

Nias Islands' Rural Access and Capacity Building Project

Human story – A simple woman who is able to transform Nias

Aries Zebua is a young woman, 24 years old, and is from Nias. Several years ago she managed to complete her high school education and then began working in a local contractor company. Two years passed by, after which Aries decided to move to Medan. Here she worked at the Polonia Airport as part of the cargo handling crew for 3 years, before she finally was asked to return home by her family.

But Aries wanted more out of life – she wanted a job and she wanted to contribute to the development of her community. She heard that an international organization called the International Labour Organization (ILO) was conducting training for road supervisors.

As a Nias-born woman striving to improve her skills and contribute to the development of her community, Aries enrolled herself in the course. She was challenged by the fact that so many positions for road supervisors on Nias were dominated by men from big cities, such as Medan or even Jakarta. She also realized that there were only a limited number of road supervisors on Nias, which ultimately resulted in many road construction projects producing roads that were of a substandard quality. Aries then set her heart to initiate a change that would topple the status quo.

The Course for Road Construction Works Supervisor started on June 22, 2010. The total num-

ber of short-listed participants was 18 (eighteen), comprising of 12 (twelve) men and 6 (six) women. Aries was among those short listed.

The Supervisor Course comprises 3 (three) phases namely: (a) Introduction Course which lasted for 1 (one) month. During this phase, participants are introduced to the technical concepts. (b) Basic Course which is delivered over a 3 (three) month period, with most of the time spend in the field. (c) Apprenticeship for a period of 6 (six) months with local contractors performing road constructions for ILO projects. Aries has managed to complete the Introduction Course and is currently spending most of her time in 'on the job training' with her instructors in the field. The Training Engineer for this project is Mr. Enardson Layang. He is impressed with the spirits of Aries and her colleagues. "I feel moved by the spirits that these young people show. Especially Aries. Her ambition is to be a contractor someday."

Aries is a simple woman with the hope and desire to improve her life. However, she has an incredible motivation to contribute to the development of Nias with the skills that she is currently learning. She has learnt on how to select the quality materials and how to make checks for quality assurance – she is without a doubt on her way to becoming a skilled road construction supervisor. Indeed she is an incredible woman.

Nias-RACBP supports the Government of Indonesia's Nias Continuation of Post-tsunami Reconstruction Programme until July 2012. Nias-RACBP is funded by the Multi Donor Fund for Aceh and Nias (USD 11.8 million) and is executed jointly by the State Ministry for the Acceleration of Development in Backward Regions and the ILO in 5 districts on Nias Islands. Nias-RACBP supports improvements in rural transport infrastructure in selected areas using a local-resourced approach, so that the people of Nias Islands can benefit from enhanced participation in markets and enhanced access to services.

