

Making Blentreng towards an environment friendly village: a COP project report

Maura Fajirin Pratiwi, Aileen Janice Livia, Bryan Young Hartono, Thiang
Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Community Outreach Program is an international service learning program designed to give mutual benefits for its participants and the village. Participants will have hands-on experience of living and interacting with villagers while implementing projects that will help improving the village. Blentreng Sub-Village is aiming to be a tourism village. It has abundance of nature goods and many potential natural tourism spots. In addition, the people are very welcoming and warm to outsiders, which is another good point as a tourism village. But, the villagers have not maximized these potentials, as they are still lacking in proper knowledge and awareness. Our projects focus on improving their mindset and knowledge. We have seen the beauty of the village and its villagers. But, this village will not achieve much with their current mindset. One big example is their habit of not disposing the trash properly. This habit is the proof that their mindsets have to be changed to improve Blentreng village quality as tourism village. Therefore, we make some projects including group discussion, tie dye and corn husk craft, waste socialization, trash bin painting and community service for the village. We hope that by implementing these projects, the village quality can be improved.

INTRODUCTION

Blentreng is the sub-village of Ngembat village. It is surrounded with forest and located on the mountain slope. Some of the village main products are avocado, coffee, corn, cocoa and cassava. Most of the people work as farmers. The mothers of the village usually stay at home to take care of their children. The majority of the villagers do not have high education. The highest education usually stopped at high school for most of the

people. The youth organization acts as tourism coordinator. They were the one who clear paths and prepare the spots so it will be ready to go public.

Blentreng has a big potential as tourism village. From the geographical aspect, the village has many unpublicized natural spots. The river is clear and fresh, there are many butterflies and dragonflies which added the beauty of the river. Mount Buthak that is opened for public presented a great view from the top. It received great attention from local hikers and campers in just a week. Besides the mount and river, there are still many upcoming spots planned to be publicized by the youth organization. Recent update was, there are about two more mountains, three waterfalls and a temple that are planned to be readied for upcoming year spots.

Then, the atmosphere aspect can also serve as attraction. The villagers have a cozy lifestyle. Tourist will be greeted with warm hospitality from the people. There are many active children that will ask you to play together. Some houses can be potential temporary lodgings in the future. This lodging service can be very helpful because there might be some tourists who want to feel living in the village. The villagers are already trained as host family for the participants, so they would not have big problem adjusting with strangers.

COP contributes in helping Blentreng village as tourism village. The projects done were meant to improve and enhance the qualities that the village has. In this article, we focus on villager empowerment. We believed that the first step as tourism village is to make sure that the people can plan sustainable development program, have the right mindset, social and environment awareness, good lifestyle and also proper knowledge to manage all village's

potential. These goals are formed into some projects. For the projects to be successful, we need teamwork from both participants and villagers. Especially the foreigners, they have different mindset that can help with the development. COP will also benefit the participants in aspect of cultural awareness. Also, it can help participants to have better understanding of living and working in a community lifestyle.

METHODOLOGY

Blentreng village strength lies in its people and geographical location. Surrounded with forests and located mountain area, Blentreng has big potential with its natural tourism spots. On top of that, Blentreng is supported by the government. The help comes in money and management aid for its development. Regardless of this village strengths and opportunity, it's still lacking in some major aspects. One example is the villagers' mindset and habit. Their lack of knowledge and awareness of long-term planning has made them oblivious with their action. Even though the people are very welcoming and open to visitors, they are used to littering and making fun of the visitors. Also, the development planning is not really clear and organized.

Based on that information we deemed that it is necessary to make some projects that focus on habit and mindset improvement. These projects included group discussion, community service, corn husk and tie dye craft, trash bin painting and waste socialization. These ideas are generated prior of departure with the hope of preparing the people first so that in the future they can develop better lifestyle and better planned long term development program and resources usage. We had village survey twice, and on the last survey, we discussed our upcoming projects with the village's

functionaries to seek permission and let them know before the implementation begun. Also, we tried to always be in contact with the head of the village in case we need some help from the villagers.

All of these projects were held with the villagers and functionaries participation. We managed to blend in with them after couple days living in Blentreng. This was made possible because of our host families and other villagers who treat us kindly and warmly welcomed our visit. We tried to always include the villagers in our works. Thankfully they were eager to participate and always lent us helping hands. After forming close bond with them, it was easier to ask them to join our projects.

Group discussion goal was to exchange knowledge with the youth organization as they were the one in charge of natural tourism development programs in the village. They would share their experience and plan for tourism spots, in turn we will help to improve the plan with the knowledge that we had. Waste socialization and community service was our way of increase littering awareness of the people, while trash bin painting would be the remainder of properly disposing the trash. As for crafting projects, we were aiming for teaching the villagers of reducing waste as well as making new source of income from that waste.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- **Group Discussion**

Initially, we planned this project to be held twice a week in three weeks duration. The participants would be three of our group members and ten village functionaries including the head of the village, sub-village, neighboring association

and youth organization. We hoped that by limiting to people with authorities, it would be more effective as they were the leaders in the village. The project would be in the form of casual meeting for about one to two hours. There would be chatting and exchanging thoughts from both parties while snacking.

After getting to the village and having meeting with the villagers, there were some changes. The discussion would be only five in total because of the day, Monday and Friday evening. The participants would be three from COP's students and only youth organization, functionaries and members, about twenty people. The other heads couldn't guarantee that they could come. It would be held at 17.30-18.30.

The first meeting, the participants from COP students were Michael, Shin Yuen Lam from Hong Kong and Ivana with Mr. Thiag as observer. There were about 23 people from youth organization including Mr. Rikono as head of the youth organization.

There were some problems occurred during the meeting. First, the youth organization was late for about ten minutes even after we reminded not to be late because there would be foreign students participating. Second, it was hard and time consuming to translate the discussion for both sides. Third, the members of youth organization were mostly silent, asleep or chatting with their friends, only Mr. Rikono actively

participated in the discussion. Lastly, there were some inappropriate jokes and attempted touching directed to the participant, which caused discomfort.

After the meeting finished, we discussed the problems with our group. The result was the PIC of group discussion had to remind Mr. Rikono about being punctual the day before meeting, to change the foreigners to Indonesian while still gaining input from the foreigners as notes beforehand and to only let the male to participate from COP students. We couldn't change the time nor the attendees from youth organization.

Aside from the problems, we were able to gain some valuable information about the tourism plan and history in the village from the discussion. Mount Buthak is proven to be rising natural tourism spot as it has just opened for about one week but the hikers reached one hundred people. Besides Mount Buthak, the youths were planning on clearing way for other spots including Galuh River, Waterfalls, Temple, and another even higher mountain. But, they were having problems with opening new tourism spots. One of these reasons was parking spots. They lacked of open space that can be used as parking spot and still trying to build one so they could accommodate tourist's vehicles. Another reason was money allocation and internal problem within the village.

The second meeting, we started to implement the changes we discussed to avert the same problems occurring. That time, the youth organization was on time. The topic was working together and making connections. Ivana, Michael, Ryan from Jakarta and Thomas from Kupang shared their thoughts on the matter then discussed with the youths. They were able to make some youths actively participate and voicing their own views. But, when Mr. Rikono started to give his inputs, the youths quieted down gradually. We believed that this was due to their mindset to always follow the leader which ended with the followers won't give any input because they are not the one with the power. After that, we tried several times to gain inputs from the youths but to no avail.

The third to fifth meetings were not done. We were already prepared for the third meeting but the youths did not come. After waiting for thirty minutes it was obvious that nobody would show up, so we canceled the meeting. It turned out the youths had some meetings in Ngembat village and forgot to inform us. As for the fourth and fifth meetings, those were canceled because the youths and villagers had to help some funerals of two of Blentreng's villagers.

- **Tie Dye Workshop & Corn Husk Workshop**

These projects were held once in the village. Developing creativity by making colorful T-

shirt and flowers from corn husk will improve the tourism and economy at Blentreng. The process of this two projects are simple.

First, for the Tie Dye Workshop, we need to prepare white T-shirt, rubber, clothes coloring, and water. We start by boiling the clothes coloring into water. After that, let the clothes coloring get cold. While waiting, we can start to rinse the T-shirt with water. After that, pull the middle of T-shirt and spin it, then put the rubber to tie the shape of T-shirt. Then we can start to dye it with the clothes coloring as we want to. Then, let it dry for 5 minutes. Finally, rinse the T-shirt with water and dry it.

We realized that this village has lots of garbage specially corn husk. To recycle the corn husk, we develop an idea to make a corn husk workshop. To make a flower from corn husk, we need to prepare corn husk, paint, fake flower sticks and fake leaf, scissors, glue or yarn. First we paint the corn husk with many colors, then we cut the corn husk like shape of flowers. Then we stick it to the fake flower stick and fake leafs with glue or yarn.

Tie Dye Workshop and Corn Husk Workshop were attended by mothers at the village. We hope the mothers can develop this business by selling the T-shirt and corn husk flower specially as souvenir when tourist visit the village. We believe it will attract the tourist to buy the T-shirt and corn husk flowers. By selling the T-shirt

and corn husk flower, it will increase the economy of the mothers and village.

Mothers of Blentreng Village was so excited to join this workshop. They were so enthusiastic and happy to make the T-shirt and corn husk flower. They made the T-shirt and corn husk flower by their own and bring the T-shirt and corn husk flower back as a souvenir from us.

- **Waste Socialization, Trash Bin Painting & Community Service**

All of these projects focus on creating awareness and forming a better habit of properly throwing trash. In the village, we noticed that villagers were throwing their trashes carelessly. This has turned into habit and they didn't think about the after effect. As this village was the highest located village in the area, it acted as buffer village between mountain and villages located below Blentreng. If the people continued this bad habit, it could affect other places.

Waste socialization and trash bin painting were done sequentially. The target was children. Because we wanted to the children to grow environmental awareness from little, but we also had some adults observing these projects. First, we informed the children about basic things like what could be considered as trash and waste, the types of waste, why we should separate the trash, 3Rs, how throwing trash affected

the environment and small things to break their bad habit of throwing trash carelessly. After we gave out the information, we prepared some types of trash and asked them to separate it.

The children were eager but during the socialization they were having difficulties with focusing. They also tended to play with themselves. It was easier to attract them by playing the separating game. Some of them managed to remember what we have told them. The others were playing around with the trash and intentionally making fun of the COP students who were teaching this socialization project.

When it was time of painting, the children took it well. They painted beautifully and enjoyed this project. We were lacking in paint supplies for some colors, but it was not a big problem. During this project, we also build closer relationship with the children. Foreign students helped the children to stay in line of the sketch and gave some help for smaller children.

The problem with community service was the villagers did not help. There were only some of the youths that help because the others had to go to school or work. While we were cleaning the neighborhood, the women only observed quietly and did not participate. Neither the head of the village nor the head of the sub-village participate on this project. The only one that gave helping hand was the head of the youth organization. Because of

the passiveness of the villagers, most of the foreign participants were complaining. In the end, we managed to finish cleaning the village and had snack time together after work.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Our goal is to implement better habit and to improving better mindset which will affect everyday life in the village in the long run. This could not be achieved with only one time program. Even though the villagers accepted our projects well, we have yet to see the result. The result could only be seen in some years ahead if done continuously. We understood that within three weeks was not nearly enough to creating awareness. Thus, we hoped in the future, there would be continuous projects to help sustain our projects.

Our recommendation was to have the future COP participants read some latest articles regarding their own specific village from previous COP. We believe that this will give better insight about village conditions about what projects had been implemented and how it resulted. It can be source of better generated project ideas. Participants can also try to have interview with past participants. Or, the committee can give out long term development focus for upcoming years. Example, 2020 COP Blentreng participants should make projects focusing on improving lifestyle and habit, next year they can focus on building attractions. This is to keep the development in an organized timeline in the long run.

For the preparation class, we gained some valuable information of general problems occurred in villages, but not every village will face those

problems. It might be better to focus on specific breakdown of each group's village, so what the participants will learn would only focus about problems occurred in their own village. As each village has more complex problems than just dirty toilets, for example internal conflict between leaders in the village that could potentially hinder projects implemented in the village.

Also, if there will be materials subsidized by third party, there should be clear agreement on what could be and what could not be subsidized by the third party. It is to ensure that the participants will not ask for hard to provide materials to the company. It might help preventing participants not getting materials they have asked for prior of departure.

As for community service, if there would be another similar project, it would be better for upcoming participants to properly ask the functionaries to gather the villagers and work together.

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Group discussion



Tie dye and Corn husk craft



Waste socialization, Trash bin painting and Community service



