

Learning to Protect Rights

Indonesian Officials Attend 12 Week Human Rights Intensive

By **Katie Mitchell**

In February 2006 the Castan Centre embarked on a human right training program as part of the *Indonesia-Australia Specialised Training Project* (Phase 3). The project is an Ausaid program funded by the Australian and Indonesian governments and the Castan Centre has been involved in IASTP since 2002. The Castan Centre's involvement in this program reflects its mandate, to promote and protect human rights not only in Australia but across the world. Dr Julie Debeljak, the team leader of the program, explains further, 'The Centre views this program, and other such programs, as an opportunity to engage with governments about human rights. At this stage, it is States that owe obligations under international human rights norms, so what better way to influence the behaviors of governments than through education and dialogue.'

The twenty participants in the program were drawn from various government ministries (including the Ministries of Justice and Human Rights, Prisons and Finance), regional government offices (including Aceh and Papua), non-government organisations, the media and academic institutions. Their participation in the program reflects a strong individual commitment to human rights and to implementing change, as they leave their families and homes to immerse themselves in another country for three months of intensive study, discussion and debate. An insight into their expectations and experience of the program can be found in the interviews on the following pages.

The content and format of the programs are varied, resulting in a lively, thought provoking and challenging 12 weeks of seminars and on site visits to institutions which deal with human rights issues. The program addresses human rights at international, regional and domestic levels and topics include rights of women and children, terrorism, the right to health, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction. Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption in government are also key themes in the training.

According to Dr Debeljak, the structure of the program is carefully balanced to give participants a solid foundation in human rights theory and concepts, while also ensuring that they "are equipped to translate the knowledge gained during the Australian training program to their workplaces and Indonesian society more generally upon their return home." The various site visits in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra aim to provide "practical, workplace related training" and are combined with a strong emphasis on case studies and group exercises. This approach recognises the importance of participants gaining "practical skills to develop effective strategies for the better protection and promotion of human rights in Indonesia."

This focus on practicality, and returning to Indonesia with a solid plan of how to implement what they have learnt and

Participant Profile: Ani Purwanti

Ani is a lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Diponegoro University in Central Java.

Why did you decide to participate in this program?

I want to develop my knowledge about Human Rights, especially women in the law and to understand the implementation of Human Rights in Australia.

What do Human Rights mean to you in your area of work?

Human Rights are the rights that a person has simply because she or he is human being. In Indonesia some women's rights are not respected.

What kind of Human Rights challenges do you face in that occupation?

Women's rights, in all sectors.

What do you hope to learn from this program?

I want to know how to improve Human Rights through the law, especially for women.

Which part of the program has been the most interesting for you so far?

Charters and treaties such as the Convention Against Torture, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing you during this training and on your return to Indonesia?

How to implement the human rights we are learning about in society.

Ani's vision for Indonesia in the future....

All people in the Indonesian government, in NGO's and all citizens to know about Human Rights and to implement them in Indonesia, step by step, so that all people can get justice.

"Human rights must inspire people and permeate a culture."

Dr Julie Debeljak
Associate Director, Castan Centre

Participant Profile: Muhammad Iqbal

Muhammad is Chief Information Officer of Human Rights Information Systems in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. He is also Head of Data Collecting.

Why did you decide to participate in this program?

My work involves socialization and dissemination of human rights information and I really need to improve and increase my knowledge of human rights. The other important things are experiences of other countries, about how they solve human rights issues.

What do Human Rights mean to you in your area of work?

Education on human rights and the dissemination of proper information by means of media, both theoretical and practical, play an important role in the promotion and respect of human rights for all. The most important thing is how we make people understand their rights and obligations, respect each other, and improve public awareness of human rights.

What kind of Human Rights challenges do you face in that occupation?

Internal challenges: Human rights information systems are an integration between human rights and information technology. Some decision makers and supervisors have no strong perspective on information technology; they see it as complex and ineffective: a waste time and money. This is the lack of support by them.

External challenges: Our budget is not large enough to optimize the program. We need magazines, bulletins, journals, a web-site, posters, leaflets, etc. We also need people to be involved in these programs.

What do you hope to learn from this program?

New perspectives and experiences in the human rights field, both theoretical and practical.

Which part of the program has been the most interesting for you so far?

The lessons in the classroom about human rights are the most interesting for me, combined with discussions, debates, and the sharing of ideas. The instructors use appropriate teaching methods and play an important role, although the material/subjects are difficult.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing you during this training and on your return ?

During this training, everything is running well. On my return to Indonesia, we need more support from the supervisors to implement the plans we are developing.

Muhammad's vision for Indonesia in the future....

Good governance, public awareness of human rights, no gross violation of human rights, and the need for human rights values to be spread evenly to all citizens.

absorbed over their months in Australia is reflected in one of the major outcomes of the program, the design and implementation of individual Action Plans. "Change, however small or large, will be effected through the implementation of the Action Plans", said Dr Debeljak. "Each participant will leave Australia with at least one strategy to pursue to improve human rights in Indonesia upon their return."

The program also provides the opportunity for a constant exchange of ideas and perspectives between the participants and the presenters themselves. As reflected upon by Dr Debeljak, "there are many wonderful moments when a participant asks a question or offers a comment that demonstrates a nuanced understanding of a human rights issue. Indeed, some of their observations make me revise my own long-held opinions about certain issues." The programs provide a reminder of the value of discussion and debate, and of the value that different perspectives and experiences can offer, "Training programs are always a two-way street. There is always an exchange of ideas, information and knowledge throughout these programs. The greatest insight I have gained is with respect to Indonesian culture. This helps me situate debates about the universality of human rights, pluralism and cultural relativism in a way that no amount of reading could ever do."

The Indonesian delegation will conclude its training and return to Indonesia on 12 May 2006.



Mr Alberd Pardede, Indonesian Consul, addresses the Indonesian participants at the welcome dinner.