

A great transformation of a young entrepreneur in Maluku, Ambon

By Lucky F. Lumingkewas, Provincial Programme Coordinator of EAST Project, and Gita Lingga, Communications Officer, ILO-Jakarta.

Sarmin, 18 years old, is one of the victims during the conflict in Ambon, Maluku. When coming back to his village in 2008, after being imprisoned for four years, he did not know what he was going to do. His future was uncertain. Yet, his life was changed dramatically when he followed the steps of his friends to join a community learning centre, PKBM Bougenville.

"The learning centre has changed my life. The trainings have provided me with an opportunity to develop and enhance my life skills, in particular my personal and social skills. I also learnt about my rights on education and skills training," he said adding that he also liked the participative learning method applied by the tutors. "The tutors encourage all of the students, including me, to be active and express ourselves and opinions freely."

PKBM Bougenville is established and managed in collaboration with the ILO through its Education and Skills Training for Youth (EAST) Project. The tutors have been trained using the ILO's training packages, such as Rights, Responsibility and Representative (R3) and Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media (SCREAM). These training packages focus on improving the life skills of children, in particular out of school children.

After completing the training, Sarmin decided to start his own business. He combined the clay pot creation skills that he learnt in prison with the life skills training that he gained from the learning centre. He was able to produce one clay pot per day and every ten days he sold them to a local market in Ketapang West Seram with a price ranging from Rp 25.000 – Rp 50.000 per piece, depending on the size and the complexity.

Not only succeeded in earning a B package certificate, a government non formal educational programme that is equal to junior high school, Sarmin was also one of the 20 trainers participated in the ILO's competency based training held in Ambon in December 2009. Recently, he facilitated a similar training for 20 out of school youth in his village on 14 January 2010 for three months. He has also dedicated his time to provide motivation and encouragement for, in particular, out of school and unemployed youth to not stop learning and reaching for a better future.

"My goal now is to help out of school youth starting their businesses. I know what they feel and what they have been through. I had been there, not knowing what to do and what I need is only an opportunity to prove who I really am and what I am potential for. And, my dream is to give others, especially the out of school youth, the same opportunity and hope," he said.

To date, he still cannot believe a great transformation that he has gone through—from an uneducated and unemployed man with an uncertain future to a skilled entrepreneur with a bright future ahead of him. "I still cannot believe it myself. It is just like a dream," he said.