

## VIDEO DIDN'T KILL THIS RADIO STAR

### *The Success of an Asset-Based Approach in Civil Society Strengthening*

The Australian Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme (ACCESS) Phase II is having remarkable success in its asset-based approach. Since May 2008, ACCESS has been working in 984 villages across 20 districts in Eastern Indonesia to empower communities and community based organizations to effectively engage with local government in order to drive their own development agenda with the aim of reducing poverty.

ACCESS provides funds and technical assistance for capacity building and uses an asset-based approach with communities in developing action plans for local development initiatives. This approach challenges the 'project-driven' paradigm where communities are asked by donors what issues or problems they have and how this donor can help solve their problems. Rather than this deficit approach, the asset-based approach encourages communities to map their village assets and potential, and with assistance from local CSO partners, helps communities organize themselves to draw and build on these assets. This approach is resulting in communities building sustainable and self-reliant income bases.

A great example of the success of this approach has been in Lapandewa, a remote and rocky dry land farming village in Buton District on the island of Buton in South East Sulawesi. ACCESS Partner, Sintesa, began working with a local farmer group, *Kaombo Labukutorende*, in June 2010 when this group comprised a total of 14 members.

One of the young members of *Kaombo Labukutorende*, Harisun, saw the potential that local radio may have in the community. With the help of a village friend who tinkered in electronics these two men raised an antenna using bamboo and were on air within 24 hours with their handmade broadcasting radio.



The local market was soon bereft of FM radios as community members began listening more and more to Harisun's transmissions. Using material from ACCESS, and with assistance from Sintesa, Harisun helped organize his community into action. Inspired by this young community leader, *Kaombo Labukutorende* now boasts 157 active members, of which 67% are women. The group's savings and loans scheme has gone from \$38 in revolving funds to \$16,480. The group is looking at supporting members with health and education coverage and provides a percentage of its membership fees to environmental initiatives within the village.

As Harisun stated in a recent radio broadcast "with 157 brains all working together imagine the number of ideas we can come up with for improving our livelihoods and the condition of our village". The village now has a number of successful small businesses, including food and snack production and farmers are now growing a range of organic

vegetables using recycled plastic greenhouses.

The work that Harisun and the *Kaombo Labukutorende* farmer's cooperative is doing is gaining the attention of the local government with a recent visit by the Bupati of Buton. Harisun himself was nominated on October 2011 as a finalist for an *Indonesia Berprestasi* Award in the field of social economy and environment and placed in the top three. This nomination has provided further incentive to Harisun and the citizens of Lapandewa to continue building on the assets they have at their disposal.

To date ACCESS has provided 225 grants to 125 CSOs at the sub-national level to support more than 1,780 citizen's groups in a range of areas including improving public service delivery, participatory planning and budgeting, local economic development, community led natural resource management, and social justice. The beneficiaries of these initiatives comprise over 2.5 million community members. The success of these community initiatives has attracted the attention of local government, and since the Program commenced in 2008, local CSOs have leveraged \$1.95 million from district governments in support of community action plans.

For Harisun and the farmer's cooperative in Lapandewa this new approach of looking at what they do have rather than what they don't is an exciting prospect. As Harisun put it, "the trust that has developed between the village government and the community members as a result of our achievements is one of the greatest assets we can now draw on. If we can do all this within one year, and with very little outside assistance, imagine what we can achieve in the years to come".

Written by Nina FitzSimons.

Nina is the Program Coordinator for ACCESS Phase II

[www.access-indo.or.id](http://www.access-indo.or.id)