

Honoring Silent Sheroes



**SUCCESS STORIES AND
BEST PRACTICES
OF WOMEN-LED
PEACEBUILDING**

DOCUMENTING SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES ON WOMEN-LED LOCAL PEACEBUILDING IN INDONESIA



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THE PROJECT OF DOCUMENTING SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES ON WOMEN-LED LOCAL PEACEBUILDING IN INDONESIA

The role of women in peacebuilding and resilience has been increasingly acknowledged with growing evidence from both academic researches and practices on the ground. Those evidences show that the roles women could play in building peace are diverse, and prove that they could demonstrate their significant capacity to enlarge the scope of peace by including a broader set of critical societal priorities and needs required for lasting and just peace.

Even though women have played an important role in peacebuilding processes, there are little attempts made in documenting and sharing the impact of women's peacebuilding efforts in the field of peace and development. The significance of sharing positive stories and best practices in peacebuilding efforts can be viewed as a powerful tool in effective advocacy and in mobilizing potential resources and people to advance the impact of the peacebuilding interventions. These powerful narratives could change people's attitudes and inspire them with a clear vision of individual transformation and social transformation by creating interconnectedness, practicing empathy towards the other, and promoting peaceful coexistence. In addition, individual stories can provide examples and insights for policymakers in local, national, and international authorities and non-governmental organizations to improve their peacebuilding interventions. This project sought to contribute to the recognition of local women in Indonesia as positive contributors for peacebuilding in society.

The project team from the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship (APS) Programme documented the journey of the Women's School for Peace's initiative, led by the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) in Indonesia, as a storybook. This storybook shares nine stories of women peacebuilding and its role in establishing resilience in local communities. The APS project team believes that this storybook can be used as an advocacy tool to spread the messages of women-led community resilience to the national, regional and international levels.

The APS programme is a Dual Degree Master of Arts Programme of Ateneo de Manila University and the University for Peace founded by the Nippon Foundation. The members APS team includes Pujika Rathnayake (Sri Lanka), Khuyen Pham (Vietnam), Ryosuke Togashi (Japan) and Yusuke Miyake (Japan). We are grateful for all mothers who have shown immense courage and dedication for building community resilience to achieve peace in the world.

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**“TO CREATE CULTURAL RELIGIOSITY THAT
COMMITTS TO NON-VIOLENCE AND GENDER
JUSTICE”**

The Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) in Indonesia, a networking organization founded on the 1st of March 2007 as a mandate of AMAN Assembly 2006 at Ciputat Tangerang, unites interfaith women and youth to create and strengthen trust and cooperation in promoting peace for the future. AMAN has been working on conflict transformation by strengthening the role of women, especially in the peacebuilding process.

They are contributing to building the culture of peace in Indonesia through three strategies: to strengthen the capacity of women through Women's School for Peace at the community level, to organize women and community to respond to the development agenda in the community, and to facilitate national networks to build strong synergy for national advocacy.

AMAN Indonesia is also actively involved in the development process through the drafting of the National Action Plan and the Local Action Plan on the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children under Social Conflict. At a global level, AMAN Indonesia with its core knowledge has been recognized as an active member of the Asia Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security, the International Civil Society Network (ICAN-WASL), the Global Network for Women and Peace Building (GNWP) and Women Waging Peace (Inclusive Security).

The progressive movement of AMAN Indonesia to create a culture of religiosity that reflects both gender justice and nonviolence can be realized through the inclusive values of religious life that promote gender justice and peacebuilding by continuing to improve the leadership capacity of women's organizations at the grassroots level and empowering them to take a strategic role in the public domain as an agent of change. This movement should also encourage and facilitate the regeneration of Women's School for Peace which has the qualities to take up strategic roles in the public domain. This movement is also strengthened by the progressive consolidation of social justice at local, national and global levels through policy advocacy that promotes gender justice and nonviolence.



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE

Women's School for Peace (WSP) is one of the first profound initiatives under the pilot program "Women-led community resilience" of Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia since the organization was founded in 2007. Recognizing women's tremendous power and ability to become agents of peace through resilient acts in the community, yet acknowledging the fact that there is not much room for women to develop their capital; WSP initiative came to seek a wider space for local women to express and develop their perspectives and experiences. WSP is an independent grassroots women community in which women are the key players.

WSP specifically aims to educate and empower women at the grassroots level, to build a critical and social awareness in women and society, to involve women leaders in a peace building movement, and to make women subjects and agents of development. Since the start, AMAN Indonesia has built 30 WSP in provinces of Indonesia, which has gathered 1500 local women members. Although each women's school has its specific focus to meet the typical need of the community, needs which can be disaggregated to three categories such as post-conflict area (Poso), urban poor (Jakarta, Bogor) and rural area (Jember, Gunung Kidul, Wonosobo, Temanggung, Sampang Madura, Tasikmalaya), WSP generally uses selective curriculum of gender study and peacebuilding in addition to safe house for women survivors of domestic violence.

In each WSP, interfaith women are provided with a two-year peace education program for conflict transformation which emphasizes individual transformation, relational transformation, structural transformation, and cultural transformation. Since 2016, WSP has become an independent entity managed by local women themselves, while AMAN Indonesia has played its role as one of their partners in providing technical trainings.

UNFLAGGING WILL TO EMPOWER WOMEN: LIFE STORY OF RUBY, THE FOUNDER OF AMAN INDONESIA



Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah is the Country Director of AMAN Indonesia. She started her career as a note taker in a NGO in Indonesia, and after more than 20 years, she is now a national and global figure in the field of women and peacebuilding. In her words, “Women has strong power when they tell stories. People love listening to the stories, and storytelling is exactly one of tools for peacebuilding”.

Here is her inspiring story as a peacebuilder.

Q. Can you describe yourself?

Some people call me that I am a woman peacebuilder or like that, but I just feel that I do what I have to do for this country, specifically helping women.

Q. What motivated you to engage in the field of women and peacebuilding?

I think my mom taught me a lot about how I grew up as a woman. My mother always repeated in my childhood that if you were a woman, you had to be independent economically. You should never beg money from your husband because you never be able to build your own power. At that time my mom owed money to my dad. They are a good couple, but she felt that she did not have full power to determine whatever she would like to be. She dreamed about having high education but could not simply because her parents eventually decided to choose her older brother as priority to get education. At that time, not because people were poor, but simply because they did not believe that education would bring better future. But my mom did not want to see her daughters like others did. She wanted to see daughters enjoying rights of education, so she decided to fully support us and send us to universities. That changed situation of my mom, she became a person to be consulted by other mothers in the village when they wanted to send kids to universities. My mom felt that what she did inspired others, at least gave new belief that education really could help them being empowered to step out of the circle of poverty.

This is how I adored my mom, and I promised during my study in the University of Jember in East Java that I should help more women to bring them freedom so that they enjoy their life. Because my family have never restricted me. They always opened space for me to be whatever I wanted to be. I want other woman to enjoy this kind of freedom because that is opening your path to reach out much greater dream”.

Q. Why did you want to establish AMAN Indonesia?

In 2003 I got scholarship for my Master's degree in Social Science and Humanity at Mahidol University in Thailand. I lived in Bangkok for 4 years, two years study and two more years in working with AMAN since 2005. I had opportunity to be a coordinator of research program sponsored by AMAN for young Muslim scholars in Southeast Asia. The idea was to bring up Islam from within, meaning that we wanted to see the perspective from insiders because Islam in Southeast Asia has been often portrayed by foreigners and actually we hardly get English documents describing Islam written by Muslim in Southeast Asia themselves. I learned a lot about Muslim in Southeast Asia in this coordinator position. Yet in myself I felt dry, feeling like this was not what I wanted to do. I felt that I wanted to help marginalized women, wanted to help people in disadvantageous situation. I wanted to help the weakest people, women in my community. So I decide to talk to my boss, and proposed to open AMAN office in Indonesia, that was in 2006. I explained my concept note that the AMAN in Indonesia would play a significant role in bringing voice of woman up in peacebuilding.

Q. Why do you think women are important in peacebuilding?

It's because, first, women simply spend a lot of time in family and communities. They know better about what is actually happening in family. In patriarchy structure like our society mothers know better. If they know better, they can create better strategy in family to bring more harmony. You will find that mothers will propose unexpected approaches to bring harmony into communities, influencing them to be much more caring, loving, helping each other. Because they know in detail to whom they should approach.

Second, another thing we felt at that time and we have tested in the last 11 years is that women have much love with their life because life started in women bodies. Women will say no to any actions to cut life. Women are hurt a lot when they see life being cut. In the context of peacebuilding, we want this kind of people. They believe that life is more meaningful. I don't say that man don't appreciate life, but man treat life differently.

In psychosocial theory mothers have strong connection with sociality, women are easily connected with other groups from outside. Men are more attached with competitiveness, aggressiveness, and masculinity compared to femininity. For peacebuilding we need femininity. We need caring, we need love. We do not need competition, but cooperation. You don't need to be aggressive, but soft, caring, gentle. We expect that mothers can transfer power of mothers to everyone in family and to communities. We believe that when mothers grow with self-confidence, holding strong leadership, leading families and communities, they can help much more compared to fathers.

Also, when you pick up women, they are actually one of the representatives of marginalized groups in communities. When you are with women, you will start thinking about other marginalized groups, such as youth and the disabled. Those groups are finally found and united to work together, because when you have disadvantageous people united that is the time you have power to convince majority. We believe that working with women will help grow other movements, for example, now mothers are active in social problems, you will see young people following them.

Q. How do you lead AMAN Indonesia as the country representative?

I have never been trained as a director. I have never joined any training, everything is learned by doing.

I am telling the staff here that you have to try to make mistakes, by bringing your ideas.

If you have space to make mistakes, you don't need to worry that your ideas are unusual or too complicated. I would say yes for any new ideas as long as they are connected with AMAN's vision. If it is something else, I have to be careful and ask what the benefit for AMAN will be to adopt the ideas. It's fair, right? As long as you can explain the office will give funds to exercise the idea and we can evaluate if it is correct or not. Of course, we need to put the ideas on table because they are no longer personal ideas but funded by the organization. We have to be responsible for the ideas. But if you make mistakes, we come back, learning that we should not do it.

Also, people joining here are new to the world of NGO, and as the person exposed to NGO I need to give them direction. Everyone should learn about basic skills to working with NGO, you should understand program planning using logical framework analysis. You need to use this in your logic, if you do the intervention what will be the best indicators that you want to see? And by learning the logical framework analysis you need to be realistic in your capacity, organizational capacity, and money capacity. I push everyone to do that because the only thing in the program which people understand well is about budget, because the logic of budget is coming from program itself. This organization is growing in flexible but at the same time professional way.

Q. What is your current task in AMAN Indonesia?

My current role is much more on facilitating movement building. Hanifah and other managers see how our projects achieve the indicators we agree with donors. My task is looking at how to bring these issues into movement building. At provincial, district and national level we want people to understand women in peace and security in broader way to enable everyone to engage. Our role is to ensure that we are working with any women organizations to formulate local action plans in women peace and security, as well as integration of preventing violent extremism. We want to do this as the movement building beyond project, because if we do only projects, that is only it.

Q. You are one of the main figures in the field of women and peacebuilding. Can you describe your individual contribution to the discourse of women in peace and security issue at national level?

I have built up myself with all the skills as a peacebuilder, and in 2011 I finally joined with the group on development of the National Action Plan (NAP) in Indonesia based on the UN resolution 1325. The group had already started negotiation of NAP in 2007, and I was a newcomer as one of the representatives from civil society who were working in grassroots level. I helped the drafting team with how to put better indicators and how to make logic in the issue over women in peace and security. In the group there was a debate over why we still had to care about security, some thought that it was already in our hand. So I was saying like “no, security for women is this and that...”. Women in peace and security issue was challenging the conventional concept of security.

In 2012 we passed the national law on Handling Social Conflict, Law No.7 Year 2012. The mandate of the national law is promoting women participation in handling social conflicts. Under that law, we have more committed to contextualize the UN resolution 1325 into Indonesian contexts. We put the element of children because Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) addressed that we should take children especially girls into consideration because they were more affected by social conflict.

In 2014, NAP on women in peace and security in Indonesia tuned into NAP for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflict (RAN P3AKS). As decentralization of Governance System of Indonesia required all the policies built up on national level need to be translated into local policies, I have dedicated myself to help MoWECP to bring the NAP down to provincial level. If it remains only at national level, it won’t say anything. I am happy that MoWE provides some support at provincial level to develop the local action plans. I am also happy and have to thank organizations like Asia Pacific Women Alliance for Peace and Security (APWAPS), UN women, and Inclusive Security based on Washington, for helping us a lot on how to make our RAN P3AKS relevant to local plans and assessing the status of RAN P3AKS.

Another contribution I have made is that I proposed integration of preventing extremism into NAP. We want the global to be aware that the national action plan of women in peace and security doesn’t means that you have to have conflicts first. Even if you do not have conflicts you have a reason to implement it because whole of it is about prevention. We are very clear that the growth of extremism and radicalism is happening in post conflict situations. If you have conflicts, it’s like having fertilizer for extremism. They are looking for conflict situation to smuggle into the areas, because extremism will be undercover. It is hard to be detected. But when they come in normal situation, you can detect it.



So one initiative I proposed to MoWECP was that why we do not do integration? You know that discussion over women in peace and security can handle the prevention of extremism. Look at what happened in Nigeria, Boko Haram. That is reflecting women in peace and security but also violent extremism. The intersection is very clear.

Surabaya bombing was shocking for us. That was done by families. Everyone in the families engaged in the violent act. After the bombing, it triggered the government to look into the integration. The ministry asked me to facilitate two time focused group discussions in Surabaya and Jakarta, after that they came up with national coordinating meeting in Jakarta run by MoWECP to talk about the integration with inviting other ministry agencies and civil society. The attack in Surabaya involving whole family may be replicated in the future in Indonesia or other countries. It is very possible because the reason why engaging whole family is strong. Because if you involve whole family, you don't have to worry that someone is left behind. If you have somebody left behind, he or she will be stigmatized and discriminated. Nobody would be able to survive in that situation.

Q. How about your contribution at global level?

I think AMAN Indonesia is one of actors who most frequently speak to international community about the issue of women in peace and security in Indonesia, explaining why NAP is relevant to what we are doing in grassroots level. Otherwise it's like hanging on the air, yes we have national action plan, but how it is relevant to work at grassroots level? I am advocating among others to really talk to the global public that we have this work in grassroots and our projects has strong connection with three pillars Indonesia came up with, which are prevention, handling conflicts including protection and participation, and empowerment. It is hard to speak to the global and make them understand about our national action plan, and I had to talk to UN bodies like UNDP and UN women. Actually, they made a study trying to document the development process of RAN P3AKS and translated it into English. The global finally recognized RAN P3AKS as one of the models in the world, not copy and paste.

Q. How do you see the future of AMAN?

I am optimistic. When we started AMAN Indonesia, we felt lonely. All the organizations working related to women were organizations working in women empowerment, but none of them were touching on women peacebuilding. But now there are many organizations considering women peacebuilding as one of their agenda.

In the last 11 years I have seen so many changes in communities, including relation between mothers and husbands, children, and neighborhood. That really contributed a lot to our sustainable peace. Also in global crisis of extremism, women can play important role to counter extremism and spread of radicalism because women have love in life. What I am very thankful to all the mother joining to schools is that they believe what we believe. They believe the power of mothers. So they can develop schools in their own way, we have modules but all the innovations they create on the field remain free. They have space to innovate. They can develop other activities related to any skills that they think beneficial to other mothers in the program. I hope this kind of initiative will be duplicated.

Q. How effective do you think women storytelling is in peacebuilding?

Women have strong power when they tell stories. People love listening to stories instead of log frame. Stories are everyday nature. There is personal element in there, everyone tells different stories. The stories I am telling you is affected by my personal life and journey. At the first time I visited Poso in 2008, I traveled to one of refugee areas. My mission was to create my brothers and sisters in the Christian area which was attacked by Muslim. When I arrived, everybody stared me with hatred look. They felt that Muslim ruined their life. Several years had already passed since the conflict ended yet I clearly saw that hatred feeling was still there. They told the stories how Muslim attacked them, burned their houses. I told them that we could not live with the hatred if we want to start peaceful life. We need to forgive. We heard feeling of the same hatred from Muslim side but our life will continue. I asked them how we can achieve it, what we should do. They told me a lot of things. That's actually gave me a lot of inspiration and I used them in our program.

Our program in Poso in central Sulawesi is now very strong. Mothers there are really owning this program. They feel that our organization opened space for women to have genuine conversation about their feeling. One day I was crying to see one Muslim woman saying that without the program she could not have conquered her fear against Christian. Now she has many Christian friends, visiting them, eating, talking, and laughing with them. That was fantastic feeling. I felt that this program created the magic things and story-telling, sharing genuine feeling, is exactly one of peacebuilding tools to achieve these. I support any initiative to document stories, online or writing or whatever it is.



**THE STORY
OF WOMEN'S
SCHOOL FOR
PEACE**

HANIFAH

**AMAN
PROGRAMME
MANAGER**



Hanifah Haris is the Programme Manager of AMAN Indonesia, she is from Bogor and mother to five kids, she received her MA degree from the University of Jakarta. The purpose of this interview is to understand the Women's School for Peace project initiated by AMAN Indonesia and its impact of empowering mothers to become peacebuilders and building resilience in their community.

Q: Why do you want to become a peacebuilder?

I think it's my soul call to become a peacebuilder, in Bahasa we call it 'Panggilan Jiwa' (soul calling for something), previously I worked at a private oil company, I never felt that it was the path I chose for my life. So, when Ms. Ruby asked me to join AMAN Indonesia in 2007, I decided to join because my heart said that this is my work, I must choose to seek my path. For me working with the community is a part of my way to appreciate God. I found many problems in the community, I heard many stories from mothers. Therefore, I wanted to help them, when I work with the community, I feel I am thanking to the God by joining with AMAN.

Q: How is the support from your family to continue your work at AMAN?

Indeed, I am so lucky to have a very good husband who supports me to carry out my work. He gives me freedom and understands how important it is for me to work with mothers. Whenever I travel to other locations, he does the housework and takes care of my children. Initially, my parents did not like my decision to join with AMAN. Because my work involves working with minority groups such as Siyah and Ahmadiyah community. My family comes from the Sunni Muslim community and they consider that Siyah and Ahmadiyah people are not part of Indonesian Muslim identity and they want these minority communities to leave from Indonesia. So, I had to start peacebuilding work within my family. I wanted my mother to understand that both Siyah and Ahmadiyah communities are Indonesians, so they have equal rights as like Sunni. As a AMAN staff, it is my duty to advocate for rights of minority groups and thus, one day I bought my mother to meet Siyah community and to see how they live in a Refugee Camp and to hear their suffering. My mother realized and said "you are right, we cannot judge other people because they have different beliefs on religion and she started to recognize my work.

Q: Why does AMAN work with women, especially mothers?

Human life begins from a womb of the mother, the woman gives birth to life and she cares and protects lives, therefore we believe mothers have so many potentials to make a change in her family as well as within the community. Our experiences show that when we involve with women, they make the process and result differently. They are very much aware of the community because they have enough time to interact with their family, neighbors, and community. We believe, when we empower mothers, they can empower their husband and children. They helped us to identify and reach more marginalized and diverse groups in the community. Previously most mothers were engaged in labour works but now they are teachers, community activists, local leaders or representatives of local government.

Q: What is AMAN's vision for WSP?

Our vision is to build women-led community resilience by strengthening the knowledge, institutions and social mechanisms to protect and prevent violence based on gender, religion and growing extremism. WSP is designed as a space to meet diverse people to come together and have a dialogue. It is space for an ordinary woman to become an extraordinary woman. Women do not have a space to be themselves, to express their feeling as they want, and our life is structured with conventional social roles as mothers, daughters, wives. Therefore, WSP is designed as a place for mothers to express themselves, learn from each other, and support each other to grow to become women leaders to bring peace and social change.

Q: In order to achieve these, what are the approach that WSP is following?

WSP aims to achieve four categorical transformations which is developed based on John Paul Lederach conflict transformation theory. First, the individual transformation which aims at individual growth by building self-confidence of mothers to become a leader and to mobilize the community. The facilitator connects subjects with the real experiences of mothers, thus makes mothers understand the teachings and become aware of their inner strength. Second is the relational transformation which aims to build better relationships within the family as well as the community. We used creative activities as part of transforming the knowledge to husbands, children, and neighbors. For example, resolving a puzzle, writing a love letter to husbands, community watch which makes understand the responsibilities, work distribution in the family. The third is structural transformation which highlights the root causes of conflict and promotes nonviolent mechanisms to minimize violence and foster to create structures that address community needs through community participation. For instance, mothers at WSP in Pondok Bambu collected data and information to resolve the dumping garbage problem into the village river. This garbage problem resulted in creating conflict among two communities. Therefore, mothers at WSP initiated a program called 'garbage bank' which collects the garbage in the river and later local government adopted the practice of garbage bank to clean the river. The last is the cultural transformation which leads for sustainable peace. This stage mothers will be able to identify and understand the cultural patterns that contribute to rising conflict and identify cultural resources for constructively handling conflict. After initiation of 'garbage bank' program in Pondok Bambu, two communities got an opportunity to build relationships and take collective actions to clean the river. After the establishment of WSP community has been able to build better relationships among each other, help each other during hard times.

Q: What are the strategies you followed in building community resilience?

We followed our module as a foundation on conflict transformation, but we have adopted different strategies depending on the context. For example, in post-conflict areas, we started the dialogue by introducing the root of peace instead of talking about the roots of the conflict. We recall the good memories and the cultures that united the community before the conflict. In Poso, there is a tradition dancing call "Dero" performed among Christians and Muslim community after collecting harvest, or any public celebrations. However, this situation had changed after the influence of violent extremist groups, religious symbols become strong in shaping ethnic identities. Initially, it was not mandatory for women to wear Hijab but now this tradition has been changed. Conversely, Muslim mothers do not wear Hijab in Christian areas because they want to feel safe and tend to hide their Muslim identity. In Bogor, some community complexes are segregated by religion. But, our common Indonesian identity values "unity among diversity".

Our community resilience design targets the family because we believe that family is the starting point to prevent violent extremism. We want to empower individuals and build strong relationships with others. This year, we are going to start "Men's School for Peace" because some husbands were not welcoming to see the individual change of mothers, therefore we think it's important to bring out an individual transformation for men, to build strong relationships within the village to ensure peace and stability in the community. The design is totally different from WSP because they will have training once in a month or three months. The subject of men's school for peace is similar to WSP but we will follow different approaches to conduct training for men.

Q: Why has AMAN decided to have WSP independent from AMAN?

Since 2016, we decided that WSP should be independent from AMAN and it has been developed as an individual entity and let it be supported by their own community. We wanted mothers and the community to take the ownership of the project to ensure the suitability of the impact. AMAN became one of the partners of each WSP and provides necessary support and guidance to carry out their activities. However, Mothers have the freedom to partner with any other organization to carry out their work. AMAN provides knowledge and skills for them to grow but we wanted them to independently grow as part of the process. Initially, it was also a challenge for mothers to become independent from AMAN and continue it by their own. AMAN also had our own limitation such as budget but, we did not want to end the process of WSP, because we have seen the positive change of mothers as well as the community. This was a part of the strategy of building community resilience by strengthening them to become independent.

Q: How do you see the achievement of WSP so far?

The biggest achievement of the WSP is that we have able to build the self-confidence of mothers to become a leader and mobilize communities to act for change. Second, they have gained leadership skills and now they have become facilitators, negotiators, mediators and community activist in their own communities to ensure peace and stability. Third one is the transformation of relationships within their family as well in the community. Culturally, it is common practice to consider the man is higher than the woman, but now woman have been able to gain recognition from their male counterparts and they have been able to discuss with their husband and making family decisions together. Earlier, mothers were voiceless and dependent on their husband but today they became equal partners in the family, thus it has changed the culture within the community to see women as an equal contributor for greater change.

Also, mothers are contributing to achieve peace in their community by understating the deeper meaning of peace. For some communities' peace is a very sensitive word as they tend to see peace as oppose to conflict. But WSP adopted to a different approach in interpreting peace not mere terms on the absence of conflict or direct violence but it is about transforming the individuals and communities to prevent future conflict. Therefore, WSP able to facilitate mothers to find inner peace as well as build community resilience through strengthening relationship within family, neighborhood, community.

Q: What are the challenges hurdled by AMAN in pursuing the project?

The main challenge was the husband, after women involving with AMAN program they have changed in many different ways. Women become capable in initiating a conversation with husband, teaching other communities, contributing for community level activities. So most of the husbands were not ready to accept these changes of their wives, they felt threatened when they saw the growth of women, so most of the time husbands tried to discourage women from joining with WSP.

Second was the change of local government, usually, when we have good and effective local government it is easy to advocate communities to make collective actions in the community through government support. But our process was intruded when the local government changed time to time. We had to start from the beginning with new government authorities and get their support to continue work of WSP. In national level, the supportive government is the key to continue our advocacy but when the political climate changes in a time to time and reluctant of some national level leaders towards women's empowerment, it was very hard to continue our work. So, we have to start from the beginning to make them understand the issues in the community and explain potential conflict unless those issues have not been solved. Also, we closely engaged with religious leaders making sure that AMAN approaches are not against Islam. All our staff members have a basic education in "Pesantren", so it is easy for us to relates to Qur'an to avoid resistance from religious leaders.





“MY VISION IS TO SEE THE WORLD WHERE DIFFERENT PEOPLE SIT TOGETHER, DISCUSS TOGETHER AND LAUGH TOGETHER AND EMBRACE THE DIVERSITY WITH LOVE AND PEACE”

Q: How do you see the future of WSP?

I am very optimistic about the future of WSP, because our approach for sustainable peace has already been embraced by the local communities. WSP is already recognized both local governments as well as some national ministries as a local institute to build community resilience. We are not depending on donors or project, but we are depending on our community to ensure the sustainability of the WSP. Some of the villages already adopted WSP as part of their community activity. In Wonosobo, Gunung Kidul, and Poso, local government are supporting WSP to continue the work, thus, AMAN only need to share knowledge and guide them to achieve desired socio-cultural transformation within their community. Initially, we targeted only 17 WSP to be established in seven districts but by currently we have 30 WSP and some are opened by the community without any support from AMAN. We build the infrastructures and network for mothers to expand their work. Since 2006 we have been working with GKST (Christian Church of Central Sulawesi) and introduced WSP teaching for the Women's Christian Commission to empower the Christian women in Poso.

Q: What is your opinion, how do you see the relevance of storytelling for peacebuilding?

Our weakness in the lack of documentation of the little change in the community that we experienced during this journey, every single change has meaning for the community itself. Documentation is important not only an acknowledgement of the community, but it will inspire other communities by sharing with others. Because when we are invited to present in the international community we have very few stories to share with them due to lack of community.

CREATING PEACE IN OTHERS MINDS: STRENGTH TO STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE



HARMIN BARAU



Name: Harmin Barau

Age: 40

Place: Poso, Central Sulawesi

Harmin Barau, a Christian resident in Tentena in Pamona Pusalemba in Poso, is taking on hard but proudful multiple tasks in her community. On the one hand, she is a caring mother. On the other hand, she is a local female figure who has actively participated in Women's School for Peace (WSP) and has developed knowledge to resolve tensions between Christians and Muslims, which may spark the recurrence of violence they have experienced in the past.

Harmin has engaged in the world of politics as a legislative candidate since she was 28 years old. She admitted that hesitation to do so still shadowed in her mind at the beginning, with concern that she might not be able to take care of her children if she joined. In spite of this worry, she decided to involve in politics. She recalled the moment, "I was aware that I was lacking in self-confidence and leadership skills yet when I faced the life of marginalized people, it made me want to keep moving forward".

The commitment for marginalized people was also the push for her to join WSP. The first WSP in Poso was established in post-conflict time in 2009. Right after its establishment, Harmin joined for the school. The journey of the WSP in the area was never easy. Women in the area, most of them were housewives, were still traumatized by devastating conflicts in the past when AMAN came to the area. Besides, trust building between opposing religious groups was a necessary but lengthy, difficult process and failure to achieve it could incite violence again in the area. WSPs in Poso nevertheless strived to provide opportunity for both Muslims and Christians to achieve sustainable peace by strengthening women's role in peacebuilding.

Having joined the WSP in Pamona for 5 years, Harmin realized a change in herself in the face of violence that struck her all of sudden. In 2014, a village in Poso was burned down, causing chaos in that area and consequently deteriorated tension between the two religious groups. Harmin heard the news while she was at her friend's house. Tremendous fear crept in her mind since she realized that she was in the middle of a village next to the one that burned down, and most of the inhabitants in the village she was in were Muslims and had different religious belief from her. Harmin remembers how upset and terrified she was when she heard someone shouting "go get your important documents!", implying the escalation of the violence.

At the same time, however, there was something different from a sense of fear which sprang in her mind. She asked herself,

"Am I going to hide myself like this? What's the point of learning about peace if I could not stand up for peace?"

Harmin clearly remembers what she has accomplished after the courageous thoughts came in. She became anxious and more terrified as the situation deteriorated.



"I was walking slowly and surveyed the situation, thinking to myself again, am I going to stay here? What's the point of learning about peace if I could not stand up for peace? My faith in God exceeded the fear I was feeling at that time".

That was the moment she decided to share her aspiration towards achieving peace and, above all, show her determination towards building a peaceful future for the children, to whom any woman and man dedicate their love. She approached a women on the side of the road and asked,

"If you want to make your children to take up arms, get them to school so that they can become either police and soldier. They will surely be able to get weapons. But not like this, where you are giving them the chance to join those armed groups who can shoot their own mother in any time." After that, one of them asked me, "Where are you from?" and I answered, "I am from Tentena." Then another woman said, "I see. What will people in Tentena do if a church got burned down again like this?" I tried to use my own argument and replied with positive thought. I answered, "We don't want to look back on the things that had happened in the past if it would just open up the old scars again and bring sorrow in our life. We have children who have the right to a bright future. We, people of Tentena, are not that easily provoked by irresponsible groups nor do we react to those who have nothing to do with this."

A few moments later, Harmin observed that there was a woman who began to gather her children and to bring them inside the house, saying that "No, kids. Your father is sick now. Do you wish to leave us both?". That behavior implied that the woman at least did not disagree with what Harmin said. Harmin was the chief of WSP in Pamona in Poso and she is one of the facilitators of WSP. Her aspiration towards building a peaceful future for children is still motivating her to pursue a greater role of women in peacebuilding in her community. Harmin still recalls the incident at that night, the night she became an agent of peace and realized change in herself.

"At least I had opened a bit of their mind that there is no use in joining for those irresponsible groups. I have created peace in their hearts by reducing their anxiety for the possibility of the conflict which may occur in the future. Since I joined for WSP, I have learned many things and that I could at least face that kind of situation".

THE VOICE OF A WOMAN IS NEVER TOO LATE TO BE HEARD

Name: Wiwik Hikmawati

Age: 46

Place: Srikandi Handayani, Special Region of Yogyakarta

I was born in a family culture which assumed men are more special than women. I grew up in a place where the word of one's father is absolute, all girls must do household chores before and after school, while boys do not have any particular task. Luckily, I happened to be the youngest child in my family, thus making me free from housework. It was an unwritten rule that men should not be involved in housework. However, I still remember that my elder brothers would help out my mother at the kitchen and do housework when my father was not around at home. I woke up every day seeing my mother taking care of our family all day by herself while my father was just hanging out with his friends every time he got back from work. I often thought to myself that, "it is fun to be a boy who can do anything without doing housework. Women are weak and fragile, but their work is endless." Yet, whenever I was surrounded by my elder brothers, I felt protected and loved.



In 2004, I was with my mother, taking care of her, as she became sick after the passing of one of my elder brothers. While nurturing my mother, I opened up a public telephone booth at home and sold electric equipment because I wanted to be independent and to start something by my own. Yet, in 2006, a strong earthquake hit Yogyakarta City and damaged half of our house. I thanked God for keeping my family safe, but my mother was traumatized after the hit. We had to stay in a camp for more than two years until our house got repaired. My mother's health condition got weaker and weaker until she passed away, leaving me alone. There was nothing I could think of doing after the passing of my mother.

In 2015, I was introduced to Mr. Maskur from AMAN Indonesia by Ms. Dewi. At the first meeting, we discussed our potential and capacity to make our village a better place. For the first time in my life, I joined the training program of WSP in Wonosobo City. It was a two-day training about Women's Rights, Conflict Resolution and Peace. Ms. Ruby, the Chairman of AMAN, joined us as a trainer. At the training, I became aware of the importance of having a peaceful environment in which to live meaningfully. I understood the basic fact that a single argument can lead to a brutal and violent conflict. We understood the potential of mothers to prevent future conflict in our surroundings by educating our families in the values of peace. I felt that it is our responsibility to prevent the occurrence of such conflicts and to facilitate how people resolve the problem without fighting with each other. Therefore, all my group members agreed to build a Women's School Peace for our village, and my friends chose me to be the head of the Women's School which we named "Srikandi Handayani."

The goal of the WSP is to create women leaders in the village to make it a better place for everyone. In the beginning of WSP, we were suspected as a forbidden organization due to the increasing number of heretical groups during those days. My friends and I tried hard to convince the local government that our school was not involved in those kinds of groups and heretical politics. I had more courage to advocate the advantages and contribution of WSP for the community.

By joining regular classes, we realized that our awareness of social issues and our knowledge on peace and conflict resolution were being sharpened day by day. We came to realize many inequalities faced by women and also the hidden potential and capabilities of women as equal to men. This place created a safe space for us to share our feelings, opinions and make friends. I still remember the first day that I made speech at the Congress on my values of peace. I personally started to control my anger, to communicate without hurting others so as not to cause any misinterpretation by my words. All women wanted to become agents of peace within the family and in the community. I have become aware of the causes that led to conflicts in the community. I remember that once I was in a pengajian (Islamic learning forum) and I met a group of people who were trying to spread malice or provocation, but I was able to listen to them with a clear mind and have a conversation with them about the danger of spreading such provocations.

Having a discussion with friends also made me become more confident to speak in front of people and share my opinions in the village meeting. I am raising my voice at the local government and village-level forums, such as Musyawarah Desa (Village Forum), Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa (Village Government Work Planning), Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan Desa (Village Planning and Development Forum), Badan Usaha Milik Desa (Village-own Enterprise) and Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga or PKK (Family Welfare Movement). Even though WSP has not been officially recognized by the local government, they really appreciate my contribution and value the knowledge given by WSP at the community meeting. Also, I often attended the events which were held by several communities who engaged in prevention of violence against women and children. I have shared the learnings I gained from WSP with them. We used to discuss not only the community problems but also personal problems we faced at the family to find solutions together. All women feel safe and supported when I am with members of WSP. I feel proud and happy about myself because I am supporting others to enlighten their lives and also to share the message of peace with everyone.



NEW LIFE WITH WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE

Name: Istiqomah

Age: 37

Place: Wonosobo, Central Java

When Istiqomah, a 31-year-old mother of two kids, moved to Gemblengan village in Garung District in Central Java in 2012 to accompany her husband, her new life started with a sense of loneliness rather than excitement. She described that her personality had been shy and that she lacked self-confidence, as she struggled to communicate with other women. After three years of living there, however, Istiqomah encountered one thing that made her feel grateful to be living in the new place, something which enabled her to see the world broadly. It was Women's School for Peace (WSP) Sindoro Indah in Gemblengan Village.



At that time WSP Sindoro Indah in Gemblengan Village was the first and the only WSP in Central Java. The school was initiated by the head of the village, and female representatives from each sub-village and informal circles were invited to discuss its establishment. From its establishment to organizing regular meetings, AMAN Indonesia has devoted itself in assisting the development of the school.

After attending regular meetings in WSP, Istiqomah was getting more interested and excited to attend the school. "I always tried to be there. When I had time to go to WSP, I would go straight to the class because I really enjoyed it and I really liked the way they taught us. Besides, the knowledge they provided was so interesting that it would be such a waste to miss it". One of the most interesting things she has learned in WSP was a lesson about women's identity. The knowledge has stirred her heart and caused her to become more excited in learning about and improving one's self-capacity. "I realized that there was a lot of potential and talents in every single woman which needed to be explored and to be developed. One of the ways to make it happen is through WSP".

Besides, through WSP Istiqomah developed the faith which gave her motivation to continue her journey to become an agent of peace. "For me life is about learning. The more I study in WSP, the more I feel that there are still a lot of things I have not known yet. In my journey, I have faith that there will be no changes without movements. I never thought I would join WSP. Now I have found new friends in this place". Indeed she vividly explained her individual change in building relationship with others. She found that AMAN provided not only opportunity to learn potential of women, but also safe space to make a network, cooperation and friendship among women in Gemblengan village. "I became confident with speaking in front of others", she tells.

Moreover, learning how to communicate with people according to their characters is now inspiring her further. "I personally became motivated to keep doing good things to anyone I encounter by creating good communication in order to become an agent of peace. I want to do more to accomplish something useful for other people, particularly in WSP in Sindoro Indah Gemblengan village, so as to empower more women in the village". She is now on her way to realize this aspiration. She has joined Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan Desa (Planning and Development Village Forum), which is organized by the local government. As the female representative figure in the village, Istiqomah has been involved in activities related to women empowerment in local contexts.

She also realized cultural and attitude changes in her community. In Gemblengan village, the inhabitants, most of them are Muslims, hold belief based on the Islam Ahlusunnah wal jama'ah teaching which they have inherited from their ancestors. Extreme religious views or exclusivist disposition, however, had been still prevailing in the village, which made people became more sensitive to any new teachings which looked different from them came into their area. Istiqomah used to overtly feel it even among women in WSP. "There was the time a woman did not want to congratulate a non-Muslim inhabitant in their religious day because it was believed to be a forbidden act for Muslims", she explained. Yet Istiqomah clearly saw cultural changes now. "Since those women joined WSP, it has never happened anymore. They started to understand that we should accept diversity and became more tolerant to other people now".

"There are many positive changes I could achieve", Istiqomah beamed as she eagerly wants to share more success stories. She was appointed as the WSP in Sindoro Indah's representative to attend writing training and had opportunity to visit Women community in Aceh Province. "This was the most memorable experience I ever had as a member of WSP. I want to share what I gained in the visit with the WSP members in my village". Istiqomah's efforts to contribute to her community will continue, yet not with loneliness anymore. "I will keep improving my capacity to carry out what we have learned in WSP, to transmit peace everywhere, and to invite mothers who have not joined WSP." Her journey to become an agent of peace will move forward step by step with self-confidence and unflagging will for learning, along with other animated mothers in Gemblengan village.



FOR ME, LIFE IS A CHOICE...

Name: Netaria Perabu

Age: 42

Place: Poso, Central Sulawesi



I am Netaria Perabu, from Tentena in Poso. Let me begin my story by sharing a very personal story about my name.

My mom named me Netaria to remember her cousin sister, Haneta because she was the one who took care of me and my mother when I was a little baby. Haneta was the first woman who taught me lessons of unconditional love to her sisters. My two little sisters' and I spent a childhood filled with love and happiness, especially with my father. However, everything changed when we lost my father.

Everything around me fell apart and I couldn't see any joy after my father's loss. From that moment on, life changed forever, I witnessed my mother's daily life struggles to run the family. My mom became the sole breadwinner of the family, and she had to handle all burgeoning expenses and support our education. As the first child of the family, I realize that I had to support my mom to reduce her burden as a single mother to three girls. After finishing my high school, I decided not to continue my higher education but look for a job to support my family. At that time, my only wish was to educate my sisters, so they can have a better life in the future. My happiness was in seeing my sister's growth and their success.

I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me over my life but, I am telling you this story because I'm sure many of you can relate to my experience. Many of you have lost someone important in your life but, when you lose a parent, your life changes forever. I passed another significant milestone in 2000. I remember the story like yesterday. In 1999, there was a riot which happened in Poso between Christian and Muslims. My house caught fire, and we lost everything. My whole family was devastated again with this unexpected tragedy. Our family was separated because we had to start our life from the ashes. I, my mother and younger sister, moved to Kendari because I wanted my little sister to continue her schooling. My other sisters moved to Morowali, as she got a job as a nurse. I started to work as an administrative staff at the educational foundation. We had been counting days to go back to Poso again and reunite as a family, but it took nearly five years to go back to my village until the situation became peaceful in Poso after the communal riots.

What happened to our family of four was really bad, but I found the light when I joined WSP in 2010. It was my dream to start my education again. The WSP in Poso became a place to educate me again. I have not only learned about peacebuilding but also other skills such as non-violent communication, facilitation, and community mobilizing. I became aware of the inner strength of a woman to overcome any life challenges and see the positive lights of my life. I have started with my personal problems as well as the problems in the community with an open mind and tried to find better solutions with other mothers. The year 2011 is one of the unforgettable milestones of my life. I got a job at an Agricultural in Poso Regency. It was a challenging job interview, as competed with the university graduates but I received the appointment as a village assistant in Kancuu in East Pamona District. My responsibilities were quite challenging, because I had to mobilize the community for collective action, but the skills and knowledge I received from WSP helped me a lot to motivate the local communities and make them understand the importance of movement for change. I have been working as temporary secretary of village since last 8 years, and I have initiated women's empowerment programs based on the learning I gained from WSP, programs are supported by the Village Fund.

When I look back on my life's voyage, I become much more responsible for my family. At the same time, I realized my life is a choice. If I want to have a better life, I need to take better choices. AMAN Indonesia has given me the opportunity to grow myself and make better choices not only for me but also for others.

WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE GALLERY



Congress of WSP 2016



Team building activity at WSP Gunung Bunder



Gender and Peace Building training in WSP
Pondok Bambu



The oldest mother in WSP

WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE GALLERY



The participants in Indonesian costume at the National Women Peace Builders Forum 2016



WSP Gunung Bunder celebrates International Women's Day by holding a bazar and reproductive health seminar



Mothers from Gunung Bunder, West Java, attended the International Women's Day event held by WSP



Meditation in the Congress of WSP 2016

WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE GALLERY



Mothers' discussion about Problem Analysis on Sexual Violence against Women and Terrorism



The activity of structural transformation at WSP in Pondok Bambu



Learning about Parenting in the regular class at WSP Pondok Bambu



Handicraft training at WSP Poso

WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE GALLERY



Mothers' discussion about Problem Analysis on Sexual Violence against Women and Terrorism



Mothers and husbands play together in outdoor activity in Family Gathering event at WSP Poso



Ms. Ruby gives the leadership coaching for the mothers of WSP



Making a Problem tree of Sexual Violence against Women and Terrorism issue

**WE EDUCATE
MOTHERS FOR PEACE**



Ms. Mega Priyanti is one of the facilitators of Women's School for Peace (WSP). She has been working at WSP since 2000. She is coordinating WSP in Pondok Bambu, Jakarta and Gunung Bunder in Bogor. The APSTeam had a conversation with her as she has been closely working with mothers. The following interview includes her experience and key achievements of the WSP in building women-led community resilience.

Q. What motivates you to work with AMAN Indonesia?

AMAN Indonesia is like my second home, I feel AMAN is always supportive for me in my hard times. Once, I had to leave AMAN for a while because I was sick, but AMAN accepted me again after I recovered. I still feel that support from the whole team. Most importantly our programs are authentic, and it understands the real needs of the community. AMAN values the process as equal to the outcome. Our process is based on continuous learning throughout the past 11 years of journey.

Q. What are your main responsibilities at WSP?

I am in charge of two WSP in Pondok Bambu and in Gunung Bunder. My main task is to ensure that the schools are going as planned and making sure that mothers at WSP are doing their activity. Also, I support women to initiate community actions with other local stakeholders by consolidating their learnings of WSP.

Q. How do you evaluate the level of transformation of mothers according to the AMAN approach in conflict transformation?

These two schools are in two different levels according to our transformation circle. WSP in Pondok Bambu is at the stage where mothers reach individual transformation and moving towards structural transformation. Currently, they are opening a new school and mothers are going to be the facilitator of the new school. In contrast, the WSP in Bogor is still at the stage of basic level in reaching towards individual transformation. However, they have been recognized by the community and the local government as a collective of women. They have been invited for community meeting by local government authorities. For example, mothers in Bogor advocate their problems and recently they raised the problem of need for health clinic at the community meeting for the authorities. Even though we followed the same approach, the outcome can be changed depending on the culture and social context. For example, Gunung Bunder in Bogor, WSP is the first women organization that formed by local mothers and it was something new for their community. Therefore, WSP is treated in a special way and mothers are recognized by the community. However, in Pondok Bambu, there are many women organizations already working on different themes, and it is not special or something new for the community, thus WSP has not been able to gain the community recognition in larger levels. Therefore, the AMAN approach is to facilitate the organic development in WSP.

Q. What are the main themes included in the module of WSP?

Our Module is designed based on four themes of transformation—individual, relational, cultural, and structural—and each theme includes a specific topic while connecting to the real-life experiences of women. For example, we discussed gender identity, gender perspectives, religious perspective, the connection between women and peacebuilding as part of the individual transformation. Relational transformation includes conflict analysis, negotiation, mediation, communication and understanding peace. Cultural transformation focuses on religion and peacebuilding and community mobilizing. The structural transformation incorporates human rights, governance system and advocacy for change.

We use creative methods such as storytelling, role plays, drawing and using visuals. These teaching methods are really effective because advantages when teaching to mothers, these topics are actually not a new topic for them. For example, when teaching about gender equality we use role plays and case studies because they have already experienced these issues but here we are making more clear understandings for them.

Q. Initially, did most of the husbands criticize that joining with WSP is too late for women to study and that it is a waste time for women engage with such activities?

It is true that most of husbands did not like women joining with WSP and this was the biggest challenge we faced when we start the project. But everything has changed as the time passed, and some husbands already started to support their wives when they have seen the positive changes of women as well as within their family and the community. As long as the change is more perceptible, husbands started to accept and appreciate mothers.

But, I must say that we are facing many challenges because of patriarchal culture, so I am making sure that mothers have built enough patience and courage to face with patriarchal culture with a peaceful mind. Sometimes, I asked them to slow down process because the whole point of the WSP is to achieve peace through strong women-led community resilience. Thus, my mission is to support mothers to become peace builders and make a change in their community.



Q. AMAN decided WSP to be independent of AMAN, but women are still with AMAN, in your opinion, why are women are still with AMAN?

WSP is more important to mothers since the inception nobody forced to join for WSP, they already feel the importance of having a space for women as such WSP. They know that AMAN is supporting them but not regulating or maintaining the WSP, it is really part of the community now. They do what they want to do. From the beginning, women were aware that AMAN is not here for them to give money or other material benefits, but AMAN is here for them to share knowledge and improve their capacity by strengthening their skills. Because after teaching and providing training, there was a moment that women were called by the local government to support for local government activities, so we are happy that women are making use of our teaching and skills to improve their lives as well as their community. They are finding own money and becoming independent. For example, Rohimah, before joining for WSP, she was doing labor work, but she joined for WSP and gained knowledge, also building self-confidence to talk with local government, she had been invited to work with local government to resolve community problem. Now Rohimah and the others are collecting data from the community, make community reports, therefore now some of the mothers are getting paid by the local government and they are becoming economically independent too.

Q. What was the happiest moment/experience that you have experienced during your journey at WSP?

There are many happy moments for me when I see very strong mothers who have become leaders in their community, but most recently I was amazed looking at one of the mothers, Rohimah. There was fire incident happened in Pondok Bambu, her house caught on fire. Even at that moment, she was asking and taking care of her friends and her community. When I was telling her that you should take a rest and eat well, Rohimah was telling me that first I need to make sure my friends are fine, and they received all emergency support. Rohimah cared about everyone, her behavior inspired me a lot and I feel so happy when I see women are taking care of them and supporting their community.

These women are incredible.

WOMEN'S SCHOOL FOR PEACE IS A GOOD MODEL TO EMPOWER WOMEN

Ms. Dede A.Md Keb. is a village secretary in the family planning department in East Jakarta of which Pondok Bambu village is in the lower administrative level. She has been a government subfield officer for 28 years and has worked her duty in Pondok Bambu village for 6 years. The APS team had an interview with her discussing Women's School for Peace (WSP) Pondok Bambu and Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia to get her insights as an outsider.

Q. How did you know about AMAN Indonesia?

I heard about AMAN Indonesia and WSP Pondok Bambu from some women such as Rohimah, Umi Kulsum, Yurlianti in this village. I have known them since they worked in Family Welfare Movement program as subfield officers, and at the same time they are members of WSP.

Q. What was your initial response when you heard about WSP?

It was "wow!" for me. I realized that there are people who care about women and children. I found that they want to build capacity for women in this village, to give them knowledge, to empower them. I was impressed that beside their daily chores as housewife, their role as government subfield officers, women in WSP Pondok Bambu spent their time caring for other mothers, sharing information, knowledge, and experiences they gained in WSP. I appreciate what they have been doing.

Q. Have you ever joined any WSP's activity in Pondok Bambu?

Yes. I sometimes was invited as a guest speaker in some activities focusing on health care on women and children because I have a background in medical sector.

Q. How do you see impact of WSP Pondok Bambu?

I see the progress of women who are members of WSP Pondok Bambu. Before joining WSP, women tended to waste their time by talking about others in the village. However, what they talk with each other now is about sharing the knowledge and issue of concerns in the village. They are now very confident to speak up. Some of them are now playing many roles as subfields officers in governmental programs such as health service, family welfare, mosquito larvae monitor. I also see the positive attitudes of their husbands. They support their wives to actively participate in societal activities including WSP. People in this village are aware of the existence of WSP Pondok Bambu.

Q. How do you think AMAN can make greater impact on the community?

I can say WSP is a good model in which women are empowered. I think it's probably better if AMAN can support to open WSP in other areas in which more women can get benefit. In addition, it could be better if the wider range of activities are included such as workshop on women's health, prevention of young marriage for teenagers, workshop or discussion on how to improve household's income.

TERIMA KASIH!





**“I CHOOSE TO
STAY STRONG,
BE GRATEFUL,
AND BE HAPPY
BECAUSE
I AM NOT ALONE”**

ROHIMAH

Name: Rohimah

Age: 44

Place: Pondok Bambu, Jakarta Timur

Rohimah, a Muslim resident in Pondok Bambu village, is undertaking many roles in her neighborhood such as health service subfield officer, family welfare movement subfield officer, mosquito larvae monitoring subfield officer. Ten years back, she was simply an ordinary housewife who is a diligent mother taking care of two daughters, getting acquainted with cooking and other home caring duties.

Pondok Bambu village, located in Duren Sawit Jakarta Timur, where she has been living for twenty years, accommodates about five hundred families dispersed in different neighborhoods. Those people come from different ethnic groups, including Javanese and Betawi people or Jakartans native people who rarely got along well with each other. Javanese believes that Jakartan native people are idle. On the contrary, Jakartans responded that Javanese people are stingy.

“I witnessed how our neighbors lived with racial prejudices. I saw our neighbors frequently throwing trash into the river, which contaminated the water source and caused flooding in the village”, said Rohimah.

It was 2007 when the flood swept Pondok Bamboo village and caused a huge damage. The village then got several aid supports for recovery, one of which was Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia to provide basic food and housing supplies. While gathering to receive AMAN’s assistance, women in Pondok Bamboo found time together, sharing their thoughts and concerns over stigma related to racial difference, water pollution as a result of trash, domestic violence in the family, etc.

“We frequently met and shared our thoughts. As time went on, we became closer to each other. Gradually, those racial prejudices appear as if they never existed”, continued Rohimah.

Since then, women in the village realized the benefits of meeting and sharing their thoughts regularly. Therefore, in 2007, as discussed and supported by AMAN Indonesia, they decided to set up the Majlis ta'lim – an informal educational institution for religious learning in order to have regular meetings. In Majlis ta'lim, they came to pray, to learn about negotiations, parenting, reproductive health, organizational structure, or law. As Majlis ta'lim entailed many other functions besides religious learning, in the same year, they renamed it as WSP Pondok Bambu where interfaith women and women of different ethnicities can learn and share things together.

"I became the leader of Women's School for Peace Pondok Bambu in 2007. I have become a new person who is more confident in expressing my thoughts in public spaces than I was in the past. I also realize that other women in WSP Pondok Bambu are now actively taking the role in local governmental activities such as head of neighborhood unit, head of health service post".

On 23 August, 2018, the Pondok Bambu village caught on fire early morning while people were sleeping. The fire left 200 people injured who are from 80 families in the village. People began to panic. Rohimah, whose family was one of the victims from the flame, reached out to other families to give support and help. She wanted to make sure that her friends and community were fine.

"Many people thought of this incident as a punishment of God. I don't think so. It is rather a test for becoming a strong person to get over problems. It is also a test for community integrity and unity to find the solution together",
stated Rohimah.



PLANTING A SEED FOR PEACE

Name: Roswin Wuri

Age: 54

Place: Poso, Central Sulawesi



Sometimes peacebuilding is not about teaching about peace or initiating a dialogue among the different community. It can emerge as a form of planting a seedling. Women's School for Peace (WSP) is not only a place for education but also a place for innovation.

Although we know that there is a strong connection between nature and peace, most of us do not understand mother nature. However, one mother found her connection with the environment, as she embarks on a journey to discover peacebuilding by a planting a seed. She is Roswin Wuri, who started her peacebuilding journey with a clove seedling.

Roswin Wuri is one of the local facilitators from Central Sulawesi, Poso. She is a Christian priest but everyone calls her "Wuri." She is being loved by all Muslim and Christian members of WSP. Previously, she was a member of WSP in Bersatu in Poso. In 2012, and then she joined the facilitator training program conducted by AMAN Indonesia. Now she becomes one of the main facilitators along with four other facilitators in fourteen schools in Poso. She loves organic farming and she would share organic vegetables with others when she gained the harvest from her farm.

"One day when I was just walking down to my farm, suddenly saw a lot of clove seeds fallen down on the ground. I was thinking that why none of us planning cloves, Then I thought planning cloves can be a good idea to earn more income as well as make use of our own natural resources. So, I thought I should propose my idea to mothers at WSP in my village." Wuri said.

She believes that planting cloves is an opportunity for mothers to improve their income but, more importantly, this activity creates a space for initiating open dialogue among members of WSP. First, she shared her idea with other mothers at WSP, and she got a very positive response from them, thus encouraging her to bring up her idea to the head of WSP, Ms. Pinci, who agreed to support her initiative in clove planting. However, planting clove seedlings was not as easy for the mothers as they imagined. They had to use polybag and soil for planting. Money with which to buy plastic polybag and soil became the biggest challenge for them. Therefore, the idea of planning cloves was postponed for several weeks until they could find an alternative. "We knew money was our biggest problem, but money couldn't stop us from doing what we wanted to do. Our good intention and hard work have become our strength to keep us motivated to start planting. We collected money by selling bags and, once we collected enough money, we started clove seedlings."

In 2017, Wuri, along with other members at WSP, started planting clove seedlings in Mungkudena. The group consisted of 20 members both from the Muslim and Christian community. They found the farm as a place for them to interact with each other and plant the seed of peace and love together. So far Wuri, along with other mothers, have established thirteen new WSP in Poso in order to achieve peace by strengthening women-led community resilience and opening thirteen new WSP in Poso.

A clove seedling...
The seed of peace on earth...
Peace in my heart
That is where it starts...

I am planting a seed of peace
A clove seedling...
Peace in my home....
That is where it is grown...

I am planting a seed of peace
A clove seedling....
Peace in my community...
Where we share love and tolerance...

I am planting a seed of peace
A clove seedling...
Peace in mother earth...
Where no violence...



FOOTPRINTS OF A PEACE AGENT

Name: Aminatur Rizqiyah

Age: 27

Place: Madura island, East Java

Aminatur Rizqiyah is from Women's School for Peace in Madura island, East Java, Indonesia where the Sunni-Syiah conflict happened during the period of 2011-2012. She shares her dreams and describes her journey to become an agent of peace, to contribute to her community, so as to foster living in harmony without violence.



“IN MY OPINION, PEACE IS CALM AND COMFORT WITHOUT VIOLENCE”

I am the eldest child of my parents. I have one younger sister who is a person with disability and one younger brother who is currently an undergraduate student. My family is living in Camplong district, Sampang, Madura island where I am now working as an assistant for PKH's program (Family Welfare Program) in my district. Sampang, one of four regencies of Madura island, where I have been living, experienced the Sunni-Syiah conflict during 2011-2012. It is believed that the conflict was rooted in an ideological matter. Some others thought that social economic factor constituted the main cause while ideological difference exaggerated the tension. Whatever reason it may be, I don't want my brothers and sisters in my community to encounter such violence. They rather deserve to live in peace and harmony. I have nurtured my dream to bring my community a happier life. I want to become an agent of peace who will endlessly fight for women's rights.

I started the journey to pursue my dream with Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia as the Peace Leader in Madura island since 2014. When AMAN opened the Women's School for Peace Bintang Sembilan Sampang (WSP) on December 2017, I soon arrived at my decision to join WSP on February 2018. I simply thought that WSP would be my initial path to step up my dream in peace work. I then became Peace Facilitator in the WSP where I have been fortunate to meet, share, encourage, and empower women in my community. In WSP, women whom we call mothers, have the space to begin having more courage to speak up. I got mothers to discuss about their rights. I shared with them about structural transformation, a lesson in WSP's training module, in which they can get to understand change in individual, family, community, in the cultural aspect as well, so that they can eventually play the part of agents of change for their community. I believe that school's module is the most impressive material of WSP because it is designed according to the women's needs, at the same time it brings up new situations for mothers to experience.

I feel grateful for AMAN Indonesia which has gotten me to become a peace facilitator, to enable to assemble and empower mothers in my village and other communities. I am happy with WSP when I witness mothers becoming more active participants, which has made my life full of memorable moments. And I feel more determined with what I have been doing to become an agent of peace when I could share the importance of good communication to husband and wife who experience family conflict.

Yet, I understand that my journey never comes easy. I have faced with challenges which come from my community itself. There have not been many members, families in the community, who fully realize the benefits of joining and supporting WSP. I know that raising awareness is a process that buys time, especially since WSP was founded less than one year ago. I, however, believe that I will persistently be able to make that happen with my genuine passion in building peace and harmony for my community.

“I START PEACE BY APPRECIATING AND HONORING PEOPLE IN DIVERSITY”

Name: Siti Aminatus Sholihah

Age: 34

Place: Special Region of Yogyakarta

Siti Aminatus Sholihah is eager to share her impression of Women's School for Peace (WSP) and Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia, where she became a part of this family in 2014. “Finally, I have the chance to tell my story with Women's School for Peace Pengkok”, she exclaimed.



Siti Aminatus Sholihah, whom people call Ika, is an honorary teacher in Pengkok village, Patuk district, Gunung Kidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. One day in 2014, she was invited to the house of Ms. Dewi Astuti for a discussion. Ms. Dewi Astuti talked about the initiative of setting up a WSP in Pengkok village.

“What is Women's School for Peace about?” Ika recalled her first question with confusion out of her mind at that time. She decided to join the next meeting in order to get a clearer picture. “I became more interested in the WSP because it is for women in the community. I am more convinced to know that this is the first school in my area which addresses women's concern in the patriarchal culture that we are living”.

Ika has become a member of WSP Pengkok since 2014. As days pass by, she realizes that she has learned a lot from her second home, which is WSP Pengkok. Although she has her job, she manages to attend every single event of WSP because she doesn't want to miss those exciting lessons. “One day, we welcomed mothers coming from WSP in Poso. We shared stories of each other about WSP as an agent of peace. It was a nice gathering, and I was extremely inspired by the story of Poso's friend. She tried to get her husband aware of what she has been doing at WSP by making him a coffee, along with preparing pieces of papers from WSP for his reading. I think it was such an intelligent idea for spreading the words of WSP, and I learned it and applied it in my case”.

Ika continued without hesitation by sharing her most memorable moments in WSP Pengkok. The first moment embedded in her mind was joining a training with WSP Gemblengan about self-development, empowerment and transformation. “I remember that training because it was the first training I had the opportunity to attend. I learned invaluable experiences from other women in Gemblengan, who shared different opinions of their role as agents of peace”. The second moment that impressed Ika was the WhatsApp group. “I love the idea that women can share their concern anytime and anywhere and receive advices and solutions from colleagues. Also, in my opinion, this app is like a learning tool where women in the community can share their knowledge for others”.

“I found myself change positively since I joined WSP Pengkok”, disclosed Ika. She became more confident because of the knowledge and practical experiences she has gained in WSP Pengkok. “I always treasure my time with WSP Pengkok because WSP paved the way for me to become an assistant to the Forum Meeting at the Regency level”. The Regency forum involved seven women communities in Gunung Kidul, which aimed to empower women through capacity building. At the Regency forum, Ika proudly shares WSP Pengkok model to other communities. “I was so happy that an expert at the Regency forum took WSP Pengkok as a case model for other assistants of different communities to learn”.

Ika admitted that her four-year journey with WSP Pengkok just started because there is much to be done ahead. Yet there was a case where a woman faced her family opposition keeping her from joining WSP. Her family members insisted that WSP had political purpose which trapped women into the political world. “I think that the time has come for women as agents of peace in my community, who are being tested, to resolve the problem in peace. I strongly believe that when women unite, with their genuine passion to make things better in peace, people will constantly change their mind and understand thoroughly our mission”.



BUILDING PEACE STARTS WITHIN SELF

Name: Yurlianti Adimala

Age: 45

Place: Poso, Central Sulawesi

A Woman liberation starts the moment she decided to liberate herself by facing her own fears and being brave to make her decisions by herself. This story is about such an incredible woman who faced all her fears with full of confidence. Her name is Yurlianti Adimala, and she lives in a Christian community in 'Poso'.

Yurlianti has a story to tell for every young girl, for every woman, and for every man. She was invited to join Women's School for Peace (WSP) in 2009. Initially, her husband was not happy with her decision to join AMAN because he thought it was too late for her to study and that it would be a waste of time. However, she decided to join with WSP despite her disagreement with her husband because she thought she needed a change for herself and meaning in her life. During that time, she was going through a difficult time with her husband because he was a temperamental man, which resulted in a lot of clashes between them. He used to get drunk and get angry with her, who resisted his habit of drinking and smoking. She never liked seeing her husband as a drunken man, nor fighting with him, because whenever they fought with each other, she felt she was weak and ashamed to face her family and neighbors. Her marriage was full of ups and downs, once she found that her husband was cheating on her. This incident was a turning point for her to embark on a new journey and to find her own peace by joining WSP.

At the time, AMAN Indonesia came to her community with an intention of building peace between two different communities, Muslim and Christian, who had been fighting for a long time. This brutal fight had resulted in the loss of many lives in her own community; unfortunately, her father was amongst them. Yurlianti and her other fellow members were taught to end the circle of revenge caused by conflicts and build a good relationship between Muslim and Christian communities through dialogue. They realized that building good communication is the key to end suspicion, hatred, and hesitation among them. They started building a good relationship with each other day by day, greeting each other whenever they would meet at the market in Malei or any other public space. They exchanged goods with each other. Muslim community shared coconuts with the Christians and, in return, Christian people shared bananas with the Muslim community. Sometimes Yurlianti received fresh fish from her Muslim friends after their husbands returned from fishing. They used to visit each other's houses and become very close neighbors. All these interactions made them overcome their fears and suspicion, as they began to build a strong community bond with each other.

After joining with WSP, Yurlianti has learned and gained knowledge on gender equality, laws, issues related to domestic violence and sexual abuses, and other social issues. She was able to explore the hidden potential of women by building her confidence day by day. She felt that she is becoming an important person within her family and in her community. In 2010 was an unforgettable year for her because she became the leader of WSP in Sintuwu Raya Malei Lage. Initially, she refused to take up the position as she felt she lacked the experience to become a leader, and she was not confident about herself. However, her friends and AMAN encouraged her to accept the position. She was able to lead the WSP well and they always had regular classes with resource persons and invited speakers from outside to deliver speeches.

In 2011, they named WSP "Sintuwu Raya." She was a leader who inspired her fellow members by example. She shared that "once I became the head of WSP, I had to give good examples to the members. I always tried to build up my confidence. As a leader, I am responsible to deliver opening speeches every time when we had guest speakers or in any special events at WSP in Sintuwu Raya. When I make an opening speech, I always prepare myself beforehand. I practise myself in front of a mirror and also in front of my husband so that he could give any feedback..."



There was a moment that she had to deliver an open speech in a big event attended by religious figures, public figures, government officials, and the Head of the Police Office in Baruga. She prepared her speech beforehand and practiced many times prior to the event but she was shaking inside when the announcer called her name to the stage. She felt like she forgot everything she practiced a while ago and felt that her heart was beating fast, but at one moment a miracle happened when, after she was finished with the initial greetings, she looked at the script once but suddenly the words just flowed like a river from her mouth. She noticed that everyone gazed at her with full attention and heard a full round of applause from every corner of the hall at the end of her speech. A few minutes later she received a text message from the Head of the village, saying that “it was an amazing speech.”

Her journey as the head of WSP was not easy. First, she had to convince her husband that she was doing something right. Second, she had to face public gossip and criticism, as some of her community members viewed that it was inappropriate for a married woman to go outside the village to attend trainings, meetings, and stay at hotels. Once, there was a rumor that AMAN was trying to proselytize Christians to Islam and use it as a stepping stone so that AMAN would receive more funding. Thus, she had a conversation with women in the community and make them understand the advantages of having a WSP in the community. She was able to make her community aware that WSP creates a space for women to empower themselves and serve their own community. She found a creative way to make her husband understand what she was doing was right. She brought him along to meetings and introduced him to AMAN’s staff and members of WSP. Eventually, she realized that he was proud of her and supports her until now to carry out her work at WSP. She gained recognition from her community, represents her village as a Committee member at PKK (Family Welfare Movement), BPSpams (Organization of Administration and Facilities for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation) and as a Lecture Content Coordinator at CU Community Cooperatives. Also, she assists victims of domestic violence and escorts them to the Women and Children Protection Center and to the police station to receive legal protection.

During this venture, she has built her confidence in dealing with any obstacles not only within her family but also within her community too. She was able to improve her relationship with her husband and make him realize on his own the mistakes he did as a husband. She was able to build good relationships with other communities and contribute to achieving peace and harmony between Muslim and Christian people. She is confident to live on her own and make her own choices. She knows that any woman can liberate and find her own peace only if she is confident enough to embrace all of life’s challenges with full confidence. Life is a remarkable journey when we realized our own potential and become brave in following the right path with an open heart.



Remember, Woman

Remember, Woman, you were born
life giver, miracle creator, magic maker.
You were born with the heart of a thousand mothers,
open and fearless and sweet.
You were born with the fire of Queens & conquerors,
warrioress blood you bleed.
You were born with the wisdom of sages & shamans,
no wound can you not heal.
You were born the teller of your own tale,
before none should you kneel.
You were born with an immeasurable soul
reaching out past infinity.
You were born to desire with passion, abandon,
and to name your own destiny.
Remember, Woman, remember
you are more than you can see.
Remember, Woman, remember
you are loved endlessly.
Remember, Woman, your power and grace,
the depth of your deep sea heart.
Never forget you are Woman, divine,
as you have been from the start.

A poem by Reese Leyva, 2015