

Weaving for Life:

a collaboration programme of Lawe and GEF SGP Indonesia



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have you ever heard the word of Molo?

Molo is located in Timor Tengah Selatan regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Unlike other areas in the province that are dry and arid, Molo is very cool and cold. Lush green trees and grasses adorn in many of this region. It is located in the highlands of Mutis, where there is a spring of four major rivers in the southern side of the island of Timor.

Houses in Molo has a garden and are located in adjacent. These villages are surrounded by gardens, fields, and forests on the outer boundary. Molo communities depend a lot on forests. They are using the forest as source for traditional medicines, their fulfillment of daily needs such as firewood, food for cattle and timber. They also use plants for traditional medicine. Leaves and bark of the trees are the most widely used, in addition to the sap, roots and the wood. The woods that can't be utilized, are used as firewood.

However, the policy of local government's forestry has destroyed customary forests and farms. Big trees were cut down and replaced by mahogany, teak, gemilia and acacia. Then the government also provides mining licenses to mining companies to extract marble stones in the hills that are guarded and considered as sacred by the people. As a result, the water catchment areas are disturbed thus landslides and regular flood happened there.

The community rejected the attempts of destruction in their region by casting the mining companies out. Community of Molo, Amanuban and Amanatun were united to stop marmer mining in the region of Naususu, Anjaf and Nuadi, Fatukoto and Ajaobaki villages. Unfortunately, there is still one hill, Naetapan in Tunua Village, which is still extracted by mining companies.

Women and Weaving

Women and weaving became an integral part in Molo and in the surrounding regions, such as Amanuban and Amanatun. In their spare time, the women produce wicker from woven clothes. It is a tradition that has been handed down from generations in Molo's women. For the women there, weaving has a very important meaning because it determines the future. In the past, women should be able to weave to get a husband. However, currently, there is not many of Molo's girls are adept at weaving.



Motives of woven clothes in Molo and the surrounding area are very diverse. One's tribe can be identified through the pattern and motives of the woven clothes. The typical motives are birds, geckos, crocodiles and kaif (hooked diamond). The process of woven clothes is quite time consuming, especially if the clothes are made of planted cotton. It may reach to one month. But currently, they combined cotton with the yarn.

In the past, they took dyeing material from the fallow and forests to give coloring to the cotton. Fruit and roots of mengkudu (*Morinda citrifolia*) and bark of pines for red color. Fiber of nira (*Indigofera tinctoria* L) for black color, turmeric for yellow and forests' beans for green.

Now woven clothes are rarely made. Especially clothing from usual cotton are so easily purchased and the price are very cheap. Materials to make woven clothes are also increasingly difficult to obtain.

The mothers are starting to get anxious. Woven clothes are not only heat insulator for them. But the clothes also bring people closer to the customs and the natural environment. They began to revive their knowledge and skill to weave in Ningkam Haumeni Festival. They are also determined to restore the areas being damaged by mining and forestry activities.





Nausus hill area becomes a collective learning area for all indigenous peoples. Knowledge on weaving, local farming and seasonal changes are shared. Every people present at the Festival were required to use traditional clothing.

They continued to learn at the learning center at Nausus hill. Traditional houses from the area of Amanuban, Amanatun, Leloboko, Fatukoto, Lelobatan, Fatumnasi, Tune and

Bonleu stood there. This learning center is also equipped with collection of farms with local food diversity, demonstration plots of crops and medicinal plants, display rooms of motives of woven clothes, land, to trees required to make weaver.

In August 2010, the first Ningkam Haumeni Festival was implemented. Seven groups from Lelobatan, Fatukoto, Leloboko, Tune, South Amanuban and South Amanatun performed their skills of spinning and weaving cotton. In the second festival in 2011, 20 weaving groups from 10 villages participated. Through this group, local knowledge and history on weaving continue to be developed.



To help complement the facilities and infrastructures of the learning center, awareness-raising activities were carried out, with the title of "Weaving for Life".



Tenun untuk Kehidupan(Weaving for Life) Programme



'Tenun untuk Kehidupan' (literally translated as weaving for life) in Molo, East Nusa Tenggara is developed to extend the natural-dye program in Jogjakarta that was supported by GEF SGP Indonesia in 2009. It is a series of social concern activities that introduce motives of woven clothes from Molo, Amanatun, and Amanuban; three districts located in Timor Tengah Selatan, East Nusa Tenggara to the world outside East Nusa Tenggara. The program echoes the voices of the mothers who strive for their territory through the woven clothes they produced in three kampongs. This time, Weaving for Life uses fashion approaches and collaborates with three young designers from Yogyakarta. Sounding the voices of women in eastern part of Indonesia through up dated designs by using local woven. Woven clothes tells a story of the spirit of women who want to keep growing along with their local knowledge. This movement is expected to become a collective property, the collective voice of women from eastern Indonesian who care about the local and environmentally-friendly culture and wisdom. This is a movement that is able to choose the source of livelihood that does not damage, because "we do not sell things that we can't produce."

Some clothing designs are exhibited and sold during Inacraft, a meeting place of buyers and sellers of national and international scale in Jakarta. Later, the clothes designed by integrating the local striated woven clothes will be displayed in several fashion shows in Jakarta and surrounding areas.

a glimpse of Lawe



Indonesia's woven clothes are exquisite. Each region has its own uniqueness in colors and patterns. Perhimpunan Lawe appreciates this highly and foresees the large opportunity for Indonesia's traditional weaving tapping into the market. Therefore, Lawe transform those clothes into modern and functional products. Through this kind of production, they are more utilized, have wide range of functions, and moreover, it opens up employments for tailors and artisans.

Lawe was established in 2004 in Yogyakarta, one of the provinces in Java island, with mission to lift Indonesian hand-woven fabrics that started to decline by involving woman's group as weavers and artisans. As the initial step, Lawe was developing products using lurik, a typical woven fabric from Yogyakarta. Lawe develops and transforms these lurik into daily functional products such as bags, wallets, hats, and many more. To do so, they worked with many stakeholders including individuals with similar visions,



prominent persons in Yogyakarta, designers, organizations working with woman and culture, and many more.

In manifesting their dream to develop traditional weaving and to empower Indonesian women, Lawe is developing Sisterhood program. This is a breakthrough program in building a network, movement and in running business. Lawe embraces women from other region who have the same concern; developing their traditional weaving in their own regions. Lawe realizes that without involving women from other regions, the movement of developing



traditional weaving will take longer time. Sisterhood is also a facilitation program for women sisters who love weaving. Lawe, along with Sisterhood, are developing modern and ready to use products from traditional weaving clothes in each of their regions, facilitating the development of design and production, developing joint markets and opening up

discussions among sisters where learning and sharing occurred. Lawe understands that Sisterhood will have or interdependency and try to do joint activities in these following aspects: the supply of 'creative products'; joint marketing; sisterhood development; and Innovative inspiration and transfer of know-how. One of sisterhood programme is Tenun untuk Kehidupan (Weaving for Life) Programme.

Uniqueness and the added value (that buyers are helping to develop traditional weaving and the artisans who are mostly women when they buy our products) offered by Lawe is Lawe's own hallmarks compared to similar product in the market. Current buyers need to feel touched to finally buy things and the quantity of those buyers (Lawe called them as Smart Buyers) are still many in craft market. This is such an opportunity for Lawe. Supports from various parties (such as network of micro and small business, government, media group, private sectors, etc) to Lawe's vision that upheld traditional weaving and empower women are the



opportunity for Lawe to keep running the business. Besides of the opportunity, Lawe also faces several risks in developing the business. Swift change of trend of buyers and products cheap imitation are some of them.



The market created by Lawe is a unique market. Each product marketed not only means a product being produced but also a better livelihood for every supporting actor. Some actors are traditional weavers, artisans, Lawe associations, Sisterhood (which is supported by some other traditional weavers and artisans). Products competitors will be very variants and easily enter products' market, however they will not enter into the market already created by Lawe. Most business people in handicraft products only purely think of business interests. That is different to Lawe, when most of the profits are used for capacity building of the artisans, weavers, and several other women's groups.

Lawe's long term objectives are the creation of welfare for weavers or producers of traditional weaving, for tailors and artisans and for the Sisterhood of Lawe; the availability of traditional weaving with top quality; the providence of employment for artisans and tailors and the creation of successful social entrepreneurs.

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