

POST SCRIPT

I. Introduction:

During the defence of this thesis, questions emerged which have not been specifically addressed by this case study. A response to those questions could enlighten us concerning two aspects, which might have a practical use to fellow practitioners as well as researchers who might be interested in this topic, namely: (1) the cross-cultural problems encountered in setting up an "LPSM" (*lembaga pengembang swadaya masyarakat* = community self-reliance promotion agency) such as the one studied; and (2) a comparison between this type of non-government organization, with other types of NGOs, such as the political parties, the churches and other forms of religious institutions, and private, profit-seeking companies.

Due to the limitations of time and space, I want to limit this post script to the cross-cultural problems which I encountered in setting up this organization, and then present some recommendations for similar situations. I will leave the second question concerning the similarities and differences of this type of NGOs and other forms of NGOs to my future dissertation research.

In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I have mentioned the various cross-cultural problems encountered in setting up this type of NGO. Generally speaking, they can be classified in three broad categories, namely: (1) cross-cultural problems encountered in introducing this

new type of NGO in a province, where none had been in existence before; (2) cross-cultural problems encountered in the day-to-day communication between the organization's practitioners who came from different cultural backgrounds; and (3) cross-cultural problems encountered in the interaction of this type of organization with the villagers who constitute the "clients" or "receivers" of the services of this organization. Since the third category has been addressed as part of the findings of this thesis, I will concentrate my discussion to the two earlier categories.

II. Cross-cultural problems encountered in introducing this new type of NGO:

As usual, people tend to interpret new institutions and individuals coming into their sphere of interaction, in comparison to those institutions and individuals with which or with whom they are already familiar. In Piagetian terms one can say, that they interpreted IrJa DISC and later YPMD Irian Jaya's presence, in terms of their pre-existing schemas. Hence the terminology I repeatedly came across in the self-recorded interviews as well as during my interaction with the people in Irian Jaya to describe this new organization included the words "*lembaga sosial* (social institutions)" and "*lembaga swasta* (private institutions)." Interestingly enough, the qualifiers "social" -- which denoted charities -- and "private" -- which often denoted commercial, profit-seeking institutions -- were the two extremes of a continuum of non-governmental institutions, neither of which IrJa

DISC or YPMD Irian Jaya subscribed. Regardless of that fact, this organization was often seen by outsiders *as well as* some insiders, as a charity or a profit-seeking corporation, from which it was logical to demand personal loans or even grants. In fact, people often did not realize the difference between "loans" and "grants," in a culture which has no translation for the concept of "borrowing."¹⁰⁹

This "ascribed" feature of IrJa DISC and later on YPMD Irian Jaya often led me to describe in lengthy speeches and articles to describe the features or characteristics of an "LPSM," stressing the fact that it was a "citizens' initiated group," which itself depended on grants from funding agencies in Jakarta and abroad, and had to account for every single penny to those donors.

Probably, the "charity" or "profit-seeking" nature of private institutions ascribed to IrJa DISC and later on YPMD Irian Jaya, was enhanced by two factors: (1) the existence of American support to this organization in terms of foreign consultants and grants; and (2) the fact

¹⁰⁹) This does not seem to be so unique of the Irianese languages predominant among the organization's staff-persons and supporters, because in the Indonesian cultures in general, there are no words for "borrowing." What they have instead, is the notion of "reciprocity." Once you have received a favor from someone or from a group, you are obliged to return that favor one day in a form, which might be totally different from the favor which you had received. This principle of "reciprocity," however, is only relevant in situations where there is a certain degree of equal power between those who receive the favor and those giving out the favor, and is usually regarded not to be binding in situations where the party extending the favor is regarded to be much more powerful -- including, richer -- than the party receiving the favor. In this type of situation, extending a favor is regarded to be an obligation of the more powerful party. And the common knowledge that the Asia Foundation consultants were earning much more than the local government and university officials, created the image that it was completely 'legal' to ask for favors from the IrJa DISC as an institution, as well as the Asia Foundation consultants personally.

that the organization was *not* a religious institution. Both factors created a larger 'constituency' for this organization than the various churches in Irian Jaya, whose constituencies were more confined to certain ethno-linguistic groups and their traditional homelands in Irian Jaya.

Apart from the ascribed financial attributes, there also were conflicting perceptions concerning the political attributes ascribed to IrJa DISC and consequently YPMD Irian Jaya by its supporters as well as other parties in Irian Jaya. As I have described in chapter 2 and 3, IrJa DISC was forbidden by the Cenderawasih University as well as by the 1982-1984 Asia Foundation officials to be involved in what they considered to be politicking, e.g. defending the rights of Asmat people *vis-a-vis* the timber companies, and the rights of Sentani people *vis-a-vis* the State Electricity Corporation which wanted to dam the Sentani Lake. On the other hand, however, the KKO initiators and their friends, saw IrJa DISC as a comrade-in-arms for their representatives in the provincial parliament to advocate the indigenous peoples' rights in various provincial, national, and international fora.

This conflict of political perceptions concerning the organization's role, created many difficulties in "navigating" this "ship" politically, in order not to crash into political land mines and sea mines. As the captain of this ship during the turbulent 1982-1985 years, I had to face problems from three fronts: within the organization, I had to put some brakes on some Irianese staff-persons and a British volunteer, who wanted to race with a speed which I thought to be

untactical. Beyond the staff-persons and volunteers, I had to prevent the organization from becoming a rallying point for all the Irianese intellectuals who wanted to turn the organization into a "battle ram" to break into the government's fortress.¹¹⁰ Beyond these circles of employees and supporters, I had to face the military and civilian authorities in Irian Jaya, who were obviously unhappy to see this organization turn into an extra-parliamentary opposition front. Apart from these problems, I also had to face the political backlash when a strong supporter of the organization, was eventually killed by the military. This event, as I have described in Chapter 3, had caused some segments within the Irianese intellectuals to identify me with the "oppressors."

III. Cross-cultural problems encountered in communication among the practitioners within the organization:

This category covered a whole range of problems. First, there was a different work rhythm or 'tempo' between the Asia Foundation consultants and the local personnel. My American colleagues and I, who come from a journalism background, wanted to achieve work output beyond the standards to which our local staff-persons and volunteers were accustomed. Secondly, there was a conflict between me and my American colleagues regarding our traditions to document

¹¹⁰) For instance, in early 1983, there was a suggestion presented to me to set up a 25-persons 'task force' to campaign for coastal and marine conservation. I turned down this suggestion, stating that the Irja DISC was not a 'membership organization,' but was instead only a center to serve the already existing organizations.

all our activities, and oral traditions of our local counterparts. Thirdly, there was a "book-keeping" conflict between those in the organization, who really insisted on documenting every single expense item, regardless of how small it was, and those who still relied on "memory" and "trust." I was caught in the middle, because I was -- and still am -- a bad book-keeper, and had to learn this tradition myself, just like one of my American colleagues, who had forgotten to write down all the expenses paid in checks for two whole years. This caused head-aches when his successors tried to balance the books after he left for another career in March 1984.

Changing the oral tradition of the organization's practitioners into a written tradition, and developing a good book-keeping operation, seemed to be continuing problems which the organization was facing, even after my wife and I left the scene in 1987. These cross-cultural problems were not confined to staff-persons, but also were of some consequence for the organization's leaders, who were still quite slow in writing their travel reports and submitting their expenses, and to the bulletin's editors and the organization's book keepers who also were frustrated.

A fourth cross-cultural problem which I encountered, was the nurturing of an atmosphere of open-criticism. Having originated from a culture which does not allow open-criticism, but having grown up in Eastern Indonesia where people value openness and frankness, I expected my Irianese partners to be open and frank as well. However, I was often frustrated when our working colleagues could not stand

criticism of their work, even in small, closed, staff meetings. My American colleagues and I, later on, often received feed-back regarding criticism, which was often negative from Irianese colleagues, or from Asia Foundation officials, to whom many Irianese staff-persons were more eager to air their grudges. This tendency to hit around the bush seemed to be a new, urban Irianese mentality, and might have been shaped under the influence of the harsh authoritarian Indonesian regime in Irian Jaya, because during my frequent field trips in the villages, I had often encountered much more open-ness and frankness from the village leaders, despite the cultural, academic, and economic difference between myself and the village leaders. Obviously, my colleagues 'closedness' might also have been enforced, as I had mentioned in Chapter 3, by my own aggressive, extrovert character.

A fifth problem was the perceived cultural difference related to sexual standards between some external supporters of the organization, and the local Jayapura society. On one occasion, a Dutch Christian agency refused to support a Dutch female marine biologist to work with YPMD Irian Jaya, since she wanted to bring along her male partner, to whom she was not officially married. The reason for that was that the Dutch organization did not want "to spoil the natives." Interestingly enough, pre-marital sex, unofficially married couples, and unwed single-parents with children, were already commonplace phenomena in Jayapura, even among the student population and development workers, including the organization's circle of staff-

persons and volunteers.¹¹¹ Hence, the Dutch funding agency's refusal was actually a big loss for the organization, which might have obtained "two experts for the price of one," because the marine biologist's partner was an economist, who was ready to work on a voluntary bases for the organization, while taking care of their child.

Apart from that 'outsider's perspective', there were also inconsistencies concerning the perceptions regarding sexuality among the organization's staff-persons and board members. On various occasions they demanded more 'Christian' or 'traditional' sexual norms from the non-Irianese staff-persons, than from the Irianese or Irian-born staff-persons.

IV. Recommendations:

Based on those experiences, I want to make the following recommendations:

(1). Non-governmental organizations of the type described in this case study, known in Indonesia as "community self-reliance promotion agencies" or *lembaga pengembang swadaya masyarakat*, which are

¹¹¹) These phenomena have cultural as well as economic roots. On one hand, many unmarried couples live together, without undergoing Christian or state marriages, to avoid the customary tradition of bride prices which had absorbed modern, more commercial, cash-economy values, making it practically impossible for the young students or fresh-out-of-school graduates to pay those prices. On the other hand, there also were elements of gender exploitation involved, because some students had a wife – or wives – to pay for the expenses of the student who was still studying. Finally, the limited access or knowledge about contraceptive techniques, and the breakdown of the old customary sexual taboos in the uprooted, cross-cultural urban settings, also resulted in a lot of pre-marital pregnancies, where the babies became the burden of the women – and their parents, who still supported their daughters in raising their initially unwanted babies.

founded by a group of citizens and only responsible to their founders,¹¹² are still a new phenomena in the outer islands in Indonesia. They tend to be perceived in terms of the older, more familiar institutions in the region, such as religious institutions, government agencies, charities, and private companies. A strong visible foreign presence in these organizations, especially coming from the country donating the funds and hiring the consultants to set up these organizations, might jeopardize the objective of creating indigenous institutions in those regions. Indigenous, not only in the sense of being managed by indigenes, but also in the sense of being "rooted" in the local web of governmental and non-governmental organizations, supported by those already existing organizations and local resources. Hence, it might even be worthwhile in the future to explore ways to minimize the role of non-indigenes by having them serve more in an advisory capacity¹¹³ and less in leadership roles, to lessen the problems of succession and to speed up the process of encouraging the organization to extend its roots within the local social fabric.

(2). To familiarize the opinion leaders in the provinces, where new LPSMs are being set up, more opportunities need to be created to get those opinion leaders to get acquainted with the operation of these new

112) Another indicator of the novelty of this type of NGOs was the frequent question which YPMD Irian Jaya staff-persons had to answer: "*Organisasi ini di bawah mana?*" [Under what office falls this organization?]

113) A concrete example is the Asia Foundation consultant who is currently assisting Yayasan Alpha Omega's training program in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara.

varieties of NGOs in other provinces. These opinion leaders should consist of government officials, university officials, church and other religious officials, who might otherwise see the emergence of LPSMs as a threat to their own institutions.

(3). All the expectations, pre-conceived feelings, and stereotypes nurtured by the consultants assigned to help set up new LPSMs in the outer islands, should be addressed seriously in specially designed sessions held at the consultants' placement organization's headquarters. These type of sessions should be undertaken prior, during, and after the assignment periods of the consultants attached to those 'outer islands' LPSMs.¹¹⁴ If this "accompanying process" can be done in a continuing and open mode,¹¹⁵ than a lot of frustration build-up could be avoided, and the organization placing the consultant or volunteer could learn much more from persons being

114) In my experience, I have found that my Asia Foundation superiors were more interested in 'cold' financial reports and the time sheets required by US-AID, than in continuously helping me to solve the stresses and strains which I had to encounter in the field. This was partially due to the conflict of opinion between the Asia Foundation's bosses themselves on whether to continue or close down the Irian Jaya 'project,' especially after various political problems started to emerge. Besides, it was also because the foundation itself had no prior experience in setting up a brand-new LPSM in the outer islands, where the resources, experiences, and models to compare were not so abundant as in Java. So in that sense, this whole thesis could be viewed as a 'de-briefing' session, after the one and only briefing session I have had with the Asia Foundation, prior to my assignment in Irian Jaya.

115) During my assignment in Irian Jaya, I knew or felt that I was closely monitored by my superiors in Jakarta, but more on a staggered, behind-my-back fashion, where everytime anybody from the organization's steering committee or advisory and supervisory boards visited the Asia Foundation's office in Jakarta, there would be a 'secret' session to evaluate my work. Similarly, when officials from the foundation visited Jayapura, there would also be closed sessions where more time and opportunities were given to listen to my evaluators, than to the person hired as the Asia Foundation consultant in the region.

placed in the field. This practice could be invaluable for further and future programs.¹¹⁶

116) For instance, the Asia Foundation's current ventures into other outer island provinces which have had much less exposure to non-governmental development agencies than East Nusa Tenggara or Irian Jaya, such as Central Sulawesi and Central Kalimantan, where the foundation has repeated its Aceh and Irian Jaya experiences by approaching the local state universities.