

Towards sustainable and strong DW union with paid up membership building –

A report on reviving Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers Union in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

“If you want to have money for yourself, you need to save money! If you want benefit from the union, save money for the union.”

Heni, a leader and domestic worker

Tunas Mulia Domestic Workers Union is the first domestic workers union in Indonesia. It was established in 2003 by Rumpun Tjoet Njak Dien, a women NGO in Yogyakarta which organized domestic workers school and advocated for domestic workers’ rights at that time. The union has been standing and running on its own especially they have had no more financial support in the past 6 years. As an independent union with committed leaders, it is important to revive the union to be a model of sustainable union to other existing and future domestic workers unions, as well as in the building of a national federation of domestic workers unions in Indonesia. In view of this, IUF Asia Pacific is supporting the union from 2012-14 to revive the union in organizing with paid up membership, more leaders, as well as a solid union structure.

Main Achievements:

Step by step, the union has made the following achievements in the 9 months’ period from July 2012 to March 2013.

Reactivating members gatherings on community basis

The union has now reactivated its members’ regular gatherings in six community groupings, “*OPERATAs*” with an average of 24.1 members attending each one of the union’s monthly gatherings. In total 170 members are attending the union’s activities on monthly basis.

Bringing up new leaders

In each *OPERATA*, there are at least 3-5 committed and active leaders. These leaders are now running the *OPERATAs* on their own, including maintaining regular meetings, collecting membership fee and recruitment of membership. Together with the existing ones, the union has 20 leaders.

Increase of paid up membership and membership fee increase

The union has been collecting membership fee from members. There is an increase of paid up membership from about 100 before July 2012 to 300 by March 2013. The membership fee has been increased to IDR8,000 (USD0.80) per month, including IDR6,000 for *OPERATAs*' services (saving cooperatives and social fund) and activities; IDR2,000 for central union (IDR1,000 for Tunas Mulia and IDR1,000 for the national federation to be built).

Better financial and administrative recording

At each *OPERATA*, financial report is being presented at every monthly members' gathering.

Joint labour platform advocating for domestic workers' rights

Another important achievement is labour networking in Yogyakarta. Concerns on domestic workers are being taken up by a newly formed joint platform of labour movement in Yogyakarta.

Highlights of Activities:

***OPERATAs* – organizing in the communities**

The union has restructured its grassroot organization. At the moment, the union has 10 *OPERATAs* and 6 of them have monthly gatherings with stable leadership. They are: Melati I, Melati II, Melati III, Jambusari, Sumberan and Bener. The union leaders actively meet domestic workers in the communities. As the union leaders are domestic workers themselves, other domestic workers feel more comfortable to be open to them. Leaders invite workers to union activities which are organized in the home places of domestic workers. It has been always difficult to get the full time, live-in domestic workers to join union activities, so the union

and *OPERATA* leaders meet and discuss with them at markets where workers are doing shopping for their employers.

Each *OPERATA* held discussion and agreed on the role of leadership, membership fee, topics of meetings and plans. Some *OPERATAs* also have sharings on how to do small business to improve members' economic situation. They are developing saving cooperatives and social fund to assist members in need. Members reflected that after they joined the union, they were able to have economic independence and thus be able to negotiate with their husbands to do their own activities. Domestic workers learn among themselves on the rights. They become more confident. If an *OPERATA* has more new members, the union brings in members and leaders from other *OPERATAs* to have sharings. This method is very effective as it is domestic workers speaking to domestic workers on workers' rights and the importance of union.

Raising awareness of domestic workers on payment of membership fee

The union leaders have been making lots of effort to explain why members need to pay membership fee, especially in *OPERATAs* where workers are used to have NGOs' support and activities are covered with food and transport allowance. To get members to pay membership fee, the union has been trying to let domestic workers be able to learn and have their own process to understand the benefit to join the union. When the union leaders face workers who are still reluctant to pay membership fee, the union leaders explain with examples. Heni, a leader of the union, told the workers, "If you want money for yourself, you need to save money." Then the workers understand immediately.

Alliance Building and Joint Activities: Indonesia Domestic Workers Day on 15th February and May Day.

The union, together with JPPRTDIY, the Yogyakarta Network on Domestic Workers Advocacy and Jalaprt, the national domestic workers network, organized a series of activities to commemorate the Indonesia Domestic Workers Day on and around the 15th February such as public dialogue on the Domestic Workers Bill and C189, mass action and radio talk. Over 100 domestic workers participated in the activities. Similar joint activities were held on the May Day. All these have led to increased visibility of domestic workers in the region.

Coming up work

The union leaders are delighted and proud to see the development of the union. In the next stage, the union will discuss and decide on the role and work of the new leaders in the core activities in the union.

The union will continue to do organizing on community level, including to reactivate the other three OPERATAs, OPERATA Gunung Sempu, UPN and Perumbahan Jambu Sari. We must make sure more domestic workers are organized in order to have a strong voice and representation.

On training and education, together with Jala PRT (the national network on domestic workers' advocacy) and *JPPRT DIY*, the union will develop model and steps to re-build domestic workers school later in this year in Yogyakarta.

Finally, together with all members of the national networks on domestic workers, Jala PRT, KAPPRT - BM, JARAK etc, the union will continuously making strong effort to get a domestic workers bill to be adopted this October in the parliament. We must get it successfully adopted before the General Election in April next year. With a new Parliament, all processes will have to be re-started again and it would lead to long delay in adopting a domestic workers bill.