



Info

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Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation

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Shalom,

On this special edition of INFO JPIC, we share with you the thoughts and experiences of VIVAT International members from Flores, Indonesia; prepared in Indonesian by Alex Ganggu SVD & Hiero Api SVD, translated into English and presented at the 60th Annual United Nations IDP/NGO Conference, New York 5 –7 September 2007 by Paul Rahmat SVD.

*Secretary:
Hiero Api SVD*

Human Rights and Good Practices in the Face of Climate Change

It is my pleasure to share with you the practices of environmental conservation in the context of sustainable development at this 60th annual DPI/NGO Conference of the United Nations.

What I'm going to share here is mainly based on the work of VIVAT members for years on the Island of Flores, Eastern Indonesia.

1. Background – Vulnerable Context

The topography of the island of Flores consists of mountains, hills, valleys, forests and savannah. At times, the island is faced with droughts, and then in certain geographical regions, the land appears barren and desolate.

VIVAT members in Flores have initiated projects of nature conservation for decades. The initiatives were established to respond to the vulnerable conditions in the areas

where droughts and famine often threatened the lives of many poor traditional farmers and their families. Because of these environmental problems, the members of VIVAT have been motivated and encouraged to develop new initiatives to conserve forests and agricultural lands, and to protect water resources.

2. Nature Conservation in the Context of Sustainable Development

Since 1994, VIVAT members have been involved in programs of environmental conservation. These programs were considered to be the best practices in saving the “mother earth” at the time. The programs emerged in various forms such as reforestation, land

terracing (terasering) and sustainable agriculture (pertanian lestari).

Later on the environmental conservation was developed and integrated with the sustainable development programs, particularly after the Bali meeting of 2002. On behalf of VIVAT International, Alex Ganggu attended the Preparation Committee Meeting for World Summit of Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Bali, Indonesia from May 27 to June 7,

2002. This special world event inspired and motivated him to seriously take care of ecological issues. “Sharing of experiences, thoughts, ideas and meeting people from various

corners of the world at the special event make me “crazy” about ecological ministry,” said Alex.

3. Outputs

In addressing the issue of protracted droughts and famine in Flores, the VIVAT groups have practiced the following programs and activities:

3.1. *Terasering*

VIVAT groups have terraced the sides of mountains to provide extra growing areas, and at the same time have conserved the run off water so it is controlled for maximum usage. Also, trees are configured and planted in groups of threes, to avoid soil erosion and to



further assist in the protection of water conservation. The tools being presently used by the farmers are rather simple implements, such as hoes and machetes.

Terasing projects have covered about 1,000 ha located in the districts of Ende, Flores. In doing these projects, VIVAT groups have worked with the local communities (traditional farmers) in partnering with the local NGOs (i.e. Tanah Nua Flores Foundation, Tani Membangun Foundation, and Flores Integrated Resources Development) and foreign Institutes such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Miserior.



Notably, the role of local governments, such as village chiefs and District government (i.e. District Agricultural Department), is crucially important. Indeed, the local governments are responsible for enabling the projects to take place, and VIVAT members undertook these projects in constant consultation with the local governments and customary leaders (*mosalaki*).

3.2. *Wanatani* concept - Integrated Farming

“*Wanatani*” is a concept introduced by foreign NGOs like OXFAM and applied and socialized by local NGOs and church institutions to farmers in Flores. *Wana* means forest and *tani* denotes farm. It is a model for cultivating integrated farming. Practically, the farming is

composed of three components which simultaneously support each other and generate an agriculture which is ecologically sound, economically productive and socially just. The three components are namely; forests, food plantations, and livestock. By planting grasses, for example, used for livestock, which produces organic compost for fertilizing plantations which increases the productivity of

foods, the cycle of integrated farming will remarkably improve farmers income.

VIVAT members have already promoted the concept of “*wanatani*” to 20 groups of farmers, consisting of 15 to 20 persons per group.

3.3. Reforestation of the indigenous people’s forest

This program has aimed at motivating and encouraging the indigenous people to plant forests on their customary land for domestic use, such as wood for constructing their houses. As a result, they will not use and damage conservation forests.

To this end VIVAT teams have approached and consulted with the customary leaders and people in building consent and motivation so they are more participative in the program. These are new initiatives introduced by VIVAT groups to the people of Flores.

Up to now they have planted approximately 20,000 trees, using a plant rotation system (*tumpang sari*). VIVAT members suggested the

farmers plant the trees of *jati* or *mahoni* in combination with coffee plantation. While the trees provide wood for house construction, they also protect coffee plantation.

4. Access to clean water

VIVAT groups promoted three programs in providing an access to clean water; namely, water piping programs, excavation of ground water, and renewal of water resources. National and international NGOs as well as the Indonesian government immediately adopted the model. The programs, however, seemed to be ineffective because the volume (capacity) of water resources are becoming quite small, and are even completely dry in many places.

People realize that the key problem was not just access to clean water, but lack of water resources altogether. Inspired by global warming discourses and the impacts of climate change issued by the United Nations, and in collaborating with other local NGOs and district and local governments, VIVAT members are promoting programs of renewing and sustaining water sources.

In the last two years they have constantly given consultative criticism and assistance to 10 regions (*desa*) to encourage people to care for and sustain water sources by planting trees around the water sources. In the long term, the

programs of water source renewal will be integrated with the project of installing water piping.

5. People's participation and contribution

These programs involve local people as main **stakeholders from the project's planning and assessment** until its implementation and evaluation. At the beginning, people shared their concerns, problems, needs and hopes. Their concerns and needs are shared and applied to VIVAT committees. VIVAT team visits the project location, does a small survey and talks with the local government, customary



leaders and populace. At the same time VIVAT offers a form of application (proposal) for the project.

People are asked for contributions in implementing the project. Besides participation in the project planning, people's contribution is mainly labor, which is paid based on the national standard of minimum wages and consumption during work days. Evaluation of the project is usually combined with a **people's**

festival. At the same time a new committee is formed and delegated to take care of sustainability of the project. Local governments and religious leaders are present in launching the new project. Their representation signifies recognition of the project by local authorities as well as shows the good relationship and collaboration with them.

6. Collaboration - from single fighters to cooperation and partnership

Almost two or three decades ago, many Organizations in Flores including VIVAT groups did their development projects alone.



The exclusive projects of local church institutions are enabled by close relationships to funding institutions such as Misserior in Germany and CRS in the US. This mentality of exclusivity influenced the Indonesian government under the New Order regime which conducted rural development through **President's Aids Programs (BANPRES)** funded by abundant petrol-dollars. Meanwhile the role of non-governmental organizations was

undermined in line with the lack of democratic growth in Indonesia at the time.

The situation has changed since the advent of democratization. Access to worldwide information by local communities is increasing and interaction between local, national and global communities and organizations is widely open. These advantages have significantly affected the relationship and collaboration between government and civil societies, including VIVAT groups.

In the case of VIVAT's initiatives on sustainable development mentioned above, VIVAT's members attempt to build close collaboration with the key stakeholders both district government and village chiefs, customary

leaders, as well as local, national and international NGOs. VIVAT constantly consults with the district governments and local authorities in initiating specific projects such as clean water, *terasering*, and reforestation of **people's forest**. VIVAT often ask the district governments and local NGOs to provide technical assistance for **VIVAT's projects**.

On the other hand, the local governments and NGOs also often invite VIVAT members to participate in the critical analysis, motivational and educational activities with target groups (stakeholders) that are part of the projects initiated by these local governments and NGOs.

In last three years, for example, VIVAT groups and local NGOs in consulting with the district government of Ende have organized an annual farmers assembly (*Musyawahar Petani*),

attended by between 300 - 500 people. The annual assembly is a movement aimed at **increasing people's consciousness of their own rights** in the context of democracy and development. The farmers learn to see and realize that sustainable development programs offered by governments and NGOs affecting their lives and their families are not charity projects of the institutions, but is better viewed in terms of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

7. Reflections - Lessons learned

These stories about **VIVAT's initiatives in Flores, Indonesia** in facing environmental challenges highlight some of the insights and lessons we have learnt.

- Millennium Development Goals.* In coping with the environmental problems causing droughts and famine in Flores, VIVAT members have strived to fulfill the Millennium Goals 1 statement to: **“eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.”** The extreme poverty faced by people in Flores is caused in part by such environmental disasters as drought, land degradation, and lack of water resources. VIVAT groups have strived to reduce famine and poverty



through innovative programs of land terracing and integrated farming.

- Sustainable development.* The Millennium Goals (7) also emphasize sustainable development, referring to the **“reverse loss of environmental resources”** and also to **“people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.”** Long before the UN declared the Millennium Goals in 2000, the members of VIVAT in Flores had taken many initiatives for nature conservation and sustainable development. Millennium Goals declarations, however, and the UN special world events give renewed encouragement to the VIVAT members at the grassroots community. Alex Ganngu, one of the VIVAT members who attended the Preparation Committee Meeting for the World Summit of Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Bali, Indonesia from May 27 to June 7, 2002, is an example of someone who was so inspired by the event that he

became very much involved in promoting ecological issues relating to sustainable development.

- *Human rights.* Access to foods and drinkable water is one of rights of people, especially those who live in extreme poverty. The document “**Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: the Rights of the Poor**” clearly states this;

done at the grassroots level through wanatani - integrated farming and renewal of water source advocates the rights of the

poor in accessing drinkable water and nutritious foods.



“persons living in extreme poverty have a **right to drinkable water**” (G); and “Every Human being has a rights to adequate, appropriate, healthy food and is entitled not to be exposed to the risk of hunger or **starvation**” (E). What VIVAT members have

VIVAT members in Flores have participated in implementing global concerns and undertaken their responsibilities in eradicating extreme poverty, promoting sustainable development, as well advocating human rights as mandated by the United Nations.***