

WOMEN PEACE TABLE AMBON

Indonesia

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"Peace will start from ourselves. Then our community should follow" said Milla a young woman survivor from family of Batu Merah community, the Muslim compound where all riots started in 1999, Ambon City, Mollucan island, some 3 hours flight away from Jakarta city, Indonesia.

PWAG Indonesia has conducted one day women peace table, as 10 years jubilee of PWAG international network. The meeting which was attended by 25 participants, from 4 different villages in post-conflict area Ambon city, some 3 hours flight from Jakarta capital city of Indonesia. In 1999, the bloody riots and turmoil in Ambon, started by youth brawl within Batu Merah area (an area in City of Ambon), which then led with hundreds of people died and thousand displaced following years from there. The Christian residence of Batu Merah was forced to flee to another village, called Kayu Tiga, where it used to be an empty hill forest.

"I think conflict should be "fought", should not be silenced. But we have to fight and faced it to protect our own rights." Said Mrs. Othe Patty, a survivor of Batu Merah and now had been a residence of Kayu Tiga area for more than 13 years. Othe Patty is one among many women survivors who now become activists, organise women community gathering and also counselor for victims of violence against women. Othe Patty shared in women peace table, her years of effort to bridge dialogue between the Muslim residence and Christian residence just two years after the riots. She was one of the women who bravely visited Batu Merah area, just couple of years after conflict, which was considered a non-Christian zone and fear by many Christian's residence.

Miss Linda, also one of survivor from Kayu Tiga, shared how she just recently in 2015 visited her friends and relatives in Batu Merah area. She was scared and traumatized by the conflict. This situation was also felt by the women in Waiheru area and Air Salobar area, which also still bring tears to their eyes every time they shared stories from the past.

The Women Peace Table Ambon, was actually the first kind of gathering of grassroots women affected by conflict in Ambon, especially for women of

Batu Merah and women of Kayu Tiga, which actually was before neighbours but now forced to be separately. Most of them conveyed that they're good neighbours and that people live peacefully before 1909. They don't understand what was the problem started the conflict. They were weaponry and shooting (sniper) and the only people who had the weapon access is usually only military. Civilians don't have access to the weapon or even bomb.

The women peace table was also attended by Lian Gogali a leader and organizer of women community programs in Poso (Central Sulawesi). Lian also have been leading program related to grassroots women and peace process, where later they also have women school (grassroots women school/informal school) where they empower women cadre or women who will organize in their villages program related to women empowerment, peace transformation as well as documentation.

The discussion of Women Peace Table lead to a conclusion that women groups or grassroots women in Ambon, needed a space or regular grassroots women gathering to discuss current issues and exchange knowledge. They agree Sekolah Perempuan (Women School) as told in Poso area, could be implemented too in Ambon.

"We need more women education program, teacher for conflict transformation, in villages and small islands/remote island, from children peace education, starting from their young ages. So that we could shape a peace full community from our children" Said Sr Brigitta Renyaan, our peace women from Ambon.

"The real peace is when the Christian people will come and stay again with us in our community as before the conflict. That's when peace really comes true," said Ulfa, a young mother of 3 children, who lived in Batu Merah.

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