

“Now, I can afford my children’s education”

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

“This training changed my mindset,” said Yulia Walilo, a honey bee entrepreneur in Lani Jaya. Participating in the ILO’s Entrepreneurship Skills Development (ILO-ESD) project last year, Yulia was able to gain new knowledge through the GET Ahead module. For Yulia, one thing was for sure: she became much more confident in her ability to run her enterprise as she began to gain the financial and management skills needed to advance her business.

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.

Her increased self-confidence matters a lot to her. Before getting into the honey bee farming business, Yulia experienced many ups and downs in business. She used to run a small stall, selling candy, soaps, cooking oil, etc. However, few buyers paid in cash and her business went broke. She tried to re-open the same business but it only lasted for three weeks.

In 1996, her husband participated in bee farming training, a starting point for Yulia to run her new business. She asked a colleague of hers to join the business and share the profit. Orders were always on call. She delivered the product to buyers either by motorcycle or by car. By selling the honey, Yulia was able to meet her family’s daily needs, and save some money for her children’s education. “Now, I can afford my children’s education.”

Some money was allocated from her business to allow her to begin studying in tertiary education. “I thought that because I now have my own business, I’d better to get a better education on how to manage the finances,” Yulia said after having recently graduated from college. This thirst for knowledge was the reason that Yulia was so enthusiastic to join the ILO-EDS programme.

Despite being one of the richest regions in Indonesia, Papua has one of the worst economies with 41.8 per cent of its population living below the poverty line. Papua also has one of the lowest Human Development Indexes with very low gender equality. The indigenous Papuans constitutes an estimated 66 per cent of the Papua region’s total population of 2.3 million.

Indigenous women are the most affected by these conditions, which are the cumulative results of underdevelopment. Whilst some women have engaged in agricultural business, their poorer education levels hinder their ability to improve their business and income generating practices. Most women, for example, do not even know the value of vegetables, let alone understand how to set reasonable prices, and thus merely sell vegetables from their gardens. (*)