
Mita

Pekka Cadre

Bangkalan, Madura, East Java

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Mita

Pekka Cadre

Bangkalan Madura, East Java¹

Twenty-three-year-old Mita is the second child of a former Hamlet Head in a village in Bangkalan district. She has been active in Pekka since her aunt Ati invited her to join. While she was studying at university, Mita worked as a teacher at a kindergarten which she and Ati established and taught children to read the Qur'an at her family's small prayer house (*langgar*).

Mita is the first woman in her village to graduate from university. Mita was determined to realise her dream of education, a dream which was supported by her family who all value learning. After finishing her schooling at a *pesantren*, Mita decided to study education at Trunojoyo University in Madura. After she graduated in 2018, Mita taught Indonesian and science at the local Islamic middle school twice a week. Alongside this teaching work, Mita and her aunt Ati run the only private kindergarten in their village. The journey to establish this kindergarten was not without challenges. While she was studying, Mita was only able to teach on the weekend when she returned to the village, so on other days Ati taught students religious studies.

“At the beginning, the kindergarten was with the maternal and child health group, so at the same time kids went to school. Auntie Ati didn't teach at the start, I had two months of holidays so for that 2 months I taught. Kids didn't know how to write the letter 'A', so one by one I drew the line up and down and spoke to them in Madurese because kids don't understand Indonesian ... And in the end, I felt it was successful, I was happy because at the beginning kids didn't know how to do it at all. Kids didn't know how to sound out words, r-e-ea-ead, like that. At the start they didn't know the letter 'A' at all.” (Mita, Bangkalan research village, 20 February 2019)

For Mita, the kindergarten is her way of demonstrating that women should not just be identified with domestic work as they can contribute to their community. During her spare time while studying, Mita sought out information and widened her networks to help her effort to certify the kindergarten. The first step in this process was to establish a foundation.

“It was me who finally put the banner up, over there on the wooden frame. I worked on it with my mother, my aunt and her daughter. I hammered in the nails and tied the rope with my mother. My father was busy somewhere else, so I did it so it would be done quickly.” (Mita, Bangkalan research village, 20 February 2019)

Mita's establishment of the Badrur Rohim Foundation was testament to both all the information she had gained from her university friends who went on to become members of the Indonesian Teacher's Association, and Mita's own confidence to ask for permission to register the kindergarten at the necessary government office. After making inquiries about registration, Mita was told that she needed to pay a fee to process the kindergarten's certification – another challenge and step in the journey so that the kindergarten she had established with her family would be certified and licenced to operate.

“My friend in Surabaya received money from a savings group. 'It's okay [take it]', she said. My father didn't have any money either. How would I get the 2 million rupiah to pay for the fee? 'It's okay, I got the money from the savings group.' My friend said that you don't have to pay back family.' The point was

¹**Authors:** Indah Surya Wardhani and Anastasia Imelda Cahyaningrum. **Editors:** Bronwyn A. Beech Jones and Annisa Sabrina Hartoto. **Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the analysis are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting governments or organisations. All names have been anonymised.

that she was giving the money to me... giving me two million rupiah... because my father didn't have any money... so I used her money for the kindergarten. Then there was 500,000 more, and my father didn't have the money again, he didn't have it at all. I asked the agent to charge the extra 500,000 to my aunt's account who saves money there. And it was done, the licence was finished. It was issued and the kindergarten was official.” (Mita, Bangkalan research village, 20 February 2019)

Mita's involvement with Pekka began when her aunt Ati, who is a Pekka coordinator, invited her to join. In 2018, as part of PEKKA's focus on the fulfilment of social rights, Mita began processing marriage verification documents and Family Cards for her neighbours and younger family members. To do this, Mita visited the Village Office, Religious Affairs Office, the Sub-District Office, the Population and Civil Registration Office in Bangkalan, and the office of the Religious Court.

At the beginning, Mita often felt that she was taking work away from village officials. The Village Office offered to process documents for villagers for a fee of 150,000 rupiah (15 AUD) per Family Card or Identity Card. For a letter legalising an informal marriage, villagers often used unofficial agents who charged between one to two million rupiah (100-200 AUD) to process the required documents. However, after she started processing these documents through official channels for villagers, Mita observed how villagers who felt scared and embarrassed to apply for these documents themselves at the Village Office valued her assistance.

Since 2018, Mita has also played a large role in the rejuvenation of hamlet-level Pekka groups. Together with Ati, she was successful in initially recruiting forty members. A year later, Mita and Ati also formed a weekly prayer group (*yasinan*) which takes place every Friday. Mita hopes to share materials on gender equality and women's social rights through these events, which Mita and Ati envisage as a first step toward involving other women as Pekka cadres and forming new groups.

Mita also challenged a culture of marrying young. In contrast to most young women in the village who marry and become mothers as teenagers, Mita married at the age of twenty three in mid-2019. Mita's parents continue to encourage her to pursue knowledge through higher education and put this knowledge into practice by teaching, even though she is now married. Moreover, her family and husband are supportive of Mita continuing to work with Pekka and manage the kindergarten.

While there were challenges in achieving the certification of the kindergarten, Mita and Ati are certain that they will always champion social and educational rights. Mita hopes that all children in the village can have the opportunity to attend university like she did. Looking forward, in her leadership in Pekka, one of her greatest dreams is to be able to visit the PEKKA Foundation in Jakarta and meet with cadres from all over Indonesia.

“I really want to be invited to Jakarta, to the PEKKA National Secretariat. It would be amazing. I want to go to a big city like Jakarta. I am active in Pekka so maybe I will be invited to go there in the future.”
(Mita, Bangkalan research village, 20 February 2019)

In the village, Mita hopes that she can become a Village Official and be involved in decision making, particularly about village women's needs. She also hopes to motivate other women in the village to become economically independent through education and organisations. Since Mita graduated from university in 2018, approximately twenty young people from the village have pursued higher education.



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