
Julianti

*Head of the Women's School Seaweed Farmers Group
Pangkajene and Islands, South Sulawesi*

Authors

Ulya Niemi Efrina Jamson and Hening Wikan Sawiji

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

*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 and www.demisetara.org.*

To cite this life story: Jamson, U.N.E. and H.W. Sawiji, 2020. "Julianti". In Setiawan, K.M.P., B.A. Beech Jones, R. Diprose, and A. Savirani [Eds], *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. 36-39. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124331>. Available at: www.mampu.or.id and www.demisetara.org.

Julianti

Head of the Women's School Seaweed Farmers Group,
Pangkajene and Islands, South Sulawesi¹

Julianti, who is currently twenty-four years old, is Head of the Women's School Seaweed Farmers Group in a Pangkajene and Islands district village. Juli, as she is normally known, lives on one island with her husband and one-year-old son, while her parents and family live on another island which together forms one village. After she finished primary school, Juli's parents were initially reluctant to send their eldest child to another island for the first time to continue her education, but eventually allowed her to because Juli travelled with her school friends from their island. Juli's highest formal education was finishing the "B-package", which is equivalent to middle school, in 2014.

Every day, Juli prepares rope for longline seaweed farming, sews crab nets, and sells food. She also sells facial and beauty products and wallets which her younger sister makes. This work supplements her husband's income from fishing – he earns between thirty and one hundred thousand rupiah a day (3-10 AUD) – which is not enough for their daily needs, particularly after the birth of their son. As well as working outside the house for her family, Juli also does all the housework herself, including cooking, cleaning, and taking care of their child.

Juli's leadership skills were forged when she lived with her grandfather who was the Hamlet Head, skills she later developed with others, as Juli likes to meet and learn with other people. Unfortunately, Juli's strict upbringing and family's treatment of her as a girl limited her opportunities to join activities outside the house and to gain access to information about how governance worked in her community.

"In his day, my grandfather, who has already passed now, was the first Hamlet Head on the island. My intention was to continue his work. My motivation has been to continue to improve governance here like my grandfather [...] I really want to advance my island. But before I joined the Women's School, I was scared of people in uniform. I had the motivation, but I was scared. I thought that those who wore uniform would want to capture me if I spoke up. Until I graduated from primary school, I was so scared, if someone came, I hid." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

This shows how Juli, like other women in the village, was not initially concerned about decision-making processes and the village government's work plan. The absence of women like Juli from these processes is exacerbated by the common fear women have of officials in uniform, like police officers. Juli explained that before the establishment of the Women's School, many men and government officials underestimated and did not believe women.

"[Women] don't go to the government. In the community women are treated as children who shouldn't be heard, but now at the School we are valued. Before we were excluded, if I had information about something no one would believe me, no one believed me when I said that we should be getting financial assistance. They didn't believe me." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

This perception of the role of women in the community began to shift once the Women's School was established. Women were provided with critical-thinking training materials, including about women's role in

¹ **Authors:** Ulya Niemi Efrina Jamson and Hening Wikan Sawiji. **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.

the public sphere and village decision making. Juli recalled that her younger sister had initially been invited to join the School when Intan, a staff member at the Foundation for Community Studies and Empowerment (YKPM), visited the island. When Juli heard that the School was going to be established, she immediately registered.

Juli joined the Women's School because of her strong commitment to keep learning; an unremitting energy which she had not been able to apply in a formal educational setting. After joining the school, Juli's prominence was demonstrated when she was elected as secretary and then group leader. She always enjoys discussions with friends from other islands which both enrich her knowledge and importantly extend her networks.

"I did not know anything about these four islands ... and now I do. I received lots of input from friends, and we could share [our experiences]. [I now have] many friends from other villages, we are close like family." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

Juli learned about advocacy at the School, especially how to fight for the basic rights of villagers. She applied this knowledge to advocate for students and parents of a primary school in her village. In 2016, Juli found out that children were not regularly attending school. After hearing similar complaints from many mothers, Juli wrote to the school authorities to hold an open meeting about how teacher attendance was affecting how students learned. At the meeting, however, parents and guardians did not feel comfortable to convey their complaints because they feared the school principal who was well-known as being skilled in black magic.

"I sent a letter in 2016 and held a meeting between parents and guardians and teachers at the school. I spoke and then my plan was to hand over to the parents and then to the principal so he could ask questions. But even the students' parents were afraid to speak, so it looked like the meeting was only my initiative, because it was only me who wanted to speak. The wife of the Hamlet Head also sided with the Principal. ... So, when residents were asked [what the problem was], there was no story [to tell]. It was as if it was just me making it all up. When it was over, the Principal said to me 'come here, don't be careless. If you report [what's going on], I'll put a curse on you', and threatened me. Maybe people were afraid, because he is a Mandarese person and they're known as being good at black magic. After that happened I felt sick after our meeting ... I came home sick and was sick for a few months. My vagina was swollen, until it looked like a ping pong ball. After being treated by the doctor, I went to the traditional healer, and they said it was because of black magic." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

The swelling only began to subside in 2018. While Juli was recovering at home from her illness, most of the people who visited asked her to quit the Women's School. They thought Juli's involvement in the school had caused her to become unwell. Juli, however, brushed off these fears and chose to continue to be involved in the Women's School.

"[I say] go for it anyway. Surrender to God for it is God who responds. When I got treated, maybe people thought "oh this sick child will give up" but, but I didn't give up. The larger the challenge is, the more I like it. I am an island girl, big waves pass, they just pass." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

Juli's involvement in the Women's School and close relationship with Intan, a staff member at YKPM, changed her perspective about women's role in private and public spheres. Now she thinks that men should also take on household responsibilities and understands that importance of women in village decision making, which should always be strived for.

Juli emphasises how Intan always helps her when she is advocating in the community to access services to which they are entitled and provides her with more personal support. This close relationship was forged as Juli attended every Women's School activity and confided her problems in Intan. For Juli, the most important part of their relationship is that Intan often accompanies and gives advice to Juli about village development and empowerment.

"I can ask anything which has happened, not just problems in the group, also if there's something I want to say, something I don't understand. I'll ask Intan. Also, about the Village Government, I've asked about the Village Fund, like how much there is. It's not just that either. I also confide about my family, I feel so close with her." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 2 March 2019)

Juli's rapid learning journey to understand YKPM materials about gender justice fostered her self-belief to fight for equality for all women, starting in her own family. She became more aware of what should not happen in a healthy relationship, such as a husband giving excessive domestic tasks to his wife. Juli's critical thinking about these issues and her busy schedule of activities with the Women's School outside the village caused her relationship with her husband to drift. Juli's husband was uncomfortable that she often left him and their son at home. Since they had been dating, he had conveyed his disapproval of Juli's organisational activities, but she had not lessened her involvement.

One time, when Juli again insisted that she was not going to leave the Women's School, her husband became very angry and hit her. Before this, Juli had taken a year off from the Women's School to travel with her husband who got a job in Papua. But, after being hit by her husband, Juli took her son and left him, returning to her parents' house. She gave him an ultimatum that if he wanted them to continue their marriage, he could not prevent her attending events at the Women's School. Juli recalled that in that moment her response drew upon what she had learned at the School about the importance of valuing and respecting women's bodies and selves.

"From a critical gender perspective, we shouldn't judge others. If someone is disabled, they usually get teased, but after I understood materials from YKPM I realised that we shouldn't do this. There are lots of different types of violence – not just physical violence. I learned at a Women's School training session that violence also can include hurtful words and stories. I learned that violence isn't just hitting someone." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

One way in which Juli has worked for her community has been through her instrumental role in advocacy for solar panels to provide the island with electricity. Juli explains that women on her island need clean water and electricity to carry out their work at home and outside, but that supply has not been adequate. Juli advocated for the purchasing of solar panels through the village Musrenbang and lobbied the Village Head in 2015 and 2016. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to install the solar panels as the island where Juli lives does not have enough available land. Nevertheless, home solar panels were distributed and now forty percent of residents have them. This has been very valuable for villagers, especially because it has meant that streets which beforehand were pitch black are now lit. For Juli, this successful advocacy was the result of the community and the village government working together.

"We participate first. If the village has good leaders who want to talk to and help the community and women's and men's groups... In any case the important thing is the leader. If the leader wants to talk to the community, if there is cooperation between the government and the community, then assistance will meet its targets." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 25 February 2019)

The largest challenge which Juli is currently facing is that she and her Women's School friends can no longer access allocations from the Village Fund. This shift is because of the influence of patronage in local politics and

events which occurred after the 2016 village election. The mother-in-law of the new Village Head marginalised the Women's School from decision-making processes like Musrenbang, because they were regarded as having supported an opposition candidate.

"I really want to. We need things but I don't know who to ask. If we are invited to Musrenbang we can say what the island needs. After Pak Andi's term finished, we didn't have this [opportunity] anymore. A while ago I asked the Hamlet Head, "what about the hamlet meeting?" He said, "we can, but I don't know when the village meeting will be, so how would I know when the hamlet meeting is? The Women's School will keep going it can be beneficial to so many more women who are yet to experience it. It can make so many more women go from not understanding to understanding." (Juli, Pangkajene and Islands research village, 2 March 2019)

Juli hopes that the Women's School program can continue in her village and that more women can become members and experience the changes and benefits like she has, particularly to have the confidence to speak in public and speak out for political and social rights. As a prominent member of the Island Women's School, Juli is currently being trained by YKPM to follow in Intan's footsteps as a field staff member to focus on empowerment in other areas.