

Hood College

Title: Sustainable Income Generation for the Stigmatized Elderly Trans People in Indonesia

Project Leader: Marhaennia English

Date Range of Project: June 30-July 14, 2020

Country: Indonesia

Goal: To establish a self-sustaining laundry business in Jakarta, Indonesia that provides employment opportunities for socially disadvantaged elderly trans people and to expand the capacity of an existing non-profit, Forum Komunikasi Waria Indonesia, to provide shelter and socioeconomic assistance to this particular population.

Background: In Indonesia, transgender identity is considered a social illness. There is not a national prohibition against transgenderism; however, there are not significant legal protections against discrimination. Consequently, trans people are often rejected by their families and stigmatized by their communities. Many trans people start life as runaways with little opportunity for education; subsequently, trans people have limited fiscal opportunity beyond begging and sex work. Their financial situation becomes even more precarious as they grow older and sex work is no longer an option. Thus, elderly trans people often have no choice but to seek social assistances shelters. Forum Komunikasi Waria Indonesia (FKWI) is a non-profit based in Jakarta operated by Yulianus Rettoblaut. Translated into English, "Forum for Indonesian Transgender Advocacy," has two main missions: (1) to provide temporary shelter, food, and medical care; (2) to organize and register the trans people at the national level. Access to social services, including socialized health care, requires that individuals are properly registered with the state; FKWI helps trans people to establish their identification and to get registered. Presently, in addition to the shelter, FKWI operates a successful small beauty salon. Unfortunately, however, there are more trans people seeking employment than the salon can accommodate; and there are more trans people seeking assistance at the shelter which adds more financial burden to the non-profit.

Solution: I am proposing a laundry business that will be operated by FKWI. The laundry business aims to provide additional opportunity for employment and a source of revenue to keep the shelter running. The laundry business will share the same building as the salon. The existing location is strategic because it is a densely populated area surrounded by residences and university complex that hosts many housing rentals to students. A laundry business is a good investment because culturally, modern Indonesian households do not do their own laundry at home anymore. Students at the university housing complex also serve a potential customer base. Most importantly, potential competition for laundry business is small because there is not yet any well-established laundry business within a five to seven-mile radius. FKWI has communicated their enthusiasm for the project because it will help their community with more employment opportunities and ability to sustain the FKWI-sponsored shelter. See attached letter.

The significance of the project: As a global study major who is passionate about gender equality, empowering the trans people of FKWI is a significant way to contribute to a more peaceful

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society. My project will contribute to providing a key element of exercising one's human freedom – access to employment. Financial independence allows the trans people at FKWI to gain their dignity. In the long run, the community and its members can be recognized as useful citizens in their community and in their country. The Cathedral Church in Jakarta has agreed to work with me in providing workshops to church members about transgender people. Rather than viewing trans people as a social illness, the Church maintains that the trans population deserves equal respect and acceptance. To conclude, this project has the following objectives: (1) to provide employment opportunities to trans individuals; (2) to financially support FKWI shelter and its social services; (3) to encourage other individuals or institutions to become active stakeholders in helping the stigmatized group; (4) to promote a culture of inclusivity towards other humans that can establish and strengthen peace in society.