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# Husnul

*Village Constituent Group Member  
East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara*

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*This research was supported by the Governments of Australia and Indonesia and was conducted in consultation with the civil society organisations involved. We would like to thank these organisations and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (MAMPU) for their support, as well as all participants in the research, in particular the countless village women who shared their experiences and views with us. 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. Future iterations of this case study might reflect further research and analysis over time. For a more extensive and comparative analysis of the case studies, Diprose, R., A. Savirani, K.M.P. Setiawan, and N. Francis, 2020. *Women's Collective Action and the Village Law: How Women are Driving Change and Shaping Pathways for Gender-inclusive Development in Rural Indonesia*. The University of Melbourne and Universitas Gadjah Mada. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124326>. Available at: [www.mampu.or.id](http://www.mampu.or.id) and [www.demisetara.org](http://www.demisetara.org).*

To cite this life story: Sawiji, H.S. and W.C. Arti, 2020. "Husnul". In Setiawan, K.M.P., B.A. Beech Jones, R. Diprose, and A. Savirani [Eds], 2020. *Women's Journeys in Driving Change: Women's Collective Action and Village Law Implementation in Indonesia*. The University of Melbourne, Universitas Gadjah Mada and MAMPU, pp. 74-76. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124331>. Available at: [www.mampu.or.id](http://www.mampu.or.id) and [www.demisetara.org](http://www.demisetara.org).

# Husnul

Village Constituent Group Member  
East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara<sup>1</sup>

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Husnul is fifty-two years old and a member of the Constituent Group in a village in East Lombok. She lives with her husband, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. As a daughter, Husnul was taught to be responsible for looking after both her parents and her parents-in-law. She cared for her father and parents-in-law who were all ill before they passed away, washing, feeding and nursing them as well as taking care of her own small children.

Husnul's husband left for Malaysia shortly after they married, when she was pregnant with their first child. In Malaysia, her husband did not earn a proper wage and faced difficulties as an illegal migrant worker. Husnul tried to earn a livelihood for her family by sewing and embroidering as well as working as a cook at the community health post. Her husband regularly came home and, as a result, Husnul was pregnant every year or year and a half until they had five children together. These frequent pregnancies and lots of small children meant that she could not work a lot, even though it became more expensive to look after her expanding family. She also experienced health problems because of giving birth so frequently. In 2018, Husnul and her family turned a corner and started a business making banana and cassava crisps. While Husnul first started the business on a whim, it turned out that lots of people were interested in her products because of their unique flavour. The cracker business has become Husnul and her family's primary livelihood.

Since the 1990s, Husnul has been a Posyandu cadre and often helps villagers who need medical help. Her experience of caring for her parents made Husnul more aware about medical examinations and procedures than most villagers. Husnul first met BaKTI in a village discussion in 2014 as, at the time, she was the Head Cadre of the Posyandu.

Husnul then began to be actively involved in events on women's issues supported by BaKTI, including paralegal training about how to handle cases of violence, data-based policy advocacy, and the drafting of the 2018 Village Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children. She is active in participating in discussions about women migrant workers and efforts to reduce domestic violence in the village. Apart from these advocacy roles, Husnul also participated in a training workshop organised by the district Office of Corporations, Industry and Trade about financial management and commercial marketing. These activities gave her new insights and broadened her horizons.

*"I also participated in corporate training about financial management and marketing. And I attended two training workshops about food management in food stalls. From BaKTI there was training about what happens when parents fight in front of their children and about paralegal work."* (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)

BaKTI also supported Husnul in her business endeavours. A BaKTI brochure features Husnul's banana and cassava crisps, and field staff introduced her to the Office of Corporations, Industry and Trade to assist her in licencing her business. This connection also led to Husnul being added to the district small- and medium- sized business chat group.

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<sup>1</sup> **Authors:** Hening Wikan Sawiji and Wigke Capri. **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.

By participating in the training workshops, Husnul gained the self-belief to express her opinions in public and overcome her feelings of nervousness and embarrassment when addressing large forums. Now, Husnul writes down what she wants to say before sharing her opinion in these forums.

*“Because after the discussion we were told to write and then present. So it is easier now to express my opinion and talk about women’s issues ... We discussed problems in the village, migrant worker problems, the problem of domestic violence. Lots of my friends are still overseas workers. Like my friend who used to ask for food because she didn’t have any and borrowed money from me. Now she is a migrant worker.”* (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)

In the Constituent Group, Husnul is head of the Support Division. She has become a contact person for women, particularly from her hamlet, to talk about their problems. Husnul has natural social skills and finds it easy to get close with others and make women feel comfortable to talk about their personal problems. Although Husnul first thought that the problems women were telling her about were normal household disagreements, the paralegal course she took emphasised the importance of being a trusted person to talk to as the first step to address domestic violence, before documentation and mediation.

*“I tell the Village Head and the go to Village Head. If someone is hurt, I used to take them first on a motorbike before we got an ambulance [in the village].”* (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)

In the political sphere, Husnul was invited to join the village Musrenbang because of her role as a Posyandu cadre and in the Constituent Group. In the forum, Husnul was confident to propose the acquisition of health equipment for the community health centre (Puskesmas) and an allocation from the Village Fund for the Posyandu.

*“Yes, [I proposed the purchasing of] equipment for the Posyandu. We don’t have complete data, or scales for pregnant women or a notice board for the Posyandu. During the Village Head’s term, we got equipment to measure the height of babies and under-fives. All we need now are chairs and a table.”* (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)

Husnul has seen changes in village women since the passing of the 2018 Village Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children. Women have become more forthright in explaining to men their rights and more vocal to counter the violence and neglect of women and children. This has also been the case in Husnul’s own family. If her husband is violent toward her children, Husnul knows she will use the Village Regulation to protect her children and as a result, feels that she has a strong legal basis to warn her husband.

*“Since the Village Regulation there are rarely cases of domestic violence, some are scared. Some used to hit their wives and was a woman who was hit until she was bruised. He was arrested by the police and in jail for a while. Once offenders paid five hundred thousand rupiah, they were let go. There was one who was only in jail for a day. But after the Village Regulation this rarely happens. Something is different. We can talk about it more feely, every time we meet ... There is also the [regulation on the] protection of children. My husband often hits our kids and I tell him he can’t do it.”* (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)

For Husnul, the primary needs of women in the village are access to courses and capital for businesses. Reflecting on her own experiences, Husnul feels fortunate that as a member of the PKK she has had access to government training workshops which were not open to all women in the village. In her view, if training and resources were open to everyone, then the village’s standard of living would increase. She adds that village women also need to be supported to develop marketing skills and networks to promote their products.

When she started her crackers business, Husnul was treated with ridicule and scorn by some of her neighbours, particularly women who told her to just carry out her domestic chores. However, because of financial necessity and her determination, Husnul did not give up. She borrowed the tools she needed from neighbours and set up her business. After it grew, she even employed other women, particularly divorcees who live near her, to make taro chips together. Now, Husnul has even trademarked her crisp recipe.

*“I pioneered these banana chips myself. When I started, there was an exhibition at the subdistrict PKK in 2018. I made the taro chips with a unique shape so they would be different from the others. [People said] “just look after your kids [at home].” But I tried to earn money for my family. My MAMPU friends helped me to find a sponsor. I accept all feedback, like at Santri Mart, I got ideas. I put all the suggestions I get into my products. A while ago a BaKTI community organiser said to me we [should] make taro crackers with [married] women and divorcees. We did it in a group and made cassava and taro crackers. I tried to continue it. So, I suggested, before I make my own business, how about we try to make these taro chips? How did we do it? I borrowed the tools from my neighbour.” (Husnul, East Lombok research village, 11 July 2019)*

Husnul has recently become a formally recognised community leader as a member of the Village Consultative Council. She hopes that many men in the village will get involved in women’s empowerment and the protection of women and children. She even already has an idea for a course about caring about women’s issues for husbands and fathers. With such an initiative, women will no longer have to fight alone to change social norms which confine women to the domestic sphere and are used to justify violence.