
Widyati

*Member of the Creative Mothers' Women Homeworker Union
Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta*

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Widyati

Member of the Creative Mothers' Women Homeworkers Union Bantul, The Special Region of Yogyakarta¹

Widyati is a forty-three-year-old homemaker and handicraft business owner in Bantul. She grew up and graduated from high school in 1993. She then moved to Batam to work in an electronics factory until returning to the village in 2008. In Batam, Widyati met with her husband who is from Medan. Widyati and her husband moved back to the Bantul village after her elderly mother, who lived alone, asked them to do so.

Widyati is an active and recognised contributor to her local community. She currently manages the early childhood education centre, is a Posyandu cadre for the elderly, a member of a working group for the village PKK and is a women's representative for the formulation of the village's Medium Term Development Plan and the 2020 Development Work Plan. Widyati considers her mother, who was also active in community life, as her inspiration.

"My mother was a cadre before, but she has already stepped down. She is still a cadre, but she is old now. The roles have reversed now and her child has replaced her." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Since returning from Batam in 2008, Widyati and her husband have both worked to support their family financially. While her husband continued to work as an air conditioning technician in shopping malls and hotels in Yogyakarta, Widyati established a small business making sewn handicrafts. She learned these skills from her neighbour who operated her own handicrafts business. In fact, many women in this village are skilled in sewing, as sewing machines were provided as part of relief efforts following the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake. This know-how has created many new livelihood opportunities in the village.

Widyati initially sewed for her neighbour before she was confident enough to open her own business. Now, Widyati has become an employer and has eight women working with her to make wallets, bags, and other souvenirs. These products are sold to sellers and online for a monthly turnover of six million rupiah (600 AUD).

Through this small business, Widyati has successfully improved her family's financial situation and pays for her four children's education. Before running her business, Widyati was in debt to a village women's collective to pay for her children's pocket money. In contrast, now she has been able to put her eldest child through school and support them to continue their studies at university, as well as for her three school age children: her second eldest is in high school, the third is in middle school, and her fourth is in primary school.

In 2016, Widyati became a member of the Creative Mothers' Women Homeworker Union, after being invited by the union's leader. Her recruitment was part of a drive to expand and increase the union's membership. In Widyati's hamlet, only three women are members of the union. Nevertheless, as a homemaker and someone who is interested in being involved in organisations, Widyati happily joined the union.

"Yeah, I was interested in joining it [the union]. Actually, I am a member of lots of organisations. I'm in the PKK and I'm in the Posyandu. But I can expand my knowledge. We are homeworkers, so what's this union about? I was curious." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

¹ **Author:** Mustaghfiroh Rahayu and Nadlirotul Ulfa. **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.

After joining the union. Widyati attended training sessions designed by Yasanti, including a course on gender and women's rights in 2018, and a workshop on workplace health and safety, as well as a training on strengthening livelihoods the following year. Apart from these training sessions, Widyati also increased her capacities through the Creative Mothers' monthly meetings.

"I learned a lot of things by joining the union. I learned about gender, about bookkeeping, about administration in business, and how we can manage time as a worker and as a mother who need to take care of our kids. Also, I learned about safety while working." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

In 2018, Widyati's active participation in these activities resulted in her being selected in a team of eleven people to formulate the Village Medium Term Development Plan, at the beginning of the Village Head's term. She was elected as a women's representative by village women in a village meeting. Widyati also represents the Creative Mothers' Women Homemaker Union in her position.

"It's on behalf of the union [my involvement in the team]. I just represent the union, because lots of other people are involved [to represent other groups]. There must be women's participation, so the union is part of the team with the PKK and others." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Her involvement in the Homemaker Union has also produced a lot of change for Widyati personally. After participating in the union's gender course for two years, she now believes in herself more and has developed her leadership capacities. She also has started to hold negotiating power in the village's development agenda based on the skills and knowledge she gained in Homemaker Union and Yasanti workshops. The inclusion of the perspectives and needs of the union and women homemakers in village meetings and development plans is one way in which Widyati has put her leadership into action.

"We were planning for five years of development. In the first year, it was about the physical side of all of the parts of the plan. We held meetings to discuss which women's representatives wanted to make proposals at the Village Meeting. We were given [invitations from the village secretary] for the Village Meeting." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

As a member of the team which sets the village government's annual work plan, Widyati was also involved in developing the Village Development Plan for 2020, as one of two women in the team of seven. This position gave Widyati the platform to make proposals to support what the union members needed.

"I, on behalf of the union, will continue to propose funds for transport and some catering when there are meetings. It needs to be budgeted for. I will continue to propose it in the future. Every year at Musrenbang, I will propose it. Workplan representatives always propose training sessions and transport funds for meetings. So, women are motivated to join organisations. Now they are only given a little bit, which really makes no difference. [There should be funds] so that if women come [to a training session] for a long time, they can have a drink." (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Over the past six years, Widyati has also developed her business and become an employer of fulltime workers. Widyati learned about business financial administration in a Yasanti training session which focused on bookkeeping. Now she clearly records her income and expenditure.

"To strengthen our livelihoods, bookkeeping is the most valuable. I was so hopeless when it comes to bookkeeping. I didn't know how to do it. During the training, I learned how to do it. My bookkeeping is neat now, and ever since I am aware how much money I earn, and how much I spend. Thanks to

bookkeeping, now I know all of that. I also learned how to make priorities. The training taught us how to be careful what we spend. (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Yasanti has also provided Widyati with knowledge about workplace health and safety. From these materials, she has learned a lot about how to take care of her body while working, an aspect of work which is often regarded as unimportant by homeworkers who do not have standards of workplace environment like at a company.

“I sew and to do this I have to sit in a good position, I have to have drinking water near me when I am sewing and take comfort breaks as well. I shouldn’t just sew without stopping. [I also learned] about how to manage our eating habits and take care of ourselves. I learned a lot about that there.” (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Widyati’s husband fully supports all her activities in their local community. As a couple, they do not think about who produces more income, instead, Widyati manages both her and her husband’s income to ensure that it covers everyday needs and their children’s education.

“For my husband, as long as I carry out my obligations as a wife, like picking up the kids and other things, I am free to participate in activities, especially if those activities are beneficial.” (Widyati, Bantul research village, 24 October 2019)

Despite gaining a lot of benefits from her involvement in the Creative Mothers’ Homeworker Union and Yasanti, Widyati still feels concerned about the conditions of women homeworkers and wants the government to pay equal attention to homeworkers and factory workers. In her opinion, homeworkers are still often regarded as not important, even though they make significant contributions to the district economy and strengthen their own family livelihoods. Widyati hopes that homeworkers will receive social and health services, decent wages, and that laws and regulations are developed which protect their rights.



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