's Schools assisted by MAMPU Partners KAPAL Perempuan and Yayasan Kajian Dan Pembangunan Masyarakat (YKPM) in Pangkajene and Kepulauan Regency, South

Sulawesi. The 507 women, on 10 islands, who are members of these Women's Schools have been impacted by COVID-19 along with other people in the community. Women's School members' income



has dropped, employees in crab processing companies have been laid off without pay, and domestic violence, as well as violence against children, is rife. The poorest people in the community have been the most affected by the outbreak.

However, Women's School members have not stayed idle. They have been prepared to work hand-in-hand with residents to carry out prevention activities and attend to the needs of the women on the 10 islands.

When the central government declared an emergency response, women's school members urged the village government to form a Task Force for the Acceleration of Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission. The government formed a task force consisting of representatives of the village government, health workers, and Women's School members. The Task Force members are responsible for collecting data on the poor people and small enterprises affected by COVID-19, disinfecting public facilities, educating the public about COVID-19, and opening checkpoints on the jetty of each island to monitor the movement of people between islands. Women's School members have also been involved in distributing food to the poor in Mattiro Ulang Village and Mattiro Baji Village. They also carry out other activities to assist women on the islands.

The Women's School on Sabutung Island started a tutoring service to assist children with their school work. This activity originated from complaints of Women School members who were facing difficulties in assisting their children to do school work, and also difficulties in paying for internet data to submit assignments virtually. The tutoring service works in two ways; tutors visit the homes of the students or assist virtually, via the messaging app WhatsApp. Tutors also help to send assignments to schools which reduces children's need for internet quota to upload the task. So far, the Women's Schools have provided five tutors to help 17 children in the community.

The School has also opened a shopping delivery service for people who want to order goods from the mainland. Members of the

Women's School take a daily shopping list from the community and buy the goods at the market, then distribute the goods to those who ordered them. This service has proved very helpful to people in the community by cutting down their transportation costs.

Another initiative has been making cloth masks. Women's School members who have expertise in sewing, make masks and distribute them to the poor, the elderly, and the disabled at no cost. They simultaneously distribute a circular letter from the School explaining COVID-19 and how to prevent transmission. The letter contains the contact numbers of Women's School members who can be contacted if there are questions related to COVID-19 and how to use the masks. Over 500 masks have been distributed to the communities on 10 islands.

School members also assist by receiving and distributing donations of cash and food from various parties, including from Saparinah Sadli, kitabisa.com and KAPAL Perempuan. Aid packages have been distributed to 80 poor families on 10 islands. Women's School members also help poor people in the community to access free



electricity tokens. School members read the news to find out how to submit requests for free electricity tokens via the internet. After successfully trying the method for themselves, they then immediately helped other poor people to access free electricity tokens from the government. 450 households on 10 islands have accessed free electricity.

The last program that the Women's School members have initiated is a routine discussion about COVID-19 via telephone and Zoom. Some of the discussion themes include how to prevent transmission, what nutritious foods can boost immunity, and how to assist people who have experienced domestic violence. The discussions also counter 'fake news' about the virus.

In this difficult situation, the Women's Schools have continued to fight, shoulder to shoulder, against COVID-19.

## Women's Empowerment Minister joins MAMPU Partners to Celebrate Kartini Day with a Discussion on the Impact of COVID-19

On 21 April, KAPAL Perempuan Institute held a discussion with the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, I Gusti

Ayu Bintang Darmawati to commemorate Kartini Day. The discussion, which was attended by women from various

backgrounds, aimed to increase the use of gender perspective in analysing and handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the event, representatives of six organisations, five of which are MAMPU partners, talked about strategies for responding to the virus that have been pioneered by women heads of households, farmers, plantation workers, women with disabilities, informal workers, migrant workers and more. In attendance were members of Women's Schools supported by KAPAL Perempuan in various regions, the Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI), Kalyanamitra, PEKKA, HAPSARI, and Migrant Care.

Around 150 participants took part in the discussion and discussed various experiences of grassroots women facing the COVID-19 outbreak. Nani (PEKKA) revealed that women head of households faced more difficulties in dealing with a pandemic because they had to face it on their own without psychological support from regular group meetings.

Participants often discussed economic difficulties. Saraiyah from the Lombok Women's School talked about rising domestic violence during the pandemic due to economic factors, and Ros from the Pangkajene and Islands Women's School talked about the low price of seafood which meant that women in the seafood industry could

not make ends meet. Meanwhile, Lely from HAPSARI talked about the emergence of gender-based sexual cyber violence during the study from home period.

Participants talked about women's creative responses to the pandemic. These responses include encouraging village governments to form COVID-19 response teams, using village budget allocations for pandemic countermeasures, preparing food storage to ensure food security, starting online classes to spread information about the crisis, and participating in local development planning meetings to ensure women's and children's needs are met.

Darmawati responded positively to women's experiences and initiatives. She talked about her collaboration with the Cooperatives and SMEs Ministry, Villages Ministry, Social Affairs Ministry, and the National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB). The Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Ministry has become a part of the National COVID-19 Task Force to ensure response to the disaster is gender-responsive.

Darmawati said she was sure that women would never give up in the face of COVID-19 and that women were taking an active role in development, working together in strength and unity.

## Homeworkers Work Together to Overcome the Economic Impacts of COVID-19

Homeworkers are some of the most vulnerable workers and are invisible in the supply chain. Although their existence has been recognised internationally through the International Labor Organization (ILO), homeworkers in Indonesia are yet to be protected by law. Homeworkers often work in unsafe conditions, with long working hours, without legal protection or job security, for payment that is generally well below a reasonable wage.

The situation faced by homeworkers was made worse by the outbreak of COVID-19 in Indonesia. According to the Trade Union Rights Center (TURC) at least 355 of the 671 women homeworkers they support in several areas, including North Jakarta, Sukabumi, Cirebon, and Sukoharjo are no longer receiving work from their employers. The homeworkers do various jobs, such as sewing and gluing sandals, and assembling paper bags. In North Jakarta alone, 80 homeworkers have completely stopped receiving work orders.

Muhayati and Een are two administrators of the Indonesian Home Workers Network (JPRI) in Jakarta which is supported by TURC. They are assisting women homeworkers by providing food packages and lobbying employers to provide assistance. Muhayati and Een also contacted a philanthropic institution, Sarah Charity, which has been supporting early childhood education activities in the North Jakarta area. Sarah Charity has provided food packages of rice, eggs, cooking oil, and instant noodles for 100 homeworkers and a number of other underprivileged residents in the area.

Muhayati and Een also took the initiative to sanitise their neighborhood. However, because the neighborhood administration had not allocated funds, local homeworkers had to raise the funds to buy disinfectants and rent spraying equipment. They then cooperated with members of the local community health center (Posyandu) to sterilise the neighborhood and urge residents to stay in their homes.

TURC — a MAMPU Partner — has also mobilised women homeworkers through the "Masks for All" movement in the cities of Cirebon, Sukoharjo, Sukabumi, and Jakarta. The movement, which began on 27 April, aims to provide masks to all people in the community. Homeworkers who have sewing skills make the masks to WHO-prescribed standards. In addition to distributing masks, TURC also conducts information campaigns to increase knowledge and understanding about COVID-19 prevention in the community.



## 62 MAMPU Supported Tailors are Working Together with Jahitin.com

Women's limited access to formal employment means that many women become informal workers, such as homeworkers. However,

as women homeworkers generally do not have formal work contracts, many were severely affected by COVID-19 especially



after the implementation of the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in several regions.

To mitigate the economic impact experienced by homeworkers, the MAMPU Program initiated a collaboration with Jahitin.com, a social enterprise in Indonesia that connects female tailors across the country with buyers. 62 female tailors who were homeworkers and micro business owners registered to participate in this Jahitin.com initiative.

The women tailors will be given online technical guidance, and the materials needed, to produce personal protective equipment (PPE),

## Empowered from the Village: Cadres of DESBUMI Support the COVID-19 Task Force Team in Indramayu

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also been felt by Indonesian migrant workers. Because of quarantine measures that apply to countries of placement some migrant workers have chosen or were forced to return to their home regions. The Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI) noted that as of 29 March, around 33,503 migrant workers had returned to Indonesia. These migrant workers face a loss of income and are also occasionally negatively stigmatised in their hometowns.

But in Juntinyuat Village, Indramayu, this did not happen. "From the beginning, we have urged the public to be calm and not panic," said Diyana, a local Villages that Care about Migrant Workers (DESBUMI) cadre. Diyana, who is also a member of the COVID-19 Task Force, said that migrant workers returning from countries such as Qatar, Australia, and America stayed calm and followed the guidelines to self-isolate for a period of 14 days. "Together with the village government, we built a monitoring post to help prevent the spread of the virus. This post monitors the arrival of citizens from outside the region," Diyana continued.

Members of the DESBUMI community are actively involved in monitoring arrivals and reporting them to the COVID-19 response team to prevent COVID-19 from entering the village. DESBUMI community members are also involved in the production and

including hazmat suits. PPE produced will be distributed according to market demand in the regions where MAMPU partners work, namely in Medan (BITRA), Yogyakarta (Yasanti), Jember (Migrant CARE) and Sambas ('Aisyiyah). The partnership aims to provide an alternative source of income for women tailors.

"I applaud Jahitin.com for directly involving women homeworkers. Hopefully, in the future the cooperation will strengthen so even more homeworkers can gain an income while contributing to the prevention of COVID-19", said Amin Muftiyanah, Director of Yayasan Annisa Swasti, one of the MAMPU partners who support women homeworkers in Yogyakarta.



distribution of masks in the village area. In an effort to maintain the cleanliness of the village area, the COVID-19 Task Force sprays disinfectant once a week and distributes handwashing soap packages to every mosque.

DESBUMI is a village-based model — initiated by MAMPU Partner Migrant CARE — which aims to help migrant workers access information about safe migration. Through DESBUMI, migrant workers receive training related to workers' rights, case handling, post-migration skills training, and alternative income sources.

## LBH APIK: Women are Vulnerable to COVID-19 Transmission and Violence during the Pandemic

Komnas Perempuan recorded 11,105 cases of domestic violence in Indonesia during 2019 (CATAHU, 2020). The Jakarta Women's Legal Aid Institute (LBH Apik) predicts that this number will increase in the next annual report, partly because of the impact of COVID-19.

Before the pandemic, on average LBH Apik Jakarta received 60 reports of violence every month. Since physical and social restrictions were imposed in March, LBH Apik Jakarta has received 97 cases of violence against women (16 March-19 April 2020). Of the 97 cases, domestic violence accounted for the largest number with 33 cases, followed by online gender-based violence with 30 cases, 8 cases of sexual harassment, 7 cases of dating violence, general criminal violence 6 cases, and 3 cases of rape.

"This is evidence that the home is not necessarily a safe place for women, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women are becoming increasingly vulnerable, not only to contracting the virus but also to becoming victims of violence," said LBH Apik Jakarta Director Siti Mazumah.

According to Zuma, women, especially women in patriarchal families, face increased burdens during social distancing. They perform roles as family caregivers and educators and sometimes violence is triggered when they are deemed to not be carrying out their duties properly.

Commenting on the high rate of online gender-based violence, Zuma believes this is one of the effects of the high dependence on the internet during times of physical distancing. LBH Apik has received reports of various forms of online-based violence: online sexual harassment, threats of spreading intimate content with exploitation as the motive, and online extortion.

During the 'Work From Home' period, LBH APIK Jakarta has continued to provide services to victims of violence in the form of online legal consultations, referring victims to online psychologist services, providing contact details for police stations so that victims can immediately get help, assisting in online hearings, and continuing to provide temporary safe house services when several other safe houses have closed during the pandemic.

## About MAMPU

Australia - Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The MAMPU Program (2012 - 2020) is joint initiative between the Government of Australia and the Government of Indonesia. The Program supports the achievement of Government's of Indonesia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by developing women's leadership and empowerment, ultimately so that they have increased access to essential services and government programs.