KAPAL PEREMPUAN
GENDER WATCH-MAMPU PROGRAM

The year 2020 marks 20 years of Institut KAPAL Perempuan’s journey as women’s rights organization committed to responding to political and economic shifts unfolding during Indonesia’s era of reform. KAPAL Perempuan provides a platform for the people of Indonesia, especially women, to be actively involved in developing critical thinking in society. Critical thinking is imperative for Indonesia in working towards a society that embraces social justice, gender equality, democracy, and pluralism.

KAPAL Perempuan envisions “to create a robust civil society, especially the women’s movement, in an effort to quicken the pace for developing a society that promotes critical thinking, solidarity, gender justice, pluralism, transparency and non-violence”. KAPAL Perempuan adopts the principles of gender equality and inclusivity into its four key strategies: (a) capacity building for raising critical awareness; (b) evidence-based policy advocacy from a gender-responsive and pluralist perspective; (c) building women’s knowledge based on lessons learnt; and (d) promoting a more transparent and accountable organization.

Since 2012 up to June 2020, KAPAL Perempuan has been one of the partners for MAMPU, a partnership project on gender equality and women’s empowerment between the government of Australia and Indonesia. Under the MAMPU project, KAPAL Perempuan has developed “Gender Watch”, a multistakeholder monitoring model for keeping track of social protection programs to ensure that they contribute towards alleviating poverty and reducing gender inequality.

Grassroots women are members of a Monitoring Committee established under the Gender Watch monitoring model. To ensure preparedness, women are empowered through Sekolah Perempuan or Women’s School, a learning platform at the village, hamlet, or community level. The core purpose of Sekolah Perempuan is to develop leadership qualities among women and help them build critical awareness, solidarity, compassion, life skills, and the commitment to promote social change. Sekolah Perempuan is established mainly in disadvantaged villages in remote islands, coastal areas, disaster-prone regions, and on arid lands. Its geographic outreach also extends to poor rural communities where conservative values have fueled a rising sense of identity, as well as in environmentally degraded regions, and flood-prone poor urban wards.

Sekolah Perempuan embraces women from diverse backgrounds in terms of their ethnic origin, race, religion, gender, and age, although such diversity presents a challenge of its own to the community. They engage in an intensive learning process every one or two weeks in the homes of local residents, vacant lands, along riverbanks, by the beach, the neighborhood office or village hall. One year since it first started, Sekolah Perempuan has now gained the trust of the community and the government.

Under the MAMPU program, the Sekolah Perempuan initiative is rolled out in 6 provinces, 9 districts/cities, and 25 villages, and later replicated by local governments in other villages, making it a total of 80 villages. KAPAL Perempuan working hand in hand with YKPM in South Sulawesi, LPSDM in NTB, KPS2K in East Java, PBT in West Sumatera and Pondok PERGERAKAN in NTT.
Since 2018-2019, the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection has been studying the Sekolah Perempuan initiative, and is now in the process of adopting it for a women’s empowerment model in Indonesia. In early 2020, the Ministry of Villages plans to enter into a three-year memorandum of understanding for a project on “Human Development and Poverty Eradication in Underdeveloped and Transmigration Regions”.

Sekolah Perempuan members in general have the critical awareness, self-confidence, and strength of will to make a difference. They are confident enough to negotiate in their respective households and communities, from the village to district level. They keep track of development processes, and provide data gleaned from monitoring activities, including on the feminization of poverty, to make sure that the rights of the poor and marginalized, especially women, are fulfilled.

Sekolah Perempuan members have also been successful in pushing for a women’s consultative development planning forum, an unprecedented milestone for the village or district government. They are bold enough to take risks when campaigning for sensitive gender issues, such as the eradication of female circumcision, child marriage and domestic violence, and the realization of reproductive health rights. They have been at the forefront of policy advocacy, leading to the issuance of village regulations, and circular letters by the district head, and head of local government offices, as well as the adoption of their recommendations in the district and village development plans and budgets.

PROFILE OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN LEADERS

VEGETABLE PEDDLER-CUM-SDGs AMBASSADOR

Indotang, 39, is a victim of domestic violence who lives in a remote island. Despite only finishing her primary education, she has rightfully earned the title of SDGs Ambassador among her friends. She memorizes all 17 SDGs, and can explain the principle of ‘no one left behind’. Not only does she know them by heart, but she puts them into practice in her day-to-day life.

While making her rounds as a vegetable hawker, she educates others on the urgency of ending child marriage, female circumcision, and domestic violence.

“I will never stop fighting for the rights of women and children as it is just the same as fighting for myself and my children. Let me be the only one to have suffered from domestic violence. My children must attain the highest education possible,” vowed Indotang.

At first she felt inferior, nobody took notice of her. However, her self-confidence and courage grew when she knew that she can make a difference, not only for herself, but also others. For example, several families had eventually cancelled plans to marry off their daughters who were below 18, and a village circular letter was issued in Mattiro Bombang to prevent and end child marriage.
Saraiyah, a housewife from Lokok Buak Hamlet in Sukadana, North Lombok has gained admission into the customary institution long occupied only by men. Entering a sacred institution that was previously male-dominated, Saraiyah must withstand possible resentment and threats from others. She was shunned by her family, yet with the determination to help other women improve their lives she was undeterred. She succeeded in becoming a member of the village customary institution known as Majelis Krama Adat Desa. This is where she negotiates customary rules and regulations that have long marginalized women, among others regarding wedding dowry, child marriage, and on handling cases of violence against women.

Saraiyah, 49, lives in a Muslim majority community, but thanks to a process that has helped her open up her mind, she has turned her attention to advocating for people of different faiths who inhabit the hilly hamlets, without electricity and road access. In decision-making forums, specifically the musrenbang (consultative development planning forum) for women, she has helped push for the construction of roads, and availability of power supply, thereby allowing villagers to access health care, markets, and schools. It was not all smooth sailing. In advocating for the betterment of Kebon Patu hamlet for example, she had to repeatedly make others understand why she needs to defend people of different faiths, especially to her adversaries.

As a victim herself of a major earthquake in Lombok in 2018, she initiated a relief center for disaster victims that pay special attention to women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. She voluntarily helped out over a long period of time, from the state of emergency to reconstruction and recovery.

Lilik Indrawati, a farmhand from the village of Kesamben Kulon, Gresik, East Java, at first lost all hope thinking that her fate will never change. But after taking the bold step of joining Sekolah Perempuan, she gained plenty and become a more capable person, especially in collecting data on gender issues through a participatory process involving the community.
Each time Lilik presents her data, she would be the center of attention. Her explanations were clear and simple, describing the actual circumstances that she herself experienced. For example, when talking about the feminization of poverty during a training course on gender-responsive data advocacy for achieving gender equality in the sustainable development goals held in Surabaya, she had this to say:

“If you want to know what feminization of poverty is, just look at me. I am a woman from a poor family, only a middle school graduate. I have been working since I was a child, then I got married and had children. I also worked in a factory, further adding to my already heavy workload. I have no health insurance coverage. Several years ago, I was diagnosed with cervical cancer. I know nothing about musrenbang, nor about women’s representation, now that is what feminization of poverty looks like.”

Her skills as a facilitator in the participatory data collection process generated valuable data on the feminization of poverty, which became the basis for advocacy work. The data were used for advocating policy change, and more gender-responsive programs and budgets. The district government recognizes Lilik’s expertise, where even the Director of Public Welfare Statistics of the National Statistical Office expressed his appreciation, making her into a role model on the collection of reliable data. Lilik is also loved by her community, especially the women of Kesamben Kulon village.

NING SETYANI, ONCE REJECTED BY MUSRENBANG, NOW A MUSRENBANG FACILITATOR

For urban poor women, trying to attend a musrenbang (consultative development planning forum) would prove to be a challenge. This was experienced by Ning Setyani, the head of Sekolah Perempuan in Jakarta, in her early attempts to join the musrenbang meeting for the Bidaracina urban ward in East Jakarta. The committee asked, “Why are you here? You don’t have an invitation. Who are you representing?” The barrage of questions was actually a sign of rejection, and the reason cited was that women were already represented by PKK, a formal women’s groups, albeit mere formality.

Living amidst the bright lights of the city where the poor only account for 5% of the population, women from poor backgrounds do not count. Under such circumstances, Ning Setyani wants to do more. She wants to let others know the importance of social protection for poor women, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens in her community. Through her strength of character and critical mind, Ning eventually got an invitation, and was entrusted to become a musrenbang facilitator.

While carrying out her duties at the forum, she will take every opportunity possible to advocate for worthy causes. She included gender issues into the problem identification process, helped identify needs, and formulated recommended solutions. Ning made her own mark in the decision-making
Yeni Marlina or Iyen, who only managed to finish her elementary education lives in the remote area of Timbulun. From Batu Gadang urban ward, Timbulun can only be reached by a footpath with several rivers to cross. As Iyen developed a more critical way of thinking, she and other local women sought to make a difference for the Timbulun community.

Timbulun was previously a hamlet that nobody pays attention to, because the people were considered “outsiders”, but now the government has taken them into account. The footpath has been replaced with a road now accessible to motorized vehicles, thereby allowing villagers to transport their harvested crops to the market. Electricity is also now available, and Timbulun is no longer left in the dark. Local citizens have access to social protection programs such as Rastra (subsidized rice), PKH (conditional cash transfer), free medical treatment, free education, drinking water supply to homes, and renovation of a prayer house that nearly collapsed due to the earthquake. Women on the other hand have access to IVA testing and other medical examinations.

The learning process that she experienced at Sekolah Perempuan has allowed her to think more critically, helping her build courage and a sense of concern for others, and therefore giving her the ability to convince the village government to pay equal attention to local residents who have long been neglected, providing them with access to services. She communicates her opinions and aspirations through the urban ward-level musrenbang. Iyen does not work alone. Many others have facilitated and supported her, but changes will occur much faster, with long-term impact if the community themselves seek change as they would know their own problems and needs better.
RISNAWATI DETHAN SAU
WOMEN SHOULD BE MAKE DECISION

"Women should not sit idle and wait for men to fight for our interests, or simply let time decide. We need to fight and take action, including for the establishment of a musrenbang for women," said Risna. The patriarchal culture remains deeply entrenched, where many in society still see women as subordinate to men, and their place is in the kitchen, preparing meals, tending to the needs of their children and husbands. Women who earn a living are also seen only as complementing what the husbands bring in to the family. If this is the case, who then should fight for women? We, women must fight for ourselves because we are the ones who know best what we need,” explained Risna, a Sekolah Perempuan cadre from the village of Mata Air, Kupang, NTT - Risnawati Dethan Sau.

With such conviction, Risna initiated a collective action in her village and succeeded in pushing the Mata Air village government to issue a village regulation on women’s representation with a 30% quota in the development decision-making process on planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Another collective action in 2017 also managed to convince the village government to hold a women’s musrenbang.

These actions have created more space for women. Risna herself is now entrusted with a strategic position as the neighborhood head for Dusun V Hamlet in Mata Air Village, which is a rare opportunity given to women. Her daily schedule is busy with the monitoring of social protection programs; initiating efforts to prevent violence against women and child marriage; fulfilling her duties as a volunteer for an integrated health center for children under 5; and being actively involved in several networks, including as a health education cadre at the sub-district level with the BKKBN of Kupang district, and assisting in the community-level data collection process.

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