THOSE NOT LEFT BEHIND

UN in Indonesia
One transformative principle underpins the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: the commitment to leave no one behind.

The promise reminds us that no development can be sustainable until all segments of the population are able to reap its benefits; to effect lasting change, we must first focus on those most in need of assistance—the neglected, the remote, and the overlooked.

The leaving no one behind promise informs the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the master strategy document the UN forges with the Government of Indonesia every five years. It is woven into our monitoring and evaluation activities and appears throughout our annual Country Results Reports. It peppers our speeches and public advocacy.

Still, speeches, strategy documents, and reports struggle to articulate the essence of leaving no one behind.

This book attempts to translate it—through the voices of some of the millions of people whose lives have been improved thanks to the collaborative work of the UN, the government and our partners.

The 22 stories in this book feature firefighters putting down blazes in carbon-rich peatlands, educators teaching children with special needs about sexual and reproductive health; refugees uplifting members of their community with educational opportunities; CEOs breaking down barriers to gender equality in the workplace, and many more.

The work of the UN and its agencies is diverse—especially in a country like Indonesia, the world’s fourth most populous nation and its largest archipelago. We bring know-how and international expertise. We coordinate with development partners and provide funding. We support the government with policy advice and also run field projects – many of which then are scaled up to the benefit of larger segments of the population.

The stories in this book are reminders of what lies at the heart of our work: the Indonesian people.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”—we share a duty to leave none of them behind.
CANDLENUT, CHILI AND CHICKENS:
UN facilitates rural economic transformation in Eastern Indonesia
INEGENA, EAST NUSA TENGGARA

Mayor Wilfridus Ngala had a vision – to turn his village of 1100 people, most of them subsistence farmers, into an agricultural powerhouse with its own food processing industry and exports.

Sounds far-fetched? It isn’t. After just a year of support from the INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD) and the MINISTRY OF VILLAGES, DEVELOPMENT OF DISADVANTAGES REGIONS AND TRANSMIGRATION, his vision for Inegena, amid the central hills of Flores Island, is starting to become reality: what were once bare lands have been converted into horticulture fields, and chickens cluck along the formerly tranquil village roads.

“Our village now has a future, and many young people have decided to stay and participate in the new agriculture projects,” says Viktorinus Roja, 30, who learned chicken farming last year through the IFAD scheme. “A year ago, I was thinking of moving on to find work in a city. But I’ve decided to give Mayor Ngala a chance,” he adds.
local processing of candlenuts, the village’s main commodity and future cash-crop. Until recently, each farmer harvested the nuts, cleaned them manually and took them to the local market. As a first step in the transformation process, they are now banding together to fetch better deals from buyers. One benefit is that farmers no longer need to make the one-hour journey to town and spend hours selling their produce — the buyers now come to the village.

Oil extracted from candle nuts—which taste a bit like walnuts but are so/fter on the palate—is used as a raw material in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries.

The ministry will support purchase of a machine to replace the manual labour now required to peel the nuts, and another to extract the nut’s oil, Ms Sulistroyini says.

Selling the oil rather than the nuts will enable the village to keep more of the revenues from the candlenut value chain. The new extraction machine is expected to be in place in 2024, allowing villages to process candles harvested in neighbouring villages as well. “We want to support villages with the vision and the potential,” she adds. “Inegena is a small village but one day it will go international — as long as they keep the focus.”

Inegena is one of more than 1,000 Indonesian villages supported through IFAD’s Integrated Village Economic Transformation Programme (TEKAD), which puts enhancing governance and community engagement in the use of village resources for local economic and social development at the heart of planning. In Inegena and 19 other villages in the Ngada district on Flores Island, programme experts help villagers design business plans and long-term development strategies and submit applications for funding to the Rp 68 billion (US$ 4.3 billion) national Village Fund, managed by the Ministry of Villages. The funding mostly comes in the form of loans, which villages commit to paying back from the proceeds of increased economic activity.

“Many times, in rural Indonesia, money is not the issue. Insightful planning to build the basis for long-term economic success is,” says Harlina Sulistroyini, General Director of Economic Development and Investment at the Ministry of Village. “Places like Inegena are proof of what small funding and big ideas can achieve jointly.”

The key, Ms Sulistroyini adds, is for communities to focus on a specific product where they have economic and market advantage. In the case of Inegena, villagers with TEKAD support drew up a business plan to improve the harvesting and start local processing of candlenuts, the village’s main commodity and future cash-crop. Until recently, each farmer harvested the nuts, cleaned them manually and took them to the local market. As a first step in the transformation process, they are now banding together to fetch better deals from buyers. One benefit is that farmers no longer need to make the one-hour journey to town and spend hours selling their produce — the buyers now come to the village.

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For now, Inegena’s economic transformation plan focuses on candlenuts, but locals see potential in other products too: they used Rp 152 million (US$ 9600) from the Village Fund to increase the cultivated area around the village by 50%. Fields formerly filled with shrubs have been converted into horticulture plantations that grow chili, eggplants, and cabbage—most of it is sold at the local market.

Bonevasius Redo is just one of the farmers who have benefited. Thanks to the new opportunities at home, he moved back to Inegana after working on an oil palm plantation on Borneo for years. The additional income he earned during the last growing season has already helped him extend his bamboo house. “We can now feed a lift here by growing vegetables and chili,” he says.

The chicken farmer training scheme that convinced newly qualified farmer Mr. Roja not to move to the city, aims to improve food security and nutrition in Inegena by providing a stable protein intake for the community—as well as income from selling the surplus. There are now 2400 chickens in the village, up from a few hundred two years ago.

The goal of TEKAD is to provide support in economic transformation to interested villages in the five poorest provinces in Indonesia, including East Nusa Tenggara, where Inegena is located. Through hiring and training local facilitators to work with the villagers, it ensures that there is buy-in from communities towards long-term planning.

“In order to create the foundations for development that is sustainable, villages need to spend money on projects that will have long-lasting economic benefits, rather than simply spending the Village Fund’s money each year on ad hoc initiatives,” says Anissa Pratiwi, Country Programme Officer at IFAD’s Jakarta office. “This fundamental change in approach requires learning and capacity building at the village level.”

The change is sorely needed, as presently only 10% of the Village Fund is used to support rural economic development. TEKAD is helping to boost that percentage by increasing technical skills and the market information available to villages, along with guidance and oversight in project planning and execution. The villages it works in have a combined population of over 1.6 million—putting it among the UN projects with the largest reach in Indonesia.
UN supports women in North-Eastern Indonesia in sustainable tourism development
As the sun sets over the Celebes Sea and its orange glow turns the horizon gold, two dozen tourists snap photos and marvel at the view. Even for someone local, the sun setting on the volcanoes is extraordinary, said a mother visiting from a nearby town on a recent Friday afternoon at the pier of Budo, a village of 2400 people perched on the ocean, 25 kilometres northeast of the provincial capital Manado.

Thanks to support from the INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) and its partners, Budo has increased its income from tourism fivefold and now appears on the tourist trail. It is one of four villages supported by an ILO programme that helps rural communities diversify into sustainable tourism, providing skills to local entrepreneurs, mostly women.

Until a few years ago, the pier – about 300 meters long, crossing a mangrove forest to connect the village to the open sea – was dilapidated and used only by fishers readying their boats. Back then there were far more fish and no tourists, said Hani Lorens Singa, President of the VILLAGE ENTERPRISE ASSOCIATION (BUMDES).

Since then, fish stocks have shrunk and at the same time, with support from the government, the pier has been renovated and painted; and benches and wooden huts added for the convenience of tourists—against an entrance fee of 10,000 Rupiahs (US$ 0.65), they can walk out and enjoy the view. Around a fifth of the visitors spend more – ordering local delicacies and drinks at the ticket counter — with the occasional visitor also staying the night, Mr. Lorens Singa said. “We share the work, we share the income — this is tourism at a human scale,” he added.
Many coastal villages in North Sulawesi, in far north-eastern Indonesia, are historically dependent on small scale fishing. Women in these communities typically do not have an independent income. The tourism project gives them not just work but also fulfilment, said Olfi Seli Budiman, one of the new tourism entrepreneurs in Marinsow, about an hour’s drive further east.

Marinsow is in a mining region whose coastal area the government has named a ‘priority tourism destination,’ making funds and other resources available to diversify its economy. Under the scheme, more than 50 villagers received small wooden bungalows on their plots to start bed and breakfast businesses, or homestays, as they are known in Indonesia. ILO, with local partners KLABAT UNIVERSITY and the MANADO STATE POLYTECHNIC, is helping to teach the skills needed to maintain homestays, such as bookkeeping, cost calculation and marketing, hospitality, and tourism.

“I was very surprised to learn that tourists prefer their sheets white and a diversity of meals,” said Yeni Aleho. Ms. Aleho and the other participants have also learned the importance of using hashtags in social media marketing posts, so that tourists looking for a place to stay in the area find them more easily.

“The investment in skills for marketing and quality control in these communities is paying off, with about half of the few hundred tourists spending the night in Marinsow last year coming from outside the province, including an increasing number from abroad. Marinsow is a few kilometres away from the beach, so before the homestays and additional services were developed, tourists had no reason to stop by. “All I could do is sell simple snacks on the beach,” Yvonne Kubis, a cook, said. “Now I cook full meals and deliver to their homestays.”

The women’s small businesses are financed through microfinance credits, and they have been able to make all the payments on time, said Gabriel Tamasengge, the village’s mayor. “We are very proud of our women; of the business acumen we never knew they had.”
The village tourism project is part of the Skills for Prosperity Programme, funded by the United Kingdom, supporting sustained and inclusive growth through skills development in three Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. Its goal is to increase employability, employment, and livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries.

To ensure the programme’s sustainability, and to eventually reach more than the initial four supported villages, the ILO has trained local trainers, including staff from higher education institutions: MANADO STATE POLYTECHNIC and the UNIVERSITY OF KLABAT.

The programme’s support to the villages is an apt illustration of ILO’s approach in Indonesia, said Michiko Miyamoto, Country Director: “Our Decent Work programme focuses on social dialogue, job creation and enhancing the protection of vulnerable workers.” Furthermore, it contributes to the UN in Indonesia’s National Blue Agenda Actions Partnership with the government in support of the sustainable development of the ocean and coastal communities, Ms. Miyamoto added.

North Sulawesi has 150 coastal villages with tourism potential, according to the provincial government. Despite the improvements, a lot remains to be done, said Mr. Lorens Singa in Budo, which was the winner of the digital marketing category at the MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CREATIVE ECONOMY’s Top 50 Village Tourism Award in 2022. “We need to offer more reasons for people to stay for a meal or overnight.”

One option could be offline marketing to get more foreign tourists from world-class diving destinations within the nearby Bunaken Marine Park to hop over for an evening meal and a visit to a typical village, off the map of mass tourism. They plan to offer cooking and handicraft classes as well as fishing trips. As occupancy starts to grow, they also want to build more homestays, Mr. Lorens Singa said.

“Our task now is to make sure that when the funding from ILO and the government stops, we will have a fully formed business that allows us to stand completely on our own feet,” he said. “We had the vision, and we have the commitment – I am confident we will succeed.”

Ivone Greivi Kubis, owner of a micro-enterprises on Paal Beach, located 2 km from the tourist village of Marinsow, North Sulawesi.

PHOTO: UNIC JAKARTA
Madura's immunization programme make history
As September approaches on the island of Madura, East Java, the leaves begin to turn brown, the grass dries up and the dust scatters in the wind. The arid soil and scant rainfall make the heat of the dry season feel even more oppressive.

Amid the unfriendly weather, Alfiatun, a middle-aged community leader, shows up at a small mosque in Kalianget, Sumenep — one of four districts on the island — to deliver a sermon on parenting in Islam and the importance of immunization for children. Clad in a bright green veil and batik dress, she speaks with a soft but commanding voice that gets the attention of the congregation. “Immunization is good, healthy and saves our children,” the single mother of four proclaims to the dozens of families in attendance.

Since August, Alfiatun has been setting aside 20 to 30 minutes towards the end of her weekly sermon to provide information on immunization. UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF) and the district government reached out to her for support before the launch of a nationwide immunization catch up campaign to address the major backslide during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a member of a health cadre and a leader of Muslimat NU — the women’s chapter of the world’s largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama — in Kalianget, she is well aware of the island’s low immunization coverage and has decided to preach about the topic and help with the immunization drive.

Madura has recorded the lowest rate of childhood vaccination coverage in Indonesia for decades. This leaves local children vulnerable to infectious diseases. When East Java experienced a polio outbreak from March 2005 to April 2006, for example, 45 of the 46 total cases were reported in Madura.

Sumenep, the only archipelago district in Madura, is made up of 125 islands, with some as much as a 20-hour boat journey away from the main island. The challenge the district’s geography poses to vaccination efforts is compounded by misinformation and conspiracy theories spread across social media that leave many reluctant to immunize their children. They include false links between vaccination and childhood paralysis and mortality.

To address the situation, the district government began reaching out to “aunties” at community events, including social gatherings and religious congregations. The term encompasses a diversity of women with and without children who are invested in the community’s future — including influential women leaders like Alfiatun, as well as women exposed to online and offline misinformation on vaccinations, explains Hendrix Prasetyo, Administrator of the Health Surveillance and Immunization Section.

“We chose to be closer with aunties because they are the ones who are close to their children,” he says. “We cooperate with them to fight against [hoaxes].”
Alfiatun is not operating alone – there are nearly 5,000 aunties like her in Sumenep, advocating for child vaccination as part of an integrated immunization initiative known as GRIDU.

“GRIDU was taken from our local language, it means noisy and boisterous, reflecting our massive and integrated action,” explains Nia. “Not only did we urge people in the Puskesmas (public health centre) and Posyandu (integrated health centre) to get their children immunized, but we have also encouraged local leaders to advocate for immunization in their communities.”

This collaborative action involves all parts of society – from government organizations like the Family Welfare Programme acting as the driving force for aunties, sub-district heads and village heads – to the police and military, who act as safeguards by cracking down on hoax spreaders for the success of the programme.

Moreover, religious organizations such as the local Ulema Council, congregations of Aisyiyah Muhammadiyah as well as Fatayat and Muslimat NU are involved in promoting immunization, preventing misinformation and encouraging families to vaccinate their children.

As a result, Sumenep has now become one of the districts with the highest rates of immunization in East Java. In December 2022, child vaccination coverage in Sumenep reached 98.88 per cent, which equates to 55,337 children vaccinated for measles and rubella, compared to only 31.8 per cent in the previous year.

“This milestone has been achieved because of our strong cross-sectoral collaboration,” said Dewi Khalifah, the vice-regent of Sumenep, as she stood in front of the city’s grand mosque. “We hope that our cadres, public figures and aunties with children will not only immunize their children but be a driving force for immunization in their communities in the future.”
Learning the art of latte making
Perfectly foamed milk. A delicate butterfly enswirled atop. A bittersweet tang on the palate. A perfect cappuccino? It is beyond that. This particular cup was masterfully frothed and served by Denny, an inmate in Tangerang, west of Jakarta, who joined a UN-supported training programme to help prisoners to re-integrate into society after serving time.

“I want to make the most of my time, even in prison, and this training should help me find a job later,” said Denny, 31, who has just over two years left of a five-year prison sentence. “Of course, I knew how to make a coffee before, but here I am learning about different flavours, smells and aromas, and about the artistic side of coffee making.”

Denny is one of 200 inmates in the Tangerang Class IIA Correctional Facility and among more than 35,000 inmates across Indonesia who are involved in vocational training, from eco-printing on textiles to farming. While learning how to be a barista behind bars, he said he hopes to get a job in a café following his release.

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To deal with a society that often stigmatizes them for life, she said, the prison offers training in personality development, counselling, and religious teaching as well.

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TANGERANG, BANTEN

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Starting a business is hard after serving time in prison, said Haswin, a 32-year-old former drug offender. Leaving the Tangerang correctional facility in January 2022, he now operates his own coffee shop, mixing modern and traditional coffee styles alongside mocktails and snacks.

“Life is so much better now,” said Haswin, adding that his former bartending job was a prime factor in his involvement with drug-related offences, which led to his arrest in 2018.

“I am more content with life and proud of my creativity,” he explained. “I had never thought I could find a career outside nightlife.”

Now, his work is not just a “means to make ends meet”, but a new opportunity.

“I want to break the stigma around ‘ex-cons’ by showing that former offenders can also be independent and creative,” he said.

“My main drive right now is to be a better person than I was before.”

Tangerang Class IIA gives prisoners a chance to do that. They can also compete in professional sports at Tangerang, a prison unique in Indonesia for offering a full university education programme. Open to prisoners across Indonesia, a pilot programme currently serving 200 inmates is poised to roll out countrywide, subject to funding, Ms. Fitriani said.

Asep, a third-year Islamic studies student with Syekh Yusuf Islamic University, said he, like many in the programme, could not afford to go to university in his life before prison.

“I was always keen to learn, but my economic situation did not make it possible for me to study”, he said.

Following the same curriculum the university offers to its regular students, Asep and his schoolmates attend classes thrice weekly for six hours each day. After graduation and before the end of his prison sentence, Asep said he hopes to help his fellow prisoners by offering religious counselling.

“I get to learn a lot about the world and about life outside,” he said. “It helps me cope better with my long sentence. It will help the others, too.”

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Supported by the **UN Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC)**, the training programmes are designed with a set of assessment tools that provide evidence-based approaches tailored to inmates’ individual needs.

Corrections officers use these tools to evaluate and better understand inmates, including the level of security risk they may pose, their compatibility with the programme, and their likely response to education.

Within **UNODC’s** prisoner rehabilitation initiative, which focuses on education, vocational training, and employment during incarceration, the goal is to contribute to the prisoners’ employability after release, thus reducing chances of recidivism.

With this in mind, the agency partnered with Indonesia’s **Directorate-General of Corrections** to create an assessment matrix that helps corrections officers to build psychological and security profiles of prisoners and enables staff to keep track of their progress, said Rabby Pramudatama, a programme manager at **UNODC’s** Jakarta office.

“We need to make sure, for instance, that we get inmates who are unlikely to disturb the classes and will cooperate with teachers and their fellow students,” he said.

UNODC also collaborates and supports such non-governmental organizations as Second Chance, which help inmates to reintegrate into society once they are out of the facility.

On a quiet morning, some inmates were reviewing verses from the Quran, while others gathered around to watch a pair of sparring kickboxers. As rain set in, they spoke of the sunshine that was bound to break through, sooner or later.

For Denny, he said the sunshine will come on the day when he, too, can get out and find a job.

“My main drive right now is to be a better person than I was before,” he said, adding that until that day, he will focus on religious activities and brewing perfect cappuccinos in barista classes.
FROM ASHES TO RICHES

Indonesian communities profit from peatland agriculture
Farmers in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan on the island of Borneo are adapting their agricultural techniques to be more climate friendly by ending the burning of land. This is thanks to an initiative by Indonesia’s Peat and Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM), with support from the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

Progress is already being made: a school building was saved from burning down; farmers are earning 50 per cent higher incomes; and a healthier peatland with much reduced greenhouse gas emissions: these are just some of the results of the initiative.

Since its launch in 2019, the programme, which includes training for villagers and critical infrastructure upgrades, has dramatically reduced fire risk and equipped the residents of 121 villages in coastal West Kalimantan with new skills and resources to benefit their communities.
“We learned how to work the land without burning the bush and crop residues — and in the meantime found ways to grow crops we can sell for more,” said Suprapto, a farmer in the village of Limbung, just south of Pontianak, the provincial capital.

“The training we received made everything so simple,” said Sumi, a farmer and head of the women farmers group in Jongkat. “Thanks to the market research by BRGM and its partners, we also learned which are the crops we should be growing for cash.”

Limbung and Jongkat are on peatland, wetlands whose soil consists almost entirely of organic matter derived from the remains of dead and decaying plant material. Under certain geological conditions, peat eventually turns into coal.

And like coal seams, peatland stores enormous quantities of carbon—dioxide — until it alights. Fires do not only devastate villages and farmers’ livelihoods, but they also release a substantial amount of carbon-dioxide.

Burning bush to clear land and plant residues after harvest led to 245 fires in the district around Limbung in 2021 — a staggering number given that a 2009 government decree forbade farmers from burning on peatland. “But without knowing any other methods to farm, we had no other options,” Suprapto explains.
Increasing farmers’ options has had a profound impact, helping to reduce the number of fires that broke out last year to just 21. But that’s still too many, says Jany Tri Raherjo, who is in charge of BRGM’s operations in Kalimantan and Papua: “We need to reach zero fires – and fully restore peatland.”

Thanks to BRGM’s interventions, much of the peatland around Limbung is moist again – enabling farmers to grow vegetables such as cucumber, tomatoes, chili and eggplants. “Horticulture really pays off,” Suprapto said. “The income of the villagers that are part of the programme is up by half.”

The additional income, Suprapto said, has in just one year helped families renovate their houses, buy new motorbikes and finance their children’s education.

In Jongkat, BRGM and an NGO engaged by UNOPS as part of a project funded by the Government of Norway, helped local farmers identify which crops are best suited to their land and to non-burn farming.

Around 20 families received training on non-burn agriculture and on the use of natural fertilizer, and are now showing the methods to their friends and families in other communities. “There is a joke that it is good to marry someone from Jongkat, because you then learn more profitable ways of farming,” Sumi says with a grin.

Canal blockers help retain water in peatland areas during the dry season – keeping the land moist. UNOPS helped transfer knowhow and construct this pilot canal blocker; 178 more have since been built by the government.

Photo: UNIC Jakarta

Farmer Suprapto is harvesting vegetables. He now grows his produce using non-burn agricultural methods.

Photo: UNIC Jakarta
Training villagers in non-burn farming methods is crucial to making West Kalimantan’s coastal villages more sustainable. Equally important is upgrading irrigation infrastructure to keep rainwater in peatlands.

**UNOPS** provided design and financing for the construction of a few pilot canal blockers – concrete structures that keep the water in the canals that criss-cross the area, making water available year-round for firefighting and watering crops as well as wild peatland. Better irrigation prevents the land from cracking, drying out and decaying, thereby reducing the amount of carbon-dioxide released into the atmosphere. Peatland restoration also involves revegetation of the area, which in turn keeps the soil moist and decreases the chances of fires and decomposition.

When a 2021 peatland fire threatened a school building in Limbung village, volunteer firefighters trained by **BRGM** extinguished it using water from the pond created by a canal blocker and saved the school. “A few years ago, when the canals were regularly empty during dry seasons, we could not have done that,” said Trisno Slamet, head of the community peatland management unit. Watering the land regularly and keeping the soil moist means that when fires break out only the vegetation above the peatland burns, not the carbon-rich land itself, **BRGM**’s Raharjo adds.

**BRGM** and its partners have built 179 canal blockers in 27 villages in the area – financed by the government and using a design based on the initial **UNOPS** model. “Knowhow from the UN was a great launchpad – we have adapted it to local conditions and improved the designs year after year,” Raharjo said. “We are now rolling out canal blockers that cost about half as much to build as the original.”

**BRGM**, with the support of **UNOPS**, the **MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY** and other players, has carried out restoration projects in 852 villages in Kalimantan, Papua and Sumatra. But thousands more remain. “The results are good, but not enough,” Raharjo says.

Key to their success at every stage, is community involvement, said Akira Moreto, acting Country Manager at **UNOPS** Indonesia: “Policing fires is hard; giving the community a stake in non-burn agriculture is a much more successful way of protecting peatlands and fighting climate change while improving livelihoods. This requires long-term commitment from all sides.”

Photo: UNIC Jakarta
Doctors in Palu learn to recognize signs of family violence and support victims.
Trained by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to identify both physical and psychological signs of domestic violence, she referred the boy to a social counselor. Shortly afterwards, he explained what really happened — how his father beat him for mischief.

"Recognition is the first step to being able to help," Dr Salim said. "We need to do a lot more than treat symptomatic wounds."

The Public Health Centre, or Puskesmas, where Dr. Salim works, is part of a UNFPA pilot programme to combat domestic violence. The programme covers 11 districts in Indonesia, including Palu, the capital of Central Sulawesi. Under it, UNFPA supports the government in policy making and trains health care providers. Local partners are encouraged to advocate for victims to come forward and seek help beyond getting their wounds treated.

This is an aspect of the project Dr Salim and her colleagues take seriously. They have organized community forums and worked with associations in the Centre’s coverage area to encourage victims to come forward.
The results are clear. In the first quarter of 2023, staff at Puskesmas Sangurara had already identified seven cases of domestic violence, compared to between one and two over an entire year in the past. “Is it because of the advocacy or because we are better trained to recognize the symptoms of gender-based violence? Probably both,” she said.

Despite significant progress in gender equality, including increased access for women and girls to education, employment and health services, gender-based violence remains a serious public health and human rights concern in Indonesia, said Norcahyo Budi Waskito, Project Officer at UNFPA Indonesia. National policies, strategies and legal documents have been put in place. However, these have not always been implemented at the local level. The government has recognized the need for a systematic solution to ending gender-based violence and has partnered with United Nations agencies such as UNFPA and UN Women.

The number of reported cases has increased from 216,156 in 2012 to 457,895 in 2022, according to the NATIONAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. This suggests that efforts to encourage more victims to come forward is having an effect. But the numbers represent is only the tip of the iceberg, as what goes on behind closed doors in a family home is still considered taboo by many and reporting it carries a stigma.

Shame is not the only reason that keeps victims from coming forward: there is also a financial disincentive. Annisa Rahmah, an emergency room physician at Palu’s Anuta Pura hospital, says several victims choose to walk out once she identifies cases as domestic violence, because the treatment would then not be covered by government health insurance. “It is depressing to see them walk away,” she said. Those who stay get complex treatment, including psychological counseling. The hospital, whose staff have participated in the UNFPA training, connects them with NGOs that can offer legal support if the victim chooses to press charges. When the victim is a child, it is the prerogative of the head of the hospital to turn to the police.

“We work on one case at a time, but at the same time hope to change mindsets in the society at large,” she said.

Until we have prevented every case of gender-based violence, we have more work to do. And we are doing it.”

Educating men and boys about gender equality is a key part of the strategy to prevent violence against women. Photo: Puskesmas Sangurara
Besides training medical staff, UNFPA also supports community organizations and NGOs. In Palu, women’s organization LINDA PEREMPUAN, for instance, has 30 volunteers to help victims. These include psychologists and lawyers. The association also runs a safe house, where currently two families live, and organizes training programmes, including training for men on the prevention of gender-based and family violence.

“It was an important mindset change in society that helping victims is as critical as bringing perpetrators to justice,” says Maya Safira, programme coordinator. All of her colleagues participated in UNFPA courses.

In a country of 280 million people and over 7,500 districts, UNFPA’s training in 11 districts can only go so far. But Programme Officer Budi Waskito says the pilot project offers a model other donors or the government can replicate: “We provide a recipe but cannot cook every meal.”

UNFPA works closely with the MINISTRY OF HEALTH, so that the training it offers can be scaled up by the government. It has helped the ministry develop a training manual for medical staff, response guidelines for hospitals and guidelines for local advocacy programmes.

The MINISTRY OF HEALTH is looking into replicating the success of this project, said Kartini Rustandi, Director of Reproductive Health Age and Elderly.

“The Ministry of Health realizes that the role of health workers is very large, not only in medical management but also in carrying out early detection, providing information on allegations of violence against women and children,” she said. “The Ministry of Health continues to make efforts to accelerate equitable distribution of health facilities capable of managing violence against women and children and capacity building for health workers either through regular budget funds, specific budget allocation or in collaboration with donors.”

For Dr Faiza, the goal is clear. “Until we have prevented every case of gender-based violence, we have more work to do. And we are doing it.”

Women can receive counselling on gender-based violence at local health centres participating in the UNFPA programme, such as Puskesmas Sangurara in Palu. Photo: UNIC Jakarta
BREAKING THE TABOO

Health workers in Papua explore new outreach methods to promote youth HIV testing
Even a decade later, Maria Jeklin Maker is not sure of the exact circumstances that led to her cousin’s death. The few details Ms. Maker received, aged 16, had come from her aunt: her cousin had HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and people in their community avoided her for fear of contracting it.

As a trainee nurse, Ms. Maker, now 26, knows how misguided those people’s fears were. She also knows it will soon be her job to give patients and the public accurate information about HIV. Still, when it came to finding out her own status, experience made her hesitate: “There is such a lack of knowledge; stigma and discrimination are still high in Papua.”

Despite the widespread availability of antiretroviral medicines that enable people living with HIV to enjoy long, healthy lives, an estimated 26,000 people died of AIDS in Indonesia in 2022. In Papua, Indonesia’s easternmost region, HIV prevalence is almost seven times the national average, the Ministry of Health estimated in 2022. The Ministry’s data also reveals that about 48% of people living with HIV in the Indonesian half of New Guinea island were unaware that they had contracted the virus.

With nearly half of Indonesia’s new HIV infections occurring among people aged 15–24, youth civil society network Inti Muda—with the backing of UNAIDS—is fighting back against the ignorance, discrimination, and stigma that prevents youth from accessing HIV testing, treatment, and support. That starts with making health services more friendly to youth and “key populations”—a designation that refers to the communities most vulnerable to AIDS, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, drug users, and people living with HIV.

“Young people still encounter many challenges that prevent them from accessing the life-saving health care they need,” said Krittayawan Boonto, UNAIDS Country Director for Indonesia. Organisations like Inti Muda, she says, help equip them to “take control of the HIV response and to have direct involvement in creating safe spaces where young people can access HIV services free from stigma and discrimination.”
Stigma and discrimination are among the key factors driving the low willingness of young people in the area to access HIV-related support, according to a recent INTI MUDA and UNIVERSITY OF PADJADJARAN study. Respondents cited among other deterrents inconvenient opening hours and the remote location of clinics and hospitals, concerns about confidentiality and privacy, and judgmental attitudes from health-care workers on issues such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and mental health.

“We are limited by which clinics we can access because many, if not most, are not youth-friendly,” said Sepi Maulana Ardiansyah, INTI MUDA’s former national coordinator. “If the services are bad, young people won’t use them and they will tell other young people not to use them,” he added.

Findings from the study on youth attitudes towards HIV services in Papua were among the information shared with more than 50 health care workers at UNAIDS-supported training sessions held in the Papua cities of Sentani and Jayapura in 2022.

Hilda Rumboy, a midwife in charge of the HIV Services Department at the WAIBHU PRIMARY HEALTH CENTER in Papua’s Jayapura regency said the session helped her understand the diverse needs of young people and would, “allow us to improve our services to become youth-friendly, which is now our main priority.”

A year on from the training, young people feel comfortable using the services at WAIBHU PRIMARY HEALTH CENTER, whose staff are friendly and treat all patients equally, according to Inti Muda. Among other service upgrades, patients can now access HIV service-related appointments outside of the centre’s operating hours of 08:00 to 14:00.

In parallel with efforts to sensitise the region’s health workers to the needs of young people, INTI MUDA organized a festival to generate greater demand for HIV services and engage young people directly in HIV response, which like the training for healthcare workers was supported by the AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE (DFAT). Among the more than 80 attendees was Ms. Maker, the trainee nurse, who said that hearing for the first time about the efficacy of antiretroviral medicine at the festival had given her the confidence to get tested.

After testing negative, she says she was inspired to challenge misinformation about HIV and encourage her friends to find out their status. “Don’t be afraid, because we already have the medicine to stay healthy,” she says, adding that a positive test “is not the end of the world.”
SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

gain confidence and more agency over their bodies
The joy of the five students in teacher Reni Gusnaeni’s morning class is palpable. As the catchy piano refrain kicks in, Nabila, a 14-year-old with Down Syndrome reaches for the microphone as 13-year-old Kanza rises from her chair. They are joined by 15-year-old autistic students Lazuardi and Cici, and then by Jenar, a 17-year-old with an intellectual disability who pushes her white-framed glasses up her nose and begins to sway to the beat.

“I am a child with a healthy body, going through puberty,” the students sing in Indonesian, for what will not be the last time that morning. Accompanying the song’s opening line is a self-referential gesture that brings the students’ fingertips to their shoulders and then one of power that has fists clenched at temples. As the jingle continues, more gestures follow: palms are placed over hearts, then arms clasped around chests in a tight embrace.

Teaching young people about sexual health, the physical and emotional changes that come with puberty, and consensual and non-consensual touch can be a challenge in cultures where many consider sex-related subjects to be taboo. The cultural obstacles are often greater still when it comes to teaching young people with intellectual disabilities. But Ms. Gusnaeni and special needs educators in nine other Indonesian provinces are pioneering a learning approach designed to give young people a better understanding of their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and with it, more confidence and autonomy. Her puberty song is part of a series of educational tools inspired by a training course the UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA) designed jointly with Indonesia’s MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY and MINISTRY OF HEALTH. Those tools, she says, have helped the 27 students at SLB-C Plus Asih Manunggal, a private special needs school in Bandung, set bodily boundaries and become more assertive in guarding them.
“Now they can say no to people who want to touch them, even when they’re playing,” Ms. Gusnaeni says. “They are also more confident to set their private space, for example, when they go to the bathroom.”

Learning materials Ms. Gusnaeni adopted or developed after attending the UNFPA-MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY course include anatomically correct dolls, and annotated aprons teachers can wear that illustrate the male and female reproductive organs. She also created a tactile book that helps students with intellectual disabilities learn to manage their periods. On successive pages, soft felt pouches contain products such as sanitary towels, tampons, and menstrual cups.

More than a third of girls (38%) who have started their periods feel ashamed of their bodies during menstruation according to Indonesia’s 2019 Global Early Adolescent Survey, with 8% reporting that they do not feel comfortable discussing menstruation. For students whose intellectual disabilities that cause gaps between physical development and cognitive abilities, self care can be even more difficult. These gaps also coincide with a heightened risk of exploitation. Research conducted by the UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL and the WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) across 17 low-income countries shows that children with disabilities are 2.9 times more likely to experience sexual violence or harassment compared to their peers without disabilities, while children with intellectual disabilities are 4.6 times more likely.

“Every young person, without exception, has the right to reproductive health education so that they are well equipped to protect themselves from challenges that adolescence brings, and make informed decisions about their body and future,” says Anjali Sen, UNFPA Indonesia Representative. “It is even more critical to provide Adolescent Reproductive Health education for adolescents with intellectual disabilities who are more vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse.”
Providing education on the emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality to adolescents with intellectual disabilities is a core component of a UNFPA pilot programme that aims to enhance teachers’ adolescent reproductive health education skills. Besides West Java, where SLB-C Plus Asih Manunggal is located, the 2020–2025 pilot operates in Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, Central Java, East Java, Bali, Central Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, and Papua. It has trained 332 “master teachers” to date, who have in turn familiarized a further 1,158 teachers at junior high school and 694 teachers at special needs schools with the curriculum, reaching 14,712 junior high school students and 246 students with disabilities.

SLB-C Plus Asih Manunggal headteacher Wiwin Wiartini says that in the past, she had reservations about whether sexual and reproductive health education was appropriate for the school. Some parents felt uneasy about the subject and teachers considered it “vulgar to use correct anatomical terms such as penis and vagina.”

A turning point came when a 19-year-old former student became pregnant after having been sexually exploited by a neighbour in 2020. The incident underscored the importance of teaching students about boundaries and consent, says Ms. Wiartini. Attitudes also began to change when parents and teachers observed students like Nabila, Kanza, Lazuardi, Cici, and Jenar becoming more confident, expressive, and autonomous.

Once a controversial subject, sexual and reproductive health education is now the leading programme at SLB-C Asih Manunggal, which collaborates with a local university on pedagogy. As a “master teacher,” Ms. Gusnaeni has taught her methods to teachers at 20 other schools across West Java, observing their lessons and developing best practices based on the approaches that prove most effective.

“We really learned from this experience,” says headteacher Wiartini. “Since implementing this programme we understand its importance and we want it to be nationwide.”
The ‘ENERGY PATRIOTS’ bring electricity to Indonesia’s remote villages.
We only had three hours of electricity per day. The government distributed generators for the rest,” said Ristifah, who like many Indonesians goes by only one name. Many community members who spent more time out on the fields were fine with the situation, she added, “but it’s different for young people who need reliable electricity to maintain our mobile devices.”

The lack of electricity meant access to healthcare and other resources was limited, and students were often forced to study by candlelight, with no access to the internet.

Indonesia urgently needs clean energy capacity. The government has pledged to phase out coal-fired power stations between 2040 and 2060, but at the same time, some 30 million people in the country do not have adequate access to electricity. And as Indonesia continues to develop, demand is expected to grow by 6.8 percent annually.

When 29-year-old Ristifah was offered a position as a village facilitator at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Indonesia’s ‘Accelerating Clean Energy to Reduce Inequality’ (ACCESS) project in 2021, she jumped at the prospect. Seven years earlier, she had worked at a micro-hydro energy plant in a village in Kalimantan. There, she saw first-hand how limited electricity supply impacted community life.
In 2021, Ristifah was among 23 facilitators at UNDP Indonesia who were tasked with assisting communities across the country to develop clean energy resources. Through the ACCESS Project, which receives financial support from the KOREAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY, she and other “Energy Patriots”, as the facilitators are colloquially known, spent one and a half years living in 23 villages across the Indonesian archipelago. In each, they hosted community meetings to determine electricity tariffs, liaised with contractors, conducted open recruitment for operators and technicians, and helped local renewable energy providers manage soon-to-be operational power plants.

“Along with construction and training for the local community, local institutions have been established to ensure that the rural electrification programme is suitable,” said ACCESS National Project Manager Mathilde Sari.

Like most island villages, Wangkolabu in Southeast Sulawesi Province, where Ristifah was assigned, used to be heavily dependent on electricity supplied from portable fuel-fired generation sets. Such generators are often inadequate for communities’ needs, and the toxic fumes they spew can harm the environment and contribute to respiratory illnesses, cancer, and other disease.

Ristifah and the other “Energy Patriots” were tasked with assisting remote communities with the installation of off-grid power plants with a combined capacity of 1.2 MW, enough to provide electricity for around 20,000 people. Although that is only a fraction of Indonesia’s total unmet need, the programme served as a blueprint for rural development that goes beyond basic socio-economic support.

“Electrifying communities that have been ‘off grid’ and providing access to clean energy helps these regions explore new areas for growth and equips people with the resources needed to improve their lives,” said Verania.
Andria, Senior Advisor on Sustainable Energy at UNDP Indonesia.

Village-level projects like ACCESS that emphasise inclusiveness, she added, “ensure communities have a say in how important infrastructure projects that affect their lives are developed. They can go a long way towards addressing urban-rural inequality.”

The Indonesian Government is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through both improving the renewable energy portion in the country’s national energy mix and opening opportunities for economic development in villages like Wangkolabu, said Chrisnawan Anditya, the former Director of Various New and Renewable Energy Sources at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

“We are developing renewable energy power plants in remote areas and replacing the fuel-based plants with solar energy,” he said.

“Electrifying communities that have been ‘off grid’ and providing access to clean energy helps these regions explore new areas for growth and equips people with the resources needed to improve their lives.”

“[Energy Patriots] are our agents of change to guide the community to use more clean energy.”

Ristifah was keen to be such an agent of change.

“I dream of the day when the houses sparkle with lights the community installed and more girls can aspire to higher education,” she said. “Electrification will provide young people with better access to technology and more freedom to learn.”
People with disabilities

**BREAK DOWN BARRIERS**

to accessing healthcare for all
Siti Chodijah, a member of the Indonesian Women with Disabilities Association, has been working to improve the accessibility of primary health care centres, or Puskesmas, in her province, Lampung.

"Most Puskesmas in Lampung are not equipped with ramps, so persons in wheelchairs must be carried. It was also very hard to access toilets in the Puskesmas, with their narrow doors and no railings for support," said Ms. Chodijah, a garment worker. "If sick, we would usually choose to stay at home."

Ms. Chodijah has a left foot slightly deformed by childhood polio. She is one of approximately 405,000 people with disabilities in Lampung, about 4.58% of the province’s population. In 2014, she joined the INDONESIAN WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION (HWDI), which participated in a collective effort to equip Puskesmas with facilities providing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) access for all, including people with disabilities. That meant documenting the obstacles that inhibited her and her friends’ access to health services and advocating to improve accessibility at Puskesmas based on the needs and feedback of community members with disabilities.

"Inaccessible environments create barriers that hinder the full participation of persons with disabilities in society," says WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) Representative to Indonesia, Dr. N. Paranetharan. "All of us have a responsibility to bring these barriers down, and our actions should be guided by persons with disabilities, who have first-hand experience of where the hindrances to access exist."
As part of its commitment to inclusive development, the UN in Indonesia works with local and international organizations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) on multiple programmes and internal processes. Its many collaborations in 2022 included a UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) partnership with the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities to train government officials on the use of disability data for better food security and nutrition, and the launch on International Disability Day of the UN in Indonesia’s first comprehensive analysis of the way persons with disabilities are represented in official government statistics.

In 2020, international development organization SNV INDONESIA participated in a WHO training on WASH FIT, a healthcare improvement tool that includes facilities for persons with disabilities among its indicators. Armed with this knowledge, SNV INDONESIA embarked on a journey to enhance healthcare in three cities, collaborating closely with district governments and its local NGO partner YAYASAN KONSERVASI WAY SEPUTIH, as well as with HWDI—the organization Ms. Chodijah joined—and WHO, who provided support throughout the endeavor. SNV Indonesia and YKWS organized trainings and mentoring sessions on the WASH FIT tool, while WHO provided inputs and trainers. This collaborative effort led to notable improvements in WASH services across several Puskesmas, including nine pilot locations in Lampung.

With their new knowledge, staff at these pilot locations will further disseminate these learnings on accessibility as tutors for other Puskesmas in the region and beyond.

“We have plenty of patients with disabilities, elderly and pregnant women. They have the same rights to healthcare services,” said Rosnilam, Head of the Puskesmas Margorejo in Metro City.

Ramps at entrances and toilets, wider toilet doors, and free menstrual hygiene management equipment are just some of the changes Chodijah and her friends have witnessed since the project began.

But just as important as the improvements in physical accessibility, is the fact their opinions and expertise are being sought and acted upon.

“We are finally heard,” she says.

A health worker cleans the grab bar for disabled toilet users at Puskesmas Kedaton.

Photo: UNIC Jakarta
Indonesian trafficking survivors demand justice

FROM DESPERATION TO DETERMINATION

Indonesian trafficking survivors demand justice
Rokaya needed time to recover after illness forced her to quit as a live-in maid in Malaysia and return home to Indramayu, West Java. However, under pressure from her agent who claimed 2-million Rupiah for her initial placement, she accepted an offer of work in Erbil, Iraq.

There, Ms. Rokaya found herself responsible for taking care of a family’s sprawling compound—working from 6 a.m. until after midnight, seven days per week.

As exhaustion worsened the headaches and vision problems that had originally forced her to leave Malaysia, Ms. Rokaya’s employer refused to take her to a doctor and confiscated her mobile phone. “I was not given any days off. I barely had time for a break,” she said. “It felt like a prison.”

The hardships Ms. Rokaya endured will be familiar to the 544 Indonesian migrant workers INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM) assisted between 2019 and 2022 in collaboration with the INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS’ UNION (SBMI). Many of them experienced physical, psychological and sexual abuse overseas. That caseload comes despite a moratorium Jakarta imposed on work in 21 countries in the Middle East and North Africa in 2015, following Saudi Arabia’s execution of two Indonesian maids.

To mitigate the humanitarian impact of trafficking in persons, IOM works with the Government of Indonesia to shore up the regulatory environment on labour migration; it trains law enforcement to better identify and respond to trafficking cases; and works with partners like the MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, the BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS and the MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS to protect migrant workers from exploitation – and, if necessary, repatriate them.

“Cases like Ms. Rokaya’s underscore the need for victim-centred approaches and for strengthening the protection system to prevent migrant workers from falling prey to trafficking in persons,” says Jeffrey Labovitz, IOM’s Chief of Mission for Indonesia.

After a clandestinely recorded video of Ms. Rokaya went viral and reached SBMI, the government intervened to get her released. However, she says her placement agency illegally extracted the cost of her return airfare from her wages and—with a hand around her throat—forced her to sign a document absolving them of responsibility. She now knows better: “We need to really be careful about the information that is given to us, because when we miss key details, we pay the price.”

Ms. Rokaya is relieved to be back home following the support of the government, she adds, but has no recourse to claim the money extorted from her.
It is an all-too-common situation, says SBMI’s chairman Hariyono Surwano, because victims are often reluctant to share details of their experience overseas: “They fear being seen as a failure because they went overseas to improve their financial situation but returned with money problems.”

It is not only victims’ shame that affects the slow progress of trafficking case prosecutions. Legal ambiguity and the difficulties authorities face prosecuting cases also pose obstacles, compounded by law enforcement personnel sometimes blaming victims for their situation. SBMI data shows around 3,335 Indonesian victims of trafficking in the Middle East between 2015 and the middle of 2023. While most have returned to Indonesia, only 2% have been able to access justice.

Around 3.3 million Indonesians were employed abroad in 2021, according to BANK INDONESIA, on top of more than 5 million undocumented migrant workers the government estimates are overseas. More than three-quarters of Indonesian migrant labourers work in low-wage jobs that can pay up to six times more than the rate at home, with some 70% of returning migrant workers reporting that employment abroad was a positive experience that improved their welfare, according to the WORLD BANK.

For those who become victims of trafficking, the experience is rarely positive. At SBMI’s Jakarta headquarters, fisherman Saenudin, from Java’s Thousand Islands, explained how in 2011 he signed a contract to work on a foreign fishing vessel, hoping to give his family a better life. But at sea, he was forced to work 20-hour days hauling in nets and dividing catch and was only paid for the first three of his 24 months of grueling labour.

In December 2013, South African authorities detained the vessel off Cape Town, where it had been fishing illegally, and held Mr. Saenudin for three months before IOM and the MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS helped repatriate him and 73 other Indonesian seafarers.

In the nine years since, Mr. Saenudin has been fighting to recover 21 months of missing pay, a legal battle that forced him to sell everything he owns except his house. “The struggle tore me from my family,” he says.

An IOM survey of more than 200 prospective Indonesian fishers provided actionable insights to the government for enhancing recruitment processes, associated fees, pre-departure training, and migration management. In 2022, IOM trained 89 judges, legal practitioners, and paralegals on adjudicating trafficking in persons cases, including the application of child victim and gender-sensitive approaches, as well as 162 members of anti-trafficking task forces in East Nusa Tenggara and North Kalimantan provinces.

For Mr. Saenudin, improvements in case handling can’t come soon enough. Still, the resolve of the fisherman shows no cracks. “I’m willing to keep going, even if it takes forever,” he said.
The number of companies promoting the UN’s WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES skyrockets.
Opening a bakery, becoming a professional designer, operating a home-tailoring business—three aspirations that just months ago would have been unthinkable to the cohort of eight women and girls about to graduate from Kartini Blue Bird, a corporate social responsibility initiative that aims to economically empower the daughters and wives of the mostly male drivers at Indonesia’s largest taxi operator, BLUE BIRD.

“I’m proud of myself because I get a lot of orders from my family and friends—they trust me enough to do that,” says Yulis Asianti, 50, who studied tailoring over the course of the 24-week programme. “I used to be very shy and feel like I couldn’t do anything. Now I can brag about my achievements.”

Rila Wati Harahap, a 26-year-old soon-to-be graduate, wearing a red hijab and matching dress she had sewn on the course, reflected on her new sense of self-sufficiency: “I can make my own clothes. I don’t have to rely on anyone,” she said.
The Kartini Blue Bird programme is just one of the initiatives rolled out by an increasing number of Indonesian companies that have pledged to the Women's Empowerment Principles, or WEPs, established by UN WOMEN and the United Nations Global Compact in 2010. From just 14 Indonesian companies in 2019, signatories to the WEPs—which are designed to empower women in workplaces, marketplaces, and communities—grew more than tenfold to 181 by December 2023.

“In addition to better performance due to diversity in their management teams, companies that care about their employees and invest more in women in the community will achieve better results for their bottom line and the wider community and environment,” says Jamshed Kazi, UN WOMEN’s representative in Indonesia. “Gender sensitive business practices are good both for business and for creating a just society.”

The principles encourage progressive initiatives such as Blue Bird’s Kartini programme, which provides participants with new skills and in some cases an additional income stream that can be used to keep children in education. They also help mobilize employees around measurable goals, says BLUE BIRD GROUP CEO and Chair Noni Purnomo. Those goals include the company’s aim to have women comprise 25% of management by 2024—a target that may not be easy to meet in the traditionally male dominated transportation sector.

“I used to be very shy and feel like I couldn’t do anything. Now I can brag about my achievements.”

“We can’t do it alone,” says Ms. Purnomo. “By having the WEP pledge, it helped me to encourage other people [in the company] to be involved, and it acted as a guideline to show how we could embed [women’s empowerment] in our company policies.”

Since 2020, UN WOMEN has hosted awards ceremonies to recognize the achievements of companies that have signed up to the seven principles, which range from establishing high-level corporate leadership for gender equality, to promoting education, training, and professional development for women, to measuring and publicly reporting on progress towards gender equality.

Acting on the principles is especially critical in the wake of COVID-19. Research by UN WOMEN suggests the pandemic has increased the gender gap in women’s wages and workforce participation globally, increased the burden of unpaid household labour, increased incidence of gender-based violence, and exacerbated challenges faced by those in precarious work. But even before COVID-19, businesses were progressing far too slowly on gender equality. In 2023, the World Economic Forum estimated that based on the current pace of change it will take 131 years to close the overall gender gap and 169 years for economic parity.
At creative agency THINK.WEB, one of the 2022 winners of the WEP Awards for Indonesia, creating an inclusive and enabling environment is crucial to ensuring women’s economic empowerment.

The company strives for gender balance across its operations, with six of its 18 senior managers—as well one of the company’s two co-CEOs—being women, explains co-CEO, Ramya Prajna Sahisnu. Policies such as the option of one month paternity leave instead of the two days provisioned under Indonesian law provide opportunities for a more equal balance of childcare between men and women, he adds. “Not all the women’s empowerment policies focus on women, we also consider policies for men that will impact women workers through fostering a more gender equal environment.”

For Mr. Sahisnu, winning a WEP as a 50-employee organization, alongside much larger companies, conferred an honour distinct from the creative industry awards for which the company usually competes. “As a small company, this gives us confidence that doing purposeful work and having empowerment as one of our four key pillars can create a big impact,” he says.
LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE
while helping to preserve Indonesia's cultural heritage
As a child growing up in Yogyakarta, Dheni Nugroho was captivated by Borobudur, the world’s largest ancient Buddhist temple complex that crested the hilltops of neighboring Central Java Province. More fascinating even than the 2,674 Buddhist reliefs etched into the temple’s volcanic rock or the five-kilometer walkway inside the main building was the mystery of how it was built more than 12 centuries ago.

“The rocks, the stone, were carried from the river, through the forest,” Dheni explains. “It’s very interesting—many people don’t see the connection between the temple and the environment.”

It was that connection that inspired the design of a wallet Mr. Nugroho entered for a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) competition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the world heritage convention in 2022. Handsewn by artisans with disabilities in a local studio, his prize-winning wallet features three contrasting leather panels that depict the silhouette of the temple, the forest, and the skyline behind. A QR code embedded in the packaging links to information about the temple, and the wallet’s construction.

Mr. Nugroho is one of more than 1000 young creative entrepreneurs living around six Indonesian heritage sites that UNESCO Jakarta has supported through its Kita Muda Kreatif (Creative Youth at Indonesian Heritage Sites Program) in partnership with the CITI FOUNDATION. The design competition he entered was part of an array of activities that included 130 online workshops in 2022, support to revitalize 500
youth-owned brands, and more than 15 offline exhibitions and eight online markets since the programme began in 2017. Supporting the livelihoods and aspirations of young creative entrepreneurs through workshops teaching marketing, branding, and accounting skills; a range of mentorship opportunities, and networking events not only contributes to keeping Indonesia’s cultural heritage intact, but also ensures tourism based on those heritage sites has a positive impact on people living in the vicinity.

“Tourists from around the world flock to heritage sites like Borobudur temple, but nearby communities don’t always enjoy the socio-economic benefits generated by the massive flow of visitors,” says UNESCO’s Indonesia representative Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa. Helping young artisans and local business owners thrive, she adds, “is one of the best ways of ensuring those benefits are distributed more equitably.”

More than half of the entrepreneurs Kita Muda Kreatif has supported are women. Rizky Puput Isnaini, a visual artist based in Semarang, is one of 40 young creatives in the programme with a disability.

Ms. Isnaini’s muscular dystrophy, which causes her hand tremors, fatigue, and spinal pain, makes painting the vivid watercolors for which she is known painful. But since her disability forced her to leave school in the fifth grade, her art has been an important medium for expression. Kita Muda Kreatif’s support has given the wheelchair-user a broader platform to explore her creativity and helped her expand her client base, she says.

“I used to be concerned with representing images as realistically as possible,” says Ms. Isnaini, discussing a recent self-portrait called Woman with History, which shows flowers growing through cuts in a woman’s face. “But I can see that when I put more feeling into my drawings, I can put more of my soul into them.”

In March 2023, Ms. Isnaini joined a UNESCO panel on the advantages and drawbacks of using AI to augment visual images. Last year, she teamed up with fashion designer Risa Maharani as part of a design challenge set by Kita Muda Kreatif, which culminated in a UNESCO-hosted fashion show in Semarang on World Disability Day.

It is these collaboration and networking opportunities that Semarang-based eco-fashion designer Jemi Nikolaus, who also participated in the World Disability Day fashion show, says make Kita Muda Kreatif so special. Hats and bags portraying Indonesia’s diverse cultural landscape, produced at Mr. Nikolaus’ zero-waste studio in Semarang, won the same UNESCO World Heritage anniversary competition Mr. Nugroho entered with his Borobudur wallet.

Joining product design coaching sessions, workshops on sustainability, and collaborative mentoring offered by UNESCO and the CITI FOUNDATION, helped Mr. Nikolaus adjust his business model, which led to higher sales and new customers. He says: “the collective mutual cooperation, sincere support and solidarity were stimulating.”

He is not alone. Since joining Kita Muda Kreatif, 94 young entrepreneurs said they had increased their income, with 140 developing new goods or services, and 61 hiring new staff to keep pace with growing business demands. Meanwhile, some 187 participants received technical assistance in obtaining legal business certifications, with more than 20 youth subsequently forging business partnerships with private sector companies.
A Jakarta industrial town leads the way to Indonesia's GREEN REVOLUTION
Feathery palm trees, manicured grass, a students’ choir greeting visitors – not images one typically associates with an industrial park. But the UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)-backed MM 2100 INDUSTRIAL TOWN, just outside Jakarta, is no typical industrial park.

Or at least, not yet.

The bucolic scenes at MM 2100 could soon become commonplace thanks to a roadmap UNIDO began developing with the MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY in mid-2020, which incentivizes all industrial parks in the country to become eco-industrial parks. Funded by the Swiss STATE SECRETARIAT FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, the initiative is part of a global project that supports the development of eco-industrial parks in Indonesia and six other countries.

Indonesia’s 138 industrial parks are engines of the country’s economic growth. So, making them greener and more socially responsible is a crucial step towards a more sustainable economy, says Salil Dutt, Chief Technical Adviser at UNIDO. “Eco-industrial parks are key drivers for inclusive and sustainable industrial development through working towards better environmental, social and economic performance,” says Dutt.

With close to 200 tenants employing a whopping 100,000 workers, the 805-hectare MM 2100 site is like a mini city with its own boulevards, power plant, hospital, banks, post office, restaurants, and even a four-star hotel. The park is majority Japanese-owned, and close to two-thirds of its tenants are local subsidiaries of Japanese companies such as HONDA, YAMAHA, LG ELECTRONICS, MITSUBISHI, and HITACHI. Many tenants work in the automotive parts and electronics sectors.

Workers at the MM 2100 Industrial Town help to keep the site green. MM 2100 is the first eco-industrial part in Indonesia.

PHOTO: UNIC JAKARTA
“We had a vision to be ecologically friendly from the outset,” says Tanaka Keisuke, the park’s Director. “But it takes expertise, patience and the right regulatory environment to make some of the changes.”

Those changes are already paying dividends. New circular economy-based initiatives have decreased landfill use for domestic waste generated in the park by between 30% and 40% per month, says Susi Rahmawati, MM 2100’s Manager of Customer Service and Legal Affairs. She attributes the progress to a new composting programme and equipping the park’s 1000 streetlights with energy-efficient LED lights. A wastewater treatment plan installed two years ago uses the latest food chain reaction treatment technology to prevent pollution, with its effluent monitored 24/7 by the MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY, while a new recycling programme now in the works will offer workers financial rewards for bringing in their household waste for recycling.

However, the pride of the park is not its energy-efficient lighting or environmentally friendly wastewater plant, but a vocational training school, maintained by the park’s tenant companies. There, some 2,500 students learn practical skills that range from assembling motorbikes to programming robots to carrying out housekeeping duties at hotels. “This will increase their employability, whether at one of the park’s companies or beyond,” Ms. Rahmawati says.
MM 2100 scores high against the International Framework for Eco-Industrial Parks, developed by UNIDO, the World Bank, and Germany’s international development agency, GIZ. However, policy and regulatory constraints make further improvement difficult, according to UNIDO. For instance, treated industrial wastewater cannot currently be re-used in the park itself but needs to be discharged into a local river, which means the park cannot decrease its freshwater use.

One issue is that regulations for various activities for industrial parks are covered by several ministries and departments at the central and regional levels, and improvements often require consensus from many stakeholders within the government. An inter-ministerial forum for eco-industrial parks established with UNIDO’s support in November 2022 is making consensus easier to reach. It enables ministries to jointly review policies and regulations and make changes as necessary.

“With the right governance model now in place, we expect an improved business environment for industrial parks within the next two-three years,” says Eko SA Cahyanto, the Ministry of Industry’s Director General for Regional Resilience and International Industrial Access.

Work on the ground will proceed in the meantime. In the three pilot industrial parks UNIDO is working with, MM 2100, Batamindo Industrial Park in Batam, and Karawang International Industrial City in West Java, a total of 25 tenant companies joined forces to implement UNIDO’s Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production approach and to explore industrial synergies to improve their environmental, social, and economic performance beyond compliance, UNIDO’s Dutt said. In the next phase of the project, UNIDO will extend support to two more parks.

“We are making progress step-by-step and will continue our work to create an enabling environment through developing a conducive policy and regulatory framework,” Dutt said. “The changes are tangible – and will scale thanks to the government’s holistic approach.”
Indonesia is becoming a centre of excellence in the
FIGHT AGAINST MARITIME CRIME
Live at-sea drills like this are a key component of preparing maritime law enforcement agencies to prevent human trafficking, guard against illegal fishing, and intercept smuggled drugs, weapons, and wildlife. Such drills are now possible thanks to a Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure training facility established with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) support in early 2022 in collaboration with Indonesia’s Coast Guard (BAKAMLA). The centre, in the coastal city of Batam, has enhanced the skills of more than 100 officers from BAKAMLA, to date, alongside scores of agents from Malaysia’s Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and Vietnam’s Customs Office.

Tony Wheatley, a maritime crime expert retained by UNODC who has led several courses at the centre since its establishment, says the facility has enabled him to take training beyond the classroom and simulate the practical challenges law enforcement officers encounter in the line of duty. “The difference he sees in officers’ skill levels after they complete the training “is night and day,” said Wheatley at the end of a recent course for 24 Indonesian, Malaysian and Vietnamese trainees: “They can now board a vessel effectively, they can communicate, secure and search the vessel effectively, and they can also collect evidence effectively.”
Those capabilities are in acute demand in the Strait of Malacca, the shipping superhighway that runs between the littoral states of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Each year, around 90,000 ships pass through the Malacca and Singapore Straits, whose torpid waters stretch from the westernmost corner of Malaysia, narrowing to just three kilometres before reaching the tip of Indonesia’s Bintan Island. The Strait links the economies of India, China, and Japan, and connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific.

A UNODC report published in June 2023 says that drug traffickers in Southeast Asia are increasingly using the sea to avoid interception by law enforcement agents in Thailand and China, a trend that has continued since the COVID-19 pandemic when many land borders were closed. Smugglers are moving significant supplies of methamphetamine and other illegal drugs through central Myanmar to the Andaman Sea because less attention is paid to monitoring the waters, the report says, with drug cartels having been more successful in expanding production and smuggling routes in 2022 compared to before. That, combined with tactical innovations—such as a proliferation of the use of UAV spotters to evade law enforcement patrols—makes maritime crime ever harder to police.

Both bilateral and multi-lateral policing efforts are necessary given the increasing sophistication of transnational crime, says Kenneth Zurcher, Director of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, which supports the UNODC Programme. “Building the capacity and partnerships between the different coastguards and law enforcement agencies is very important—they’re going to have to work together as they address these activities.”

At least as early as the 14th Century, when traveler Wang Dayuan chronicled marauding attacks pirates launched on laden ships returning from China, the Malacca Strait has been associated with piracy. Although multinational naval efforts have led to a decline in piracy and kidnap-for-ransom since 2016, authorities reported 25 incidents of armed robbery against ships in the first three months of 2023—a 9 percent rise year-on-year. Meanwhile, the same coves and
jungled islets that enabled generations of pirates to evade capture continue to provide a haven for smugglers and traffickers today.

“When it comes to countering criminal activity at sea, the primary agencies are the Coast Guard agencies,” says Shanaka Jayasekara, who oversees UNODC’s Maritime Crime Programme in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Sharing knowledge and best practices between littoral nations helps ensure those agencies are able to operate effectively, he adds: “The Coast Guard sector is very much a young sector in Southeast Asia—so, the UN is creating connections and relationships amongst coastguard agencies.”

UNODC recently purchased an underwater remotely operated vehicle that will help trainees at the Batam facility practice searching for drugs concealed under ship’s hulls. The centre also runs specialist training on night boarding, detecting chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear material—including transfers that take place in breach of UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea—and protecting migrants, and women and children on board non-compliant vessels.

As the June sun sunk into the Singapore Strait on the penultimate day of a Batam training course, BAKAMLA officers stalked the bow of a wooden shipping vessel to identify hazards and assess its seaworthiness. On deck, three officers conducted a body search of an armed crew member and secured evidence in Ziplock bags, while others tied a tourniquet around the leg of a teammate simulating an injury.

Learning international standards for safely boarding and searching suspicious vessels, and bonding with counterparts from Malaysia and Viet Nam, said one of the BAKAMLA officers, who requested not to be named, would assist him with his job of guarding Indonesia’s coast. “I want to protect my sea environment,” he said. “Because it is the sea that gives us life.”
UN-ASEAN joint programme helps Tomohon invest in an EARLY WARNING SYSTEM for disasters.
For the residents of Tomohon, North Sulawesi, which is situated between two active volcanoes, being prepared for natural disasters is second nature. But with support from the UN-HABITAT, in cooperation with the ASEAN SECRETARIAT, the city’s leadership is looking to secure funding for an early warning system that could enhance their preparedness, buying citizens crucial minutes and seconds in the event of earthquakes, volcanic activity, or landslides.

“We currently face a long emergency response time – and our goal is to have a system like in Japanese cities, where sirens connected to automatic censors warn people in real-time,” said Jean D’Arc F. Karundeng, Head of Family Empowerment and Welfare in the city. When these censors feel a tremor, no matter how insignificant, they trigger an alert, prompting people to get out of their houses before they can feel the earthquake.

When Mount Lokon, one of the volcanoes on the city’s edge, erupted in 2011, 12,000 of Tomohon’s 100,000 residents had to be evacuated. “We were lucky because nature gave us enough warning,” said city official Royke Roeroe, who headed the Disaster Management Office at the time. “But this may not always be the case – and with earthquakes and landslides, it never is.”

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 1700 islands lying on what is often called the Pacific Ring of Fire, has a higher number of seismic and volcanic events than any other country in the world. Tomohon is one of dozens of cities prone to disaster.

Under current procedures, the mayor’s office is informed by national authorities when seismic or volcanic activity is detected, and then it needs to inform citizens. However, when the timing is crucial, this could cause delays, Ms. Karundeng said. Under the new setup the city is looking to develop, a digital early warning system would send text messages and sound the alarms.

Tomohon, which is dependent on the central government for 80% of its budget and needs more discretionary funding, knew it could not afford to build or procure such a system on its own. What it did not know was how to solicit the funding it required. Under the UN-HABITAT project, its officials acquired skills in drafting project documents for submission to potential donors.
With financial support from the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program, the ASEAN SECRETARIAT and UN-HABITAT’s joint project is supporting eight cities across Southeast Asia in identifying priority areas for urban interventions, articulating their needs, and drafting viable project proposals.

“The urban growth in ASEAN is happening primarily in smaller and secondary cities, like Tomohon, where investments – even if relatively modest – can have a great impact on communities and accelerate sustainable urbanisation,” said Riccardo Maroso, Project Team Leader at UN-HABITAT.

Tomohon zoomed in on issues to do with safety and security early in the process, Ms Karundeng, the city official, recalls. “This is the main quality of life issue for our citizens, and portraying Tomohon as a safe destination will also help to allay the fears of tourists,” she said. North Sulawesi is a popular destination for tourists from China, and Tomohon, with its cooler mountain climate, many flowers, hot springs and two volcanic peaks, hopes to attract more visitors. “We have tour operators who often question whether we are prepared for disasters and whether their tourists will be safe,” she said.

Being part of such an international programme has yielded further indirect benefits, Ms Karundeng added. “We saw the kind of projects other cities are working on, which gave us ideas for future work, as well as a network of peers to discuss various development issues with.” Tomohon officials were particularly interested in the project by Kep City in southern Cambodia on waste collection and recycling.

“Becoming more sustainable is the way of the future, and initiatives like this are a great help for us in getting there,” Ms. Karundeng said.
For refugees in Jakarta and Medan, uplifting others provides a sense of purpose.
“If we don’t do anything good with our time, we’re just wasting it. And time is precious, it will not come back,” says the 29-year-old founder of *SKILLED MIGRANT* and *REFUGEE TECHNICIANS*, or *SMART*, which provides specialist training for refugees aimed at improving their livelihood opportunities.

Refugees are acutely aware of the passage of time. In Indonesia, which is not a party to the 1951 *UN* Refugee Convention and sees itself as a transit country, many have lived in limbo for years, waiting for a third country to accept them for resettlement—a lack of safety means a return home is not feasible, and Indonesia does not provide a path to local integration. So, the seven years since Hakmat first sought asylum here had been full of memories: the smell of fresh baked bread and his mother’s cooking before Taliban persecution of the Hazara ethnic minority forced his family to flee for Quetta, Pakistan; the feel of the Quran he would touch to pray for a safe return whenever he left their house after extremists began targeting Hazara people in Quetta, too; the acrid taste of smoke after a bomb hidden in a water tower killed dozens at a nearby open market, destroying his home 200-meters away and leaving debris and body parts strewn outside. Between painful memories and an uncertain future, the present offered little solace.

“Those were the days when I was lost. I’d cry about my youth passing uselessly without being able to pursue education,” says Hakmat, who asked to be identified by only one name.

When Afghan refugee Hakmat and his friends set out to start an organization to help their fellow refugees in Indonesia, they had few resources, and only a vague sense of what type of support they could offer. What they had in abundance, Hakmat says, was time—as refugees in Indonesia are not allowed to work or attend university.

_Hakmat, Founder of SMART._

Photo: UNIC Jakarta

JAKARTA AND MEDAN, NORTH SUMATRA
Enabling refugees to spend time usefully was the impetus behind SMART, a refugee-led learning organization oriented towards building transferable skills until refugees hope, a resettlement country will accept them as residents. But in early 2020, as Hakmat and his friends canvassed NGOs for funds, purchased a web domain, and consolidated talents like graphic design and coding, their plan of action was overtaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. As online disinformation spread in parallel with the virus, SMART’s first order of business was to create multi-lingual messaging campaigns to ensure Indonesia’s refugee community—which then numbered more than 14,000 people—knew how to stay safe in often cramped and crowded accommodations.

"Refugees were particularly vulnerable during the pandemic," says UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)’s Indonesia Representative Ann Maymann. "Although we ramped up health, psychosocial, and protection services amid COVID-19, the contribution of refugee-led organizations like SMART was critical to ensuring accurate information reached communities outside government safety nets."

In 2022, the UNHCR office in Indonesia selected SMART to serve as facilitator in the office’s training project on digital literacy and safety, funded by UNHCR’s Digital Innovation Service in Geneva. The project provided training to about 60 refugees using a "training of trainers" approach, which helped disseminate accurate information through the broader community. In parallel, SMART’s flagship programme got up and running: an online course that in its first year selected 30 refugees—about half of them women—to participate in six-week-long web design and graphic design courses. SMART plans to double the programme’s intake in 2023.

Among the 2022 cohort was Nasim, who ran a bookshop in Kabul before he was forced to flee Afghanistan with his family. Nasim’s application to SMART, one of more than 100 the organization received, had detailed certificates obtained through online learning platforms such as Coursera, the acquisition of new language skills in Farsi and Indonesian, and his drafting of around 30 colouring books for children he hoped to publish one day. While these endeavours had occupied much of his time since he arrived in Indonesia in 2016, many others in his Medan community struggled to find productive ways to fill their time, he says. Nasim twice translated for a hospitalised friend dealing with mental health challenges, who he says had lost hope and spent day after day glued to games on his mobile phone.

There are 35 million refugees in the world. Many of them need to be resettled with only few places available. Indonesia’s laws often restrict refugees’ social and economic rights, however, recent years have seen a gradual loosening of restrictions. In 2019, following IOM and UNHCR meeting with the MINISTRY OF EDUCATION and INDONESIAN COMMISSION ON CHILD PROTECTION, the Ministry issued a circular note designed to ensure refugee children can benefit from the national education system—with some 795 refugee children and adolescents attending school by the end of May 2023 and further 385 enrolled in early childhood education. Another circular note, issued in May 2022, makes it easier for refugees to obtain a letter of school completion that helps them continue to further education.

After Nasim completed the graphic design course offered through SMART last year, Hakmat assisted him in securing an internship with Indonesian creative design agency Pamoe. For four months, Nasim worked with a team on various graphic design assignments.

Although he had previously taken many online courses, Nasim said SMART’s training followed by the internship with PAMOE offered something unique, “I had the chance to practice teamwork and collaborate with colleagues,” he said. It had offered a glimpse of what he calls his greatest ambition, "to have a normal life. To become a small part of society."

Becoming part of society, having the same rights as others, and safely reuniting with his family somewhere he can call home is an ambition Hakmat shares. But his mission to expand SMART also provides sense of purpose in the present. "I feel a kind of satisfaction," he says, "Despite having limitations, we are doing something good for others, something good for the community."
How Islamic financing helped clean up a landfill in Yogyakarta
Financing through the **UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)**-supported Green Sukuk has enabled Indonesia’s **MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HOUSING** to improve life for residents living near the site of the old dump through better management and improved sanitation of the site. Today, instead of garbage piling up, it is compressed, buried, and layered with protective material to allow it to decompose into biologically and chemically inert materials.

“Before the revitalization, the landfill created so many problems in our lives. We couldn’t use the groundwater because it was smelly and grey,” said Sampto, 72, who lives at the foot of the site in Piyungan. “All the people who were living there suffered the same health risk, such as skin infections and bronchial problems.”

Revitalization of the landfill is one of many initiatives funded by Green Sukuk, a Sharia-compliant bond to finance government projects that deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits. Proceeds from the US$ 6.9 billion Indonesia has issued in Green Sukuk since 2018 — more than any other country for this type of bond — have financed a range of projects across renewable energy, sustainable transportation, waste management, and climate resilience.

“The Indonesian government is committed to issuing more Green Sukuk in the future,” Indonesia’s Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati wrote in a foreword to the Government’s 2023 Green Sukuk Allocation and Impact Report. “These Sukuk will help Indonesia to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, build a more sustainable economy, and create a better future not only for all Indonesians but also for the rest of the world.”
Landfill revitalization was just the first step for the Special Region of Yogyakarta in dealing with its waste problem, putting in motion efforts to revitalize the environment for communities that live in the area. In the future, organic waste from households will be processed into compost for the city’s gardens, while plastic waste from factories and shopping centres will be sorted for recycling. The Piyungan project included a social component: providing those who used to scavenge from the dump access to regular health check-ups from Yogyakarta’s environment agency.

“The partnership between UNDP and the government on the issuance of Green Sukuk since 2018 ensures that funds collected under the scheme promote projects that focus on the transition to a low-emissions economy and climate-resilient development,” said Muhammad Didi Hardiana, Head of the Innovative Financing Lab of UNDP Indonesia.

The Green Sukuk is just one of a range of innovative financial mechanisms UNDP has helped the Indonesian Government launch to bridge the country’s financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is estimated to reach US$1.9 trillion by 2030. In May 2023, UNDP—through an SDG Fund-backed joint programme with UNICEF, UNIDO and UNEP—supported Indonesia in issuing a first-of-its-kind Blue Bond in the Japanese debt capital market, raising JPY 20.7 billion (US$ 150 million). The bond—which will help finance projects in coastal protection, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management, marine biodiversity conservation, and mangrove rehabilitation—adds to the US$ 7.5 billion in innovative financing for sustainable development the UN helped mobilize by the end of 2022.

Workers sprinkle eco enzyme liquid in the leachate processing pond to reduce odors at Piyungan TPST, Yogyakarta. Photo: UNIC Jakarta

Revitalization site at Piyungan TPST, Bantul, Yogyakarta. Photo: UNIC Jakarta
How an award-winning farmer combined agriculture, tourism, and technology in West Java.
In Indonesia’s Subang Regency, West Java, entrepreneur Adimas Muhammad Wibisana is experimenting with an exciting new idea. He wants to tap into the agri-tourism potential of his greenhouse, which uses smart technology to produce cantaloupe melons, and bring tourists to experience life as farmers during harvest season.

“Many young people associate farming with dirtiness and difficulty, but it doesn’t have to be like that,” he says. “The greenhouse we’ve developed shows you can live close to nature and use cutting edge technology.”

It is Mr. Wibisana’s determination to realise ideas like this that won him a Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support (YESS) competitive grant, co-financed by the INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD) and Indonesia’s MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE in 2022. The goal of the programme is to create opportunities for rural youth in the agriculture sector at a time when many rural youths are migrating to urban areas or overseas in search of better job opportunities. Although Indonesia’s agriculture sector has shrunk over the past 15 years in terms of its proportion of GDP contribution, agriculture remains the main source of income for about a third of Indonesia’s population of 270 million people, and for 64% of the country’s poor people.

“Farmers like Adimas serve as an example to rural youth – showing them the benefits of the agricultural sector and that they, too, can play a role in transforming small-scale farms into sustainable agribusinesses,” said Anissa Pratiwi, Country Programme Officer at IFAD.
By 2025, the YESS programme will help 32,500 young people to find employment in the agriculture sector, 33,500 young farmers and rural entrepreneurs to increase their profits, and 50,600 young people to gain a job in a new enterprise. It also aims to help 100,000 rural youth to use financial services and an additional 120,000 to receive financial education. As of June 2023, YESS had provided hands-on training to more than 30,000 rural youth, improving their financial literacy and agricultural business management skills, connected more than 750 apprentices to mentors, and awarded grants to 1,000 novice “agripreneurs”. A further 1,400 competitive grants were awarded to young people with good business proposals but limited access to loans and credit, to assist them in starting new agri-businesses.

Originally a medical device salesman, Mr. Wibisana only took up farming during the COVID-19 pandemic. The YESS grant has helped him deploy technology that cuts costs and improves labour-efficiency at his 1.3-hectare farm, where in addition to cantaloupes he grows cavendish bananas and other fruits and vegetables.

“When I got involved in agriculture last year, my first thought was to see how I can use smart farming techniques to grow our agri-businesses,” he said. Internet of Things applications help him with smart irrigation techniques, giving his crops just enough water at just the right time. His farm now produces up to two tonnes of fresh produce each month, and his success has attracted so much interest in smart farming that he plans set up an educational center that will teach his “agripreneurship” techniques to visitors from around the region.

“The opportunity to inspire Gen-Z and show how it is possible to make a success out of farming provides ample motivation to keep growing,” he says: “This farm is a prototype, a pilot project. If it is successful, we will add greenhouses and seek other investors.”
A UN pilot project helps vulnerable communities FIGHT FOREST FIRES
When volunteer firefighter Marlizar noticed smoke billowing over a quarter-hectare of peatland while on a routine patrol in 2019, he dispatched his colleague to their base in Riau province’s Teluk Meranti village, seven kilometers away, and faced the fire alone.

As Marlizar’s colleague sped off to retrieve a clunky hose unit called a Robin, the 42-year-old attempted to beat back the flames with a tree branch while alerting the disaster management agency. Experience had taught him how to stay safe from smoke inhalation. He said: “The only thing on my mind was what could I do to stop the fire from spreading.”

Despite Marlizar’s valiant efforts, the flames had engulfed five hectares within an hour. In the two more hours it took for the Robin to arrive—transported by speed boat, then hefted on several fire-fighters’ shoulders—the peatlands were ablaze as far as he could see. In Teluk Meranti, a Quran recital competition had to be put on hold. And in the coming days and weeks, schools, airports, and government offices were forced to close as smoke thickened the air.

Volunteer firefighter Marlizar in Teluk Meranti Village, Riau.
Photo UNIC Jakarta
Indonesia’s 2019 wildfires burned 3.1 million hectares—an area bigger than Belgium—blanketed six other countries in haze, released almost 604 million tonnes of CO2 and caused some 900,000 people to report respiratory illnesses. The fires also inflicted US$ 5.2 billion in losses in Indonesia, according to the WORLD BANK, adding to the US$ 16 billion caused by even larger fires in 2015. Worse is still to come, says the UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP), which expects a 14% increase in forest fires globally by 2030 due to a mixture of climate change and changing land use. But since 2021, a UNEP-led integrated fire management pilot project, financed by USAID, has helped build greater fire resistance in three of the country’s most fire-prone districts. Its draws inspiration from a “cluster-based” approach towards land management practiced in South Africa—bringing together the knowhow of community fire-fighting brigades like Marlizar’s, the reach of government agencies, and the resources of some of Indonesia’s largest private companies. The project’s aim of enhancing coordination between community, government, and private land users could hold lessons for fire-prone countries around the world.

“Forest fires inflict massive humanitarian, environmental and economic costs, especially when they occur on carbon-rich peatlands, so it’s in everyone’s interest to prevent them from breaking out,” says UNEP’s programme officer Johan Kief. “Indonesia has set ambitious goals on halting deforestation and reducing carbon emissions—reducing the risk of fires is a key component of achieving them.”

After UNEP began forming fire prevention clusters in 2021, no fire hotspots were found in the first pilot district, Central Kalimantan’s Pulang...
Pisau, in the 2022 dry season. In Riau’s Pelalawan district—where Teluk Meranti is located—the number of reported fires decreased from 139 in 2021 to 88 in 2022. In South Sumatra’s Ogan Komering Ilir district, the third pilot area, the number of reported fires declined from 345 to 109.

Based on the results achieved in the initial three pilot districts, the project is expanding to a further six priority districts, with the aim of eventually implementing the approach nationwide.

“The efficacy of collaborative approaches to fire prevention has been proven through these clusters. Sharing the experience of these three districts not just in Indonesia, but also to other peat-rich and fire-prone countries in Latin America and southern Africa, is a contribution from Indonesia to the world,” said Bambang Surya Putra, Head of the Centre for Operation Control at Indonesia’s disaster prevention agency, BNPB.

Indonesia has the third largest area of forest cover in the world, behind only Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo. But as with elsewhere on an archipelago that was 84% forest in 1900, the road that leads from Riau’s provincial capital Pekanbaru to the UNEP pilot district Pelalawan today tells the story of how industry and agriculture have caused the forest to recede. Kilometer after kilometer, the cacophony of jungle has been replaced with uniform blocks of squat glossy green oil palm, spindly brown acacia, and white dappled rubber.

At least 14 companies hold concessions in Pelalawan district. One of the largest is paper and pulp maker APRIL, with some 150,000 hectares of...
acacia estate. Most fires in Palawan break out on community rather than company land. APRIL’s deputy chief of fire and emergency response, Mr. Yuneldi says, but even when fires occur outside the company’s estate, APRIL has sent its ample resources, equipment, and personnel to assist the police and military in putting down fires.

Equipped with satellite imaging and real time weather tracking technology, the resources at APRIL’s fire center are a far cry from those available to community firefighters like Marlizar and his team, who gauge the dryness of the peatland they patrol by the way it falls through their fingers.

It is these differences in resources that UNEP’s cluster approach is designed to address, through developing an integrated strategy to take on a challenge that affects everyone.

The cluster approach, APRIL’s Yuneldi says, “creates much more efficiency because we can share technology and strategies, so it will minimize the use of resources but maximize the results of the work.”

Ms. Ernawati, a former volunteer fire fighter who heads a local farmers’ group says that community-based awareness raising efforts are paying off in Teluk Meranti. Farmers have a better understanding of the risks of burning dry peatland, and new signage cautions fishers and bird hunters against tossing cigarette butts or starting cooking fires, she says. But coordinated efforts with the private sector are still essential to help ensure non-burning agriculture is feasible for smallholders, “for many of them, there aren’t enough resources—the cheapest way is burning.”
UN and local partners support farmers on MARGINAL LANDS increasing yields and income
Through terracing and intercropping, they have put an end to erosion of their land in the village of Nangaroro, located on a steep hill overlooking the Indian ocean. Through capturing the manure of domestic animals and using it as organic fertilizer, their corn yield has increased from two tons per hectare to seven. And in that surplus corn, which they sell for cash, lies the linkage between manure and education: their two oldest children are now at university in Jakarta.

“We would have never been able to afford that in the past,” says Mr We’e, a former subsistence farmer, who now grows sweet potatoes, beans, corn and leafy vegetables such as pok choy for sale.

Forming terraces on their steep slopes took some work, but it paid off, as did keeping formerly freely roaming cattle and goats in animal pens, so that their manure could be collected and applied as organic fertilizer. “Our food is guaranteed year-round and we have a regular income on top of it,” Ms Nasa says.
Local agriculture authorities have taken notice of the enhanced productivity of farms like Ms Nasa and Mr We’e’s and others nearby. From early 2023, conservation agriculture techniques FAO promoted in a handful of villages through its local partner, the INDEPENDENT FARMER PARTNERS FOUNDATION (YMTM), began to be mainstreamed and made accessible to all farmers cultivating marginal lands, says Oliva Monika, Head of the MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE’s Nagekeo District Office.

“These are very impressive results, and we have decided to roll out the methodology throughout the district,” she says.

The Nagekeo district has around 21,000 farmers, and around 10% of them work on marginal land: agricultural areas less suitable for growing plants. Either the land is too steep, like in Nangaroro Village, with rainfall gushing down natural slopes causing the loss of the most fertile topsoil, or the land is completely flat, causing rainwater to pool and turn what could be rich agricultural areas into wetland.

The latter was the case for Amandus Buiu, a small-scale farmer in Wolowae, where the frequent flooding of his one-acre plot restricted him to planting rice, rather than corn or horticultural products that fetch a higher price.

Mr Buiu’s flat plot, with a slope of around 2%, now has small drainage canals to guide excess rainwater the soil cannot absorb down to the nearby creek, while intercropping corn with beans provided enough shade, moisture and natural fertilizer from leaves in the soil for both plants to thrive. For now, he has kept a rice paddy at the end of his plot, closest to the creek. “I am still experimenting with what balance of crops will work the best,” he says.

Varieties of raw cashew nuts as one of the products of intercropping agriculture. Photo: UNIC Jakarta

Intercropping of corn and beans and the development of small drainage canals has enabled Amandus Buiu to turn what was formerly flooded land into a productive farm. Photo: UNIC Jakarta
FAO’s support for farmers responded to an urgent need in Nagekeo, part of East Nusa Tenggara Province, which is one of the five least developed areas of Indonesia. Most of Indonesia’s least developed areas are agricultural, and moving farmers out of subsistence agriculture into generating an income is a key goal of the government, said Wayan Tambun, Project Manager at FAO Indonesia. “The methods we introduce – and our local partners help the farmers implement – conserve the land and resources, while increasing yields and incomes,” he says.

In another marginal area, Rendubutowe, where high elevation means much lower rainfall, FAO partners WORLD NEIGHBORS and VECO INDONESIA have trained farmers in terracing techniques and the use of hedgerows to conserve soil and water, as well as planting trees to minimize water run-offs in the rainy season. Farmers have moved from slash and burn agriculture and shifting cultivation to permanent farming. As a result of the new practices, the land in many areas is now forested, providing natural erosion and flood control, storing carbon, and giving rise to new water springs.

“Before, our land was barren and infertile and could be used for agriculture only 5-7 months per year,” says farmer Andontius Pati. Twenty-five years since FAO’s local partners began assisting farmers in the region, his farm now consists of terraced land and areas with mahogany and gmelina trees, whose seeds and firewood he can also sell. “With terracing, and the use of leaves from leguminous crops as green manure, my harvest kept on increasing,” he says.

Mr. Pati’s “family forest,” as he calls it, ensures that the local creek never dries out and there is water in the soil year-round.

Life has much improved for many of the farmers who participate in the programme. Inheriting marginal land is no longer a curse, Mr W'e'e says. Now, he can even think of taking a trip outside the province, he adds: “With our older children now in Jakarta, we hope we can go and visit them.”
Evidence-based policy making tackles food insecurity in rural Indonesia.
Kornelia Icha never starved. Very few people do in Indonesia with its fertile soil and tropical climate. But until a recent intervention by the NATIONAL FOOD AGENCY, her diet consisted mostly of rice, corn, onions and the occasional meat dish.

“I was not aware that vegetables were that important – or how to grow them,” the 25-year-old farmer from Idas, West Kalimantan says. “Now I do.”

Ms Kornelia, along with 50 of her neighbours in this village among the rolling hills of Northwest Borneo, close to the Malaysian border, received vegetable seeds and the chance to participate in a training on how to grow tomatoes, cucumbers, and peanuts. The idea is that this will make them and their families less prone to diseases.

Idas was one of just four out of 160 villages in the district targeted for bespoke government intervention thanks to data-based policymaking. Using a rigorous, data-based methodology from the WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP), the district’s FOOD SECURITY OFFICE published a recommendation to all local government offices to concentrate efforts on these settlements, which parallels the government’s aim of providing targeted support for stunting, a condition of which chronic undernutrition is the main contributor.

“Without research and hard data, even the best intentioned attempts to decrease food security vulnerability are like a shot in the dark,” says Nur Affandi, Head of the FOOD SECURITY OFFICE in Singgau, the regional capital. “In order to target interventions correctly and create policy that really makes a difference, we must base our work on evidence, not intuition.”

Ms Icha, her father and brother can afford a more varied diet as a result of an intervention by local authorities based on food security vulnerability data.

PHOTO: UNICEF JAKARTA
Much of that evidence is presented through the Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas. Developed jointly by WFP and the NATIONAL FOOD AGENCY, the atlas visualizes key food security data for all 514 cities and districts in Indonesia, a vast country of 280 million people. On it, each subdistrict and village is given one of six priority classes of vulnerability, based on indicators such as access to running water, amount of agricultural land per person and access to a medical facility, among others. The composite index takes into account these various indicators and based on that automatically identifies which villages and subdistricts are vulnerable to food insecurity.

In 2019, Idas fell into the priority 1 or ‘highly food insecure’ category. Since then, the fortified dirt road connecting it to main roads in the area has been partially repaired to ease villagers’ access to markets and therefore improve their overall economic condition. Seeds have been distributed to families to help them vary their diets, along with pepper plants to diversify their income away from reliance solely on rubber and palm oil. The few families who did not have clean running water are now hooked up to the village’s water system. ‘A major improvement’, a proud Mr Affandi says with a broad smile. ‘It’s not thanks to us; it thanks to science.’

His approach of data-based policy making is seen as a pilot to emulate, particularly in poorer areas of the country, such as East Nusa Tenggara Province and its capital city of Kupang. A Regent’s Decree prepared in 2022 by the Kupang District Government, the REGIONAL DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OFFICE and WFP mandates all local authorities, including those in charge of health care, agriculture and social support, to use the Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas to target their food and social support. ‘The province has over 309 subdistricts – 37% of which were found vulnerable to food insecurity in 2021.

In East Nusa Tenggara, more than 20% of the population lives below the poverty line and nearly 40% of children under five are stunted. Stunting prevents children from reaching their full cognitive and physical potential. Countrywide, just over 20% of children under five were stunted in 2022. ‘Using the Atlas for planning enables us to refine our focus and target food insecurity interventions accordingly,’ says Marthen Rahakbauw, Head of the KUPANG DISTRICT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OFFICE.

While the progress is tangible, a lot of work remains. ‘WFP is supporting the NATIONAL FOOD AGENCY to work with other cities and districts to also mandate the use of Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas,’ said Jennifer Rosenzweig, WFP Indonesia Country Director a.i. ‘We need more examples like Sanggau and Kupang districts to systematically reach the most vulnerable to food insecurity segments of the population nationwide.’

For Ms Kornelia, who says she can only afford to eat what she and her relatives can grow themselves, the vegetables make a major difference in her diet. Her and her husband’s base income comes from selling the milky latex they extract from around 200 rubber trees; this earns them around 60,000 Indonesian rupiah (US$ 4) a day, which is supplemented by income from odd jobs and the occasional sale of peanuts. ‘We are not poor,’ she says. ‘But we could certainly never eat as many vegetables as we do now.’

Without research and hard data, even the best intentioned attempts to decrease food security vulnerability are like a shot in the dark,” says Nur Affandi, Head of the Food Security Office in Singgau.

Photo: UNIC Jakarta

Authorities have improved the condition of the road leading to Idas, helping villagers access markets for their produce.

Photo: UNIC Jakarta