

“Nyeki Awa Loh Halok, Nyape Awalok Hat”

By Gita F. Lingga, Communications Officer of ILO-Jakarta

“The programme not only gave me knowledge, but it also gave me a chance to expand my business by helping me with a loan,” said Serlina Wenda, a coffee milling entrepreneur in Jayawijaya. When joining the ILO’s Entrepreneurship Skills Development (ILO-ESD) programme in 2009, Serlina had been an established entrepreneur, with a coffee milling business that had run for more than a decade. But she believed that her business knowledge needed to be updated and developed.

Commenced in January 2009, the ILO-ESD project was recently ended in September 2010 with 625 entrepreneurs trained in basic entrepreneurship skills using the principles of the ILO’s training package—Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET Ahead). The GET Ahead module not only focuses on administration, finance and marketing, but it also provides opportunities for women to speak out hence giving them a voice.

The Project aimed to contribute to the poverty reduction programme, with specific attention to women in the three regencies of Jayawijaya, Lani Jaya and Yahukimo in the Papua Highlands, one of the poorest regions in Papua. It also aimed to facilitate community entrepreneurship skills development activities primarily for indigenous Papuans women.

In addition, the project has made significant achievements given the challenges and gender inequality that exist in the central highlands. The number of target beneficiaries exceeded the original plan to reach 250 entrepreneurs. The training has also successfully met the gender specific targets as 70 percent participants (437) were women and 137 people were trained as trainers.

The training materials admittedly enriched and refreshed her mind. The new knowledge gained evidently significantly improved her finance management skills. As an experienced entrepreneur, the training coincided with her needs, that is, in the area of administration. Moreover, ILO-EDS also facilitated access for entrepreneurs to microfinance institutions. “I am grateful for this,” Serlina said. “This is real.”

Although today she is an established businesswoman, Serlina’s success as a coffee milling entrepreneur did not come overnight. She had to endure long and tiring days to be able to sell the coffee. Before the business took off, Serlina was constantly frustrated and felt hopeless for not being able to fulfil her family’s basic needs. Life was unbearable for her as she had to feed so many dependants: a husband, a grandmother, a sister, and six children.

“Everyday, I went out to meet the new neighbours, crawling. I told them that I wanted to start a business making coffee, but my coffee was scattered. I did not know how to manage it. They only said how pitiful I was,” she said, remembering her long journey to be a successful entrepreneur.

Now this is far behind her, even though initially she didn’t know how to meet and expand her market. She only sold the products to the people she knew. She even asked her children to help sell the coffee. Her business began running better over time and profit continued to grow.

In addition to re-injecting some of the profit back into the business, some was allocated for her son’s education. After 16 years of doing business, Serlina could finally send some of her family members to college, and several have since graduated. Narrating an old proverb, Serlina spoke of the motivation and achievements that the ILO-EDS project has provided: ‘Nyeki Awa Loh Halok, Nyape Awalok Hat.’ ‘If the hand does nothing, the mouth will be not chewing’. (*)