

KASBI-AMRC, August 5,2010 Informal Economy Workers Organizing

This second follow up workshop was aimed to capture the organizing strategies developed to organize informal economy workers and structure all the experiences into a manual/learning material for organizers and workers. The workshop in Solo, Central Java Province was attended by 25 workers from eight informal workers organizations encompassing various sectors in informal economy such as waste pickers, street singers and hawkers, fishermen and peasants. All organizations are affiliated to KASBI. In this workshop, Semut Ireng (Waste Pickers Organization) and SKoBB (Flood Victims Solidarity Group-A Community Group) shared their experiences in organizing informal workers and community.

We Demand our Constitutional Rights as Lawful Citizens



Community group meeting. The community is threatened to be relocated as they are accused of squatting used-to-be cemetery land

On the last year preliminary workshop on informal workers organizing held by KASBI and AMRC, Semut Ireng shared its experience in organizing waste pickers demanding to be recognized as workers. Later, the organizing work was also expanded to the community organizing, urban poor slum area where informal workers

dwelling. Semut Ireng itself has tried to build up a “collective situation” which is still at the very initial stage in which they tried to be independent from the market and State intervention. So far, the group has developed a small organic farm where the community learned how to make the fertilizer and grow the vegetables. Surely, this is aimed for community food sovereignty/ food self sufficiency. They also develop a small home based industry that is producing sort of environment friendly cooking stove. The main obstacles encountered here are access to land for expanding the community organic farming and capital and resources to fuel the economic effort.

The process does not stop here. The organizers then expanded the organizing work to other urban poor community such as Bengawan Solo riverbanks community and an urban poor community threatened to be evicted for squatting used-to-be cemetery land. The relocation, a terms propagated by State to evict the urban poor, is an issue triggering the organizing. In the context of informal economy workers, relocation means to be deprived from their livelihood or separated from their working place. During the discussion, the representatives from urban poor communities emphasizes their constitutional rights as citizens to be entitled to decent livelihood, access to natural resources such as water and land, equality before law etc. While the State keeps neglecting the existence and rights of informal economy workers, the workers must keep struggling for the betterment of living condition and striving for their constitutional rights as lawful citizens.

Workshop Methodology

In general, the workshop was divided into four sessions, those were the elaboration of waste pickers and community organizing, group discussions mapping the issues and lesson learned how to structure all information into a manual and the follow up process such as trying out the manual to elicit more inputs from the ground.



General Findings from Group Discussion

	Fishermen Association/Kendal District, Central java	Peasant Organization/	Community/Informal workers reside in slum area in Solo, Central Java
Issues	<p>The damaging impact of the industrial waste to the sea biodiversity</p> <p>The disappearance of mangrove forest adversely affects the livelihood of fishing communities. This is along with the disappearance of various fish species</p> <p>Law No 27/2007 giving concession to certain parties (individual, corporations etc) to obtain rights to utilize coastal area for specific purposes</p> <p>Fishermen are required to pay local tax (retribution) at the fish auction that is 5% of the sale revenue.</p>	<p>Excessive use of chemical fertilizers damaging the environment and leading to various new plant diseases—State policies in favor of fertilizer industry</p> <p>Free trade agreement – In the group discussion, the participants complained the over flowing imported agriculture products in the domestic market</p> <p>Limited access to land</p> <p>Land dispute and expropriation due to industrialization in rural area (plantation industry and the establishment of new factories/industrial zones)</p>	<p>Urban renewal planning— establishment of public flat which is intended for affordable housing yet this housing still unaffordable for informal workers dwelling in that area. The city mayor plans to relocate them.</p> <p>Government plan to repair the river dikes damaged by the flood. However, this plan comes along with urban renewal planning along the riverside threatening the livelihood of the community</p> <p>Compensation for the flood victims allocated in the Annual Regional Budget (APBD) has not been distributed</p> <p>Forced eviction</p>
Strategy	Reforestation of the Mangrove forest—this more like an initiative coming up from the fishermen association	Setting up a group/association/forum and developing organic farming to avoid market dependency	Setting up community organizations Regular meeting to discuss daily community issues Building an “independent” community

	Forming a forum/association – fishermen association—to discuss the daily issues and formulate strategies	In Boyolali district, a forum to accommodate dismissed workers and peasants is established. The forum tries to develop alternative economy by developing small “mushroom” (food processing) industry.	by introducing small organic farming for food self sufficiency The organizations have been fully aware of their bargaining power that they insist to have direct hearing/dialog with the mayor. They refused to be mediated by sub district chief or village chief.
Bargaining Target	Questioning the allocation of the local tax to fishery department —the government argues that the tax is for fishermen social protection and accident insurance. Nevertheless all accidents are never compensated. Questioning the local parliament on the beach privatization—giving concession to hotel industry or fishery/food processed industry to utilize the coastal area for industry purposes.	Local parliament (seen as State representative) National Agrarian Body	Local mayor—The organizations sought for class action against the mayor National Agrarian Body—Demanding the certification of land. Regular demonstration/protests serve as means of political education
Forms of Organization	Association/Fishermen Forum—The manpower office does not recognize it as workers’ organization.	Peasant Association	SKoBB (Community Organization—Solidarity of Flood Victims) Semut Ireng (Waste Pickers Organization—in practice, street singers and public transportation

			drivers also join the group) Anker (Community Organization—it was founded by the community accused as wild squatters as they dwell the used-to-be cemetery land. The government is planning to build public flats on that land)
How to improve the work/ lesson learnt	-- Organizing process consolidating fishermen forums in Java coastal area -- It is necessary to develop collective effort to fight for the rights to earn living and preserve the ecosystem (sustainable livelihood)	-- Linking up peasant movement with workers movement	--A need to come up with an alternative of urban planning which benefits informal economy workers --Political education to rise the critical awareness is necessary so that communities can push for participatory process in the making of public policies

Manual Structure and Method
Writing Process and Dissemination Method

Content wise	Process
Based on the stories uttered in the workshop, the participants agreed	After the group discussion, the facilitator help the participants

to map overall strategies and identify the common issues of fishermen, peasant, and informal economy workers.	conclude the process by explaining “the global factory” based on their stories—(basically to emphasize the capital penetration in every aspects of life) Later in the manual, we can put this in a very simple way encouraging cross sectors solidarity and alliance
Forms of organization, way to organize (consolidating people), maintaining the membership and how to expand the organizing scope.	This will be based on case studies
Bargaining Target and multi layered strategies	Based on case studies—The shortcomings will be put into the box to trigger further discussion
Manual tryout	The draft will be socialized to all groups .This is aimed at eliciting inputs from the groups to improve the draft

