

Indonesian transcript:

Pewawancara: Hmm ngomong-ngomong tentang, aktifis.. sebagai aktifis NGO, tadi disebutkan Mas Agus ini seorang aktifis NGO. Bisa bercerita tentang pengalaman aktifis apa dan dibidang apa?

Agus: Hmm.. saya bekerja, saya tidak mengatakan ini sebuah pekerjaan tapi sebentar pengabdian. Eehmm saya terlibat dalam eee... kerja-kerja bersama ee.. buruh, petani dan nelayan. Sebelum aktif di buruh, saya banyak di petani. Misalnya pernah suatu hari saya advokasi, saya bukan dari hukum tapi mencoba untuk.. eee.. Boleh saya bicara tentang sebuah kasus?

Pewawancara: Silahkan.

Agus: Jadi, di Sumatera Barat, ada namanya di daerah Gunung Sago, daerah Lima Puluh Kota, ada nama tempat, itu ee.. jadi disini daerah gunung, disini ada bukit, nah di gunung ini, di lereng gunung ini ada beberapa desa, sangat banyak desanya, dan ada mata air. Nah, kemudian, di bukit di seberangnya, dibikin.. dibikin sekolah. Nah, separuh dari air ini dialihkan untuk sekolah. Ok, ga masalah kata masyarakat karena untuk sekolah. Orang Sumatera Barat sangat mendukung sekolah. Sejak jaman..jaman dahulu mereka antri tiap Kamis sore untuk menyerahkan zakat ke sekolah-sekolah. Tiba-tiba, ditempat, di bukit yang sama, dibangun barak militer, air yang tinggal separuh, diambil dengan paksa. Jadi, tidak ada lagi air untuk petani, padahal, dalam keyakinan masyarakat di Sumatera Barat, air itu bukan untuk privat tapi milik publik.

Orang Sumatera Barat dulu dilarang membikin sumur, karena diyakini kalau mereka membikin sumur, mereka akan memiliki air dan mengurangi eee... kualitas air untuk mengairi sawah. Sekarang air sudah habis dan tentara ga ada yang bisa melawan pada masa orde baru. Jadi kemudian, masyarakat banyak terjebak pada eee.. pertama kemiskinan, bayangkan sampai eee.. akhir, lebih 1999 itu tidak ada yang bisa sekolah lebih dari SMA disitu, di beberapa wilayah itu, sangat miskin dan terjebak mal..marasmus, mal nutrition. Eee.. ya, marasmus ya.. Ee.. banyak anak-anak yang jadi marasmus.

Eee terus, eee datanglah kemudian orang-orang kota memberikan modal untuk orang-orang nanam tembakau disitu. Mereka butuh hari-hari untuk makan, kemudian mereka dipinjamin. Jadi nanti setelah dikeluarkan modal, hasil dibagi dua, kadang hasil untuk petani ini habis untuk nutupin hutangnya. Sementara tembakau ini ditanam di tanah dia. Jadi dia menjadi buruh di tanahnya sendiri.

Aaa ini hanya sebuah contoh kasus kemudian eee.. saya mencoba mengadvokasi itu ee.. kemudian bersama masyarakat kami bekerja bersama. Eee.. dari situ saya mendapatkan, itu tahun 98-99 (1998-1999) Ee 99 sesudah reformasi. Saya mendapatkan.. bahwa eee..

selama ini masyarakat kita dibodohi atau ditinggalkan dalam kebodohan, hidup dalam kebudayaan bisu dan dibiarkan. Hmm sementara banyak kita orang-orang kota datang itu seakan-akan datang dari sebuah peradaban yang lain. Tapi tidak memposisikan mereka untuk lebih memahami tentang persoalan mereka dan mencari tahu bagaimana sebenarnya dan mencoba mencari jawabannya sendiri. Nah itu yang saya kerjakan.

Saya bukan.. NGO yang datang ke daerah kemudian bagi-bagi proyek, saya tidak pernah seperti itu, saya tidak pernah punya funding besar, juga funding kecil. Biasanya kami bekerja hanya karena serikat-serikat aja tapi bagaimana kemudian kami membuat, katakanlah sekolah, tapi sekolah informal untuk menjadikan mereka subjek atas masalah mereka.

Datang ke lingkungan nelayan, ok kaya di Lampung mereka bertarung dengan orang-orang yang punya eee.. bom itu, saya lupa namanya .. yang untuk usaha-usaha besar, sementara mereka hanya punya kapal. Ok, gimana kita mengatasinya. Hanya mereka sendiri yang membentuk serikat-serikat, begitu juga kemudian kasus di Tangerang misalnya, di Tangerang itu lebih gila eee.. karena faktor ya globalisasi ini punya efek yang sangat banyak saya pikir.

Pewawancara: Jadi pekerjaannya lebih, kurang lebih bisa dikatakan sukarelawan begitu?

Agus: Eee.. ya.. karena saya tidak diga.. ya.. tidak digaji untuk hal-hal seperti itu.

English translation:

Interviewer: Hmm, speaking about activists... As an NGO activist, you mentioned before that you're an NGO activist. Would you please tell me about your experience as an activist, and which areas are you involved in?

Agus: Hmm... I am working, I don't consider it as a job but it's more like a form of dedication to our people. I am involved in uh.... groups working with... workers, farmers and fishermen. Before being active in the workers' union, I spent most of my time with farmers. For example, one day I did some advocating work. I have no background in law whatsoever but I tried anyway... uh.. perhaps I can tell you about a case?

Interviewer: Yes, please.

Agus: So, In West Sumatra, there is an area in Gunung Sago, Lima Puluh Kota¹. There is a place, it was uh.... it's an area in the mountains. There's a hill, and on this mountain, there are several villages by the mountainside, a lot of villages, and also there is a spring. And then, they built a school on a hill across this hill, and half of the spring waters flew to the school. The villagers said it was okay because it's for the school. People in West Sumatra really support the school. Since, since that time, every Thursday they would line up to offer tithing for the school. And then suddenly, on the same hill, they built military

¹ Gunung Sago, Lima Puluh Kota is a district in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia

barracks, they ended up taking over the other half of the spring water. So now there is no more water for the farmers. Meanwhile people in West Sumatra believe that water should not be solely used for private interest, but for public interest as well.

It is forbidden for the people in West Sumatra to dig a well, because it was believed that if they dug a well, they will have their own water and that in turn will decrease the quality of the water that flows through their paddy field. And now the water has dried up and during New Order Era¹, no one dared to stand up and fight with the soldiers. And then people in those areas are trapped in...uh.. Firstly there's poverty. Just imagine, until the end of... even longer than 1999, no one was able to obtain higher education in those areas, and several areas as well. They were really poor, they had mal... marasmus², malnutrition. Uh.. yes, marasmus right? Uh... a lot of children suffered from marasmus.

And then people from the cities would and give capital for the villagers to plant tobacco. The villagers needed money for their daily expenses, so they borrowed some money from the owner of the capital. After the capital is given, they split the harvest in two, and sometimes the harvest which belongs to the farmers part are used to cover their debts. Meanwhile, those tobaccos are actually planted in their own field. So they became workers in their own field.

Ah.. that was only an example, and then...I tried to advocate for them, I worked alongside the community. Uh... from that case I got... it was in 1998-1999. 1999 was the era of reformation. I just started feeling that... Our people were being duped and were left steep in this culture of muteness. Hmmm...meanwhile there are a lot of people who come from cities, and they act like they come from another civilization, but these people don't position themselves in order to gain a better understanding about the problems of the villagers and try to find out how they really are and to support them in finding their own answers. That's what I did in a nutshell.

I am not.. I am not ones of those NGOs who would come to an area and start giving them some projects. I am not like that. I don't have a large amount of funding. I don't even have a small one. Usually we'd work to support the unions, but then we'd build...let's just say a school. It would be an informal school to encourage them to be subjects of their own issues.

Going to a fishermen's environment, okay like in Lampung³ they would fight with people who have bombs. I forgot what was it called... The one for big companies, in meantime they only have a boat. Okay, how we deal with it. They started the unions themselves, and also the case in Tangerang⁴ for example, that's even a crazier case because of factors involving globalization...I think it has a huge impact.

¹ New Order Era is the term coined by former Indonesian President Suharto to characterize his regime as he came to power in 1966.

² Marasmus is a form of severe protein-energy malnutrition characterized by energy deficiency.

³ Lampung is a province of Indonesia, located on the southern tip of the island of Sumatra.

⁴ Tangerang is a city in Banten, Indonesia. It is located about 20 km west of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia

Agus: So, your work...it could be considered as volunteer work, right?

Agus: Uh.... yes, because I don't receive any salaries for those jobs.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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