
Hatini

*Head of the Women Farmers Group and
'Aisyiyah Reproductive Health Cadre
Cirebon, West Java*

Authors

Desi Rahmawati and Nadlirotul Ulfa

Volume Editors and Reviewers

Ken M.P. Setiawan

Bronwyn A. Beech Jones

Rachael Diprose

Amalinda Savirani

Copy Editors

Bronwyn A. Beech Jones

Annisa Sabrina Hartoto

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Hatini

Head of the Women Farmers Group and 'Aisyiyah Reproductive Health Cadre Cirebon, West Java¹

Hatini is a thirty-nine-year-old 'Aisyiyah cadre from a village in Cirebon district. Like many villagers, Hatini only has a primary school education. This low level of education has produced a widespread lack of self-belief among this community, including for Hatini. Before joining 'Aisyiyah, Hatini was considered a very shy person. She previously worked in a factory before quitting and opening a small food stall at her house where she sells vegetables and fried snacks.

Before becoming an 'Aisyiyah cadre, Hatini was an active member of Posyandu (from 2007) and PKK (from 2008). As a Posyandu cadre, she was in charge of tuberculosis prevention in 2013. However, in all three roles, she feels that she had limited involvement.

"[As a Posyandu cadre], my task was just to weigh babies from this hamlet. As a PKK cadre, there were PKK meetings to attend in the village and subdistrict. They were my main tasks. Doing this, supervising or like that, knowing how many students attended school. I gathered data about the school. As a TB cadre, I was with Bu Sri², we took part and had to find people who were sick with tuberculosis and report them to the community health centre." (Hatini, Cirebon research village, 2 March 2019)

When 'Aisyiyah's Cirebon district Regional Head introduced a women's empowerment program in the village in 2014, Hatini was given the opportunity to join as a reproductive health cadre. She was selected by the Village Head temporary administrator through the Village Secretary, because of her experience in the PKK and Posyandu.

This new role opened new opportunities for Hatini to gain new knowledge. Hatini's cadre training was the starting point of her getting to know places far beyond her village, such as when Hatini stayed in a hotel to attend a training about leadership and information about women's reproductive health which she had never had an opportunity to learn before. Through these training sessions, Hatini learned to express her opinions.

"I am happy that I have gained so much new knowledge from 'Aisyiyah. The first time was at a nice hotel. 'Aisyiyah helps the village cadres. If there's any issues they will take it up, even if it's in the village, or the subdistrict government. It's really good. [Cadres] are supported and now we are confident. We are confident to express our opinions about anything really." (Hatini, Cirebon research village, 2 March 2019)

As a reproductive health cadre, Hatini has gained new knowledge and experiences of organising. Apart from new information about women's reproductive health, she has also gained experience in how to recruit new cadres to the women's group Balai Sakinah 'Aisyiyah. Hatini coordinates Balai Sakinah 'Aisyiyah activities in her hamlet, works together with other cadres and regularly communicates with district 'Aisyiyah leaders. Through meetings, she meets other village women and talks about their everyday lives and the reproductive health program, as well as other women's issues like food supplies and children's education. As Hatini is close with 'Aisyiyah's district leaders, she has become a go-between to explain health information to the community and report on community needs, even if they are outside of the program's focus on reproductive health, such as issues about processing vital identity documents.

¹ **Authors:** Desi Rahmawati and Nadlirotul Ulfa. **Editors:** Bronwyn A. Beech Jones and Annisa Sabrina Hartoto. **Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the analysis are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting governments or organisations. All names have been anonymised.

² See the life story of Srikandi.

Hatini carries out all her activities as a cadre with tenacity and has developed her individual leadership skills. At the end of 2018, Hatini, who many know to be hard working, had the opportunity to manage 'Aisyiyah's Nutrition Garden – a small garden for growing vegetables. The Nutrition Garden is a trial project of the Cirebon 'Aisyiyah district leaders to explore livelihood activities which align with the interests of women in rural areas. Initially, Hatini thought this opportunity would be beneficial to develop her interest in farming. Hatini's husband also receives additional income for helping to tend the garden.

As time went by, the Nutrition Garden created many positive changes for Hatini and other village women, primarily through the creation of the MAMPU-'Aisyiyah Women's Farmers Group in 2019. This group has the potential to solidify women's collective action in this village by providing an alternative space for cadres to develop positive and productive group activities. In the group, cadres lead group activities like farming and learning how to market farming products – skills which are very beneficial to village women's lives.³ As Hatini was first in charge of tending the Nutrition Garden, she became the leader of the Women's Farmers Group. Armed with the leadership skills she gained from 'Aisyiyah cadre training, Hatini swung into action and quickly started to carry out her tasks as leader, such as managing the division of tasks between members and distributing their harvest.

"All my friends said, 'how about if Bu Hatini does it? So, I became the head [of the Women's] Farmers group]. I said, 'oh I don't want to.' [They said], 'you manage the garden, so you're the leader ... That's what I do ... If there are a lot of weeds, then I say to my friends 'come and do weeding.' I am given funds from 'Aisyiyah to hoe the garden, to get rid of the pests, to do anything ... With the group, [I say] 'you sell this, sell this many bunches.' I divide it amongst the group, 'you sell this for this price.' (Hatini, Cirebon research village, 2 March 2019)

Gradually, Hatini became more confident in expressing her opinions. She proposed the Nutrition Garden's new position so that it would be close to the village office and market. To do this, Hatini first conveyed her idea to 'Aisyiyah district leaders who passed it on to the Village Head. Her public speaking skills too have helped Hatini lead the Women's Farmers Group, build social relationships with village women, and put her leadership skills into action. Working at her vegetable stall and gathering with other women to practice tambourine (*jamiah*) are now opportunities to exchange opinions.

Consequently, Hatini felt confident to propose the acquisition of tambourines at the 2018 village Musrenbang, to be purchased through the village budget. For the local community, tambourines have meaning far beyond just being music instruments. Tambourine groups are informal spaces for women to gather and express themselves in an artistic and spiritual way, as well as meet other women and talk about their everyday lives and problems.

Hatini now inspires many women in the village. Her work with 'Aisyiyah has also made her confident and provided her with advice on how to save money to finance her children's schooling and further study. Her eldest daughter is now completing a higher education degree at the State Islamic Religious College in Cirebon (STAIN).

"I want to know how to put my children through school, so they become useful. I have been thinking about this since my children started high school. How can I put you through school and university so you can get a good job. [My motivation] at the start was when I saw people attending meetings outside of this region. That's what I want my children to do. Then, 'Aisyiyah supported me and said, 'you can

³ In early 2019, the Women's Farmers Group managed village-owned land (approximately 7,000m²) and planted a variety of vegetables, including eggplant and chilli. In September 2019, the Women's Farmers Group expanded the project by planting fruit. They plan to sell their produce in at a stall in the village market.

definitely do it but you need a business they said. You can definitely do it [pay for your children's schooling] if you want to.” (Hatini, Cirebon research village, 2 March 2019)

As the first family in their hamlet to have a child in higher education, Hatini has become a positive example in her local community. Now young people from several other families have also begun attending university. Hatini's involvement in 'Aisyiah has even inspired her daughter to join.

“I have seen really positive [impacts] for my mum. Now she is not scared when she is trading [in the market]. Whatever she does she pushes forward herself. For the Nutritional Garden she has been supported by her family and 'Aisyiah. Before she wasn't very brave in public. Now, thanks be to God, she is confident to be social in groups and in organisations. I participated in 'Aisyiah's cadre school and stayed overnight to do it. I learned a lot from 'Aisyiah in 2018 and was also involved in socialising livelihood skills to the community.” (Hatini's daughter, Cirebon research village, 3 March 2019).

Hatini hopes that her experience will continue to inspire women of all ages in the village to join organisations and work for their communities.