

# Civil Society in The Times of COVID-19

MADANI COVID-19 EDITION, VOLUME I

## MADANI's Lead Partners in Responding COVID-19

COVID-19 is the one of biggest challenges in decades and in many different ways has changed the way we live and how we see the world. Social interactions and livelihoods are no longer the same. The global pandemic has forced us all to adapt to survive. COVID-19 is much more than a global health crisis that has killed hundreds of thousand people; it is a human, economic, and social crisis causing recession, a high rate of unemployment, and waves of disinformation and uncertainty.

Working in 32 districts in six provinces in Indonesia, the USAID-funded MADANI Civil Society Support Initiative improves the capacity, legitimacy, and sustainability of local civil society organizations (CSOs). During the COVID-19 pandemic, MADANI's local partner CSOs are doing their part in responding to the crisis, especially in supporting their communities. Their initiatives have included fundraising and providing social assistance to support those affected by COVID-19, providing personal protective equipment for community members, empowering women and other vulnerable groups to mobilize, campaigning on COVID-19 prevention measures, and fighting against hoaxes related to COVID-19, among others. All these efforts aim to ensure that nobody is left behind or forgotten. For many years, CSOs have been supporting millions of Indonesians to address issues related to: the environment, education, economics, disaster management, violence, and inequality, including supporting the Government of Indonesia in overcoming its development challenges. The results achieved by MADANI's CSO partners captured in this newsletter are proof once more that civil society and community mobilization are essential to rebuilding and recovering.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Educating the Local Community Using Social Media: Wong Solo Tukar Info COVID-19</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Fighting COVID-19 Through Collaborative Governance: A Story from Sukabumi, West Java</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pasar Kita Changes the Lives of Women in the Time of COVID-19</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Supporting the Unsung Heroes: Sanggar Hijau and 77 Environmental Organizations Support Garbage Collectors and Scavengers during the COVID-19 Emergency</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SAPA Institute Supports Women in Bandung District Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Paramitra Foundation Ensures No One is Left Behind During the COVID-19 Pandemic</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Wallacea Works Together with the Local Government of North Luwu to Support its COVID-19 Response</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Facing Disaster in the Middle of a Pandemic: A Story from Luwu Utara, South Sulawesi</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>AtmaGo and MADANI Organize Webinar on Civil Society's Response to COVID-19</b>	<b>10</b>

## Educating the Local Community Using Social Media: Wong Solo Tukar Info COVID-19

The Consortium for Monitoring and Empowering Public Institutions (KOMPIP), in the city of Surakarta in Central Java (also known as Solo), is actively involved in responding to COVID-19. After distributing masks to the people who work at traditional markets, KOMPIP, MADANI's partners in the city, created a Facebook group called "Wong Solo Tukar Info COVID19" (People in Solo Exchanging COVID-19 Information). This Facebook group's activity is organized as a response to the lack of knowledge and information about COVID-19 in Surakarta. A lack of knowledge and information about COVID-19 can lead to counterproductive attitudes and actions that endanger the public during this pandemic. This small step is expected to help many parties to exchange information and learn from each other.



*"With this group, I just found out what it's like if you take the Swab test. It's not really good to imagine getting a cottonbud stabbed in my nose. With that knowledge, I prefer to be careful and take preventive actions including following the health protocols, wearing masks to protect my self and everyone when I am in the crowd."*

Tina Dewi, KOMPIP activist.

Three months after launching the group, members have started to see the benefit. On August 6, Mas Aris, a member of the Wong Solo Facebook group, posted that he was laid off from his job due to the COVID-19 crisis and sought help so that his son could continue to afford to study at his university. The next day, Slamet Riyadi University (UNISRI) reached out to Mas Aris to discuss his son. Two days later, on August 8, KOMPIP received a heartwarming WhatsApp text from Mas Aris saying that his son finally can continue his studies at UNISRI.

*"Alhamdulillah, after meeting with the UNISRI Foundation management...I explained all the conditions, [and] UNISRI foundation finally gave a 100% scholarship for my son (without registration fees, etc.)," wrote Mas Aris.*

## Fighting COVID-19 Through Collaborative Governance: A Story from Sukabumi, West Java



Sabadesa distributing package of groceries in Sukabumi  
©USAID MADANI/ Documentation from Sabadesa

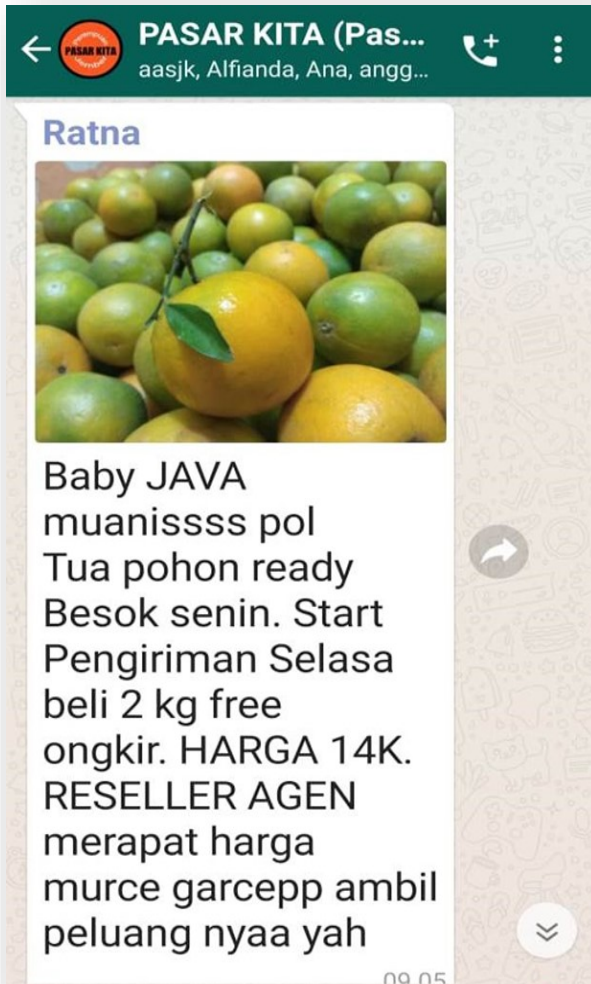
In a democratic country, there are three main pillars to support human and social development: government, civil society, and the private sector. The three pillars work together to solve problems, such as combating the COVID-19 pandemic. As occurred in many other rural areas, when COVID-19 struck, local communities in Sukabumi (West Java) faced both health and economic challenges. After observing the needs of local communities during the pandemic, the Sabadesa Foundation, MADANI's partner in Sukabumi, took the initiative to collaborate with private companies and village governments to assist communities in dealing with the effects of COVID-19. Sabadesa collaborated with the Sukabumi district government, Bank BJB, and the energy company PT. Migas Hulu Jabar, to help respond to and prevent COVID-19. They distributed 1,000 aid packages to families affected by COVID-19 in Sukabumi, especially to those who were identified as not yet receiving support from the government. The Sabadesa Foundation also successfully advocated for the revision of village fund allocations (APBD) related to the 2020 Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) program, to ensure that BLT is based on criteria jointly agreed through a Special Village Deliberation.



Sabadesa in collaboration with MUJ CSR Program  
USAID MADANI/ Documentation from Sabadesa



## Pasar Kita Changes the Lives of Women in the Time of COVID-19



“When you empower women, you empower the community,” said Sri Sulistiyani, the Executive Director Jember Women’s Care Movement (*Gerakan Peduli Perempuan Jember*). Starting from this belief, GPP Jember (MADANI’s partner in Jember) established *Pasar Kita* (“Our Market”) in 2016 as an independent market community that aims to improve women’s economic conditions and increase their level of confidence to participate in decision-making processes. The *Pasar Kita* movement was initiated because there are so many victims of domestic violence who must remain silent because they are financially dependent on their abusers. Initially, *Pasar Kita* was started as a WhatsApp group that allowed its members to conduct business transactions with each other. However, now the network is growing and currently *Pasar Kita* has 2,000 members from Jember and 32 WhatsApp groups: 31 groups for each sub-district and one group for wholesalers throughout the district of Jember. The initiative has played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic as economic activity slowed down significantly. Even when all traditional markets and shops are closed, *Pasar Kita* can still effectively support its members to buy daily necessities at a fair price and sell their products.

Sri Sulistiyani from the Jember Women's Care Movement relayed the following example of its impact: "One afternoon, a mother came to my house. She talked about her family's condition during the pandemic and cried. She said that her husband rented a land to grow chilies. They hope to gain profit during the Islamic Eid celebration in May when the price of chilies is usually high. But then the pandemic happened. They had a good and abundant crop, but they could not sell it at the market. The middlemen bought many of the chilies at a very cheap price; and they have not even been paid for it yet. The price was very low. She cried, not knowing how to find a solution. After hearing about *Pasar Kita* from a neighbor in May, she managed to sell 84 kilograms of chilies in just three days. Ten days after joining *Pasar Kita*, the woman came to my house again. She cried happily this time because she managed to sell 340 kilograms of chilies in just ten days at a good price after joining *Pasar Kita*. The woman and her husband promised to support other farmers to sell their products on *Pasar Kita*, especially for the women." There are many other stories of women and families surviving because of *Pasar Kita*. They are full of emotions and achievements, and ups and downs. In the middle of this pandemic, MADANI partner Women's Care Movement proved that *Pasar Kita* could be a solution for women and their families.

## Supporting the Unsung Heroes: Sanggar Hijau and 77 Environmental Organizations Support Garbage Collectors and Scavengers during the COVID-19 Emergency

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has paid attention to the heroes who work in hospitals; doctors and nurses. But sometimes we forget that there are less visible people who also play an important role in a pandemic like this. These include the very unglamorous and dirty work of garbage collectors and scavengers, the dumpsite pickers. In Indonesia, there are more than 300,000 people working as garbage collectors and an estimated 2.4 million scavenger families. These workers cannot work from home and there is no guarantee that they are fully protected from viruses. Taking this into account, MADANI's partner in Jombang, Sanggar Hijau Foundation, and 77 other environmental organizations in East Java are working together to organize a fundraising initiative to support local garbage collectors and scavengers. In collaboration with the Greenation Foundation and Waste4Change, they have collected 150 million rupiah (US\$10,000) for the provision of personal protective equipment and foodstuffs for 761 garbage collectors and scavengers. In Jombang, Because the hard work of these workers sometimes goes unnoticed, and they are among those who are highly exposed by COVID-19, providing these equipment goes a long way to making sure they can work safely and to recognizing their important services to the community.



Sanggar Hijau distributing package of groceries in Jombang  
©USAID MADANI/ Documentation from Sanggar Hijau

## SAPA Institute Supports Women in Bandung District Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered major changes to economic conditions, including a rising unemployment rate and the collapse of many businesses. The main sectors affected by the pandemic in Indonesia are trade, manufacturing, tourism and the informal sector, in both urban and rural areas. The same issues have also brought economic challenges for women in Indonesia, who constitute large part of the labor force. When large-scale social restrictions were implemented in March due to COVID-19, many women lost their jobs or had to close their food stalls. Some of them are mothers, some are single parents who must support their own families. Apart from the economic issues, other problem also require special attention – violence against women has increased during this pandemic as men who have lost their jobs stay home.

SAPA Institute is MADANI's partner in Bandung district (West Java) that works as

an independent non-profit organization focusing on issues of sexual rights, reproductive health, violence against women, and women's financial independence. Through *Bale Istri* - "A Place for Women", a coalition of community women groups supported by the SAPA Institute – in April-June SAPA Institute organized a fundraising drive to help women affected by COVID-19 in Bandung. With funds raised, the organization distributed 600 food packages and donations of 10,000,000 rupiah (US\$6,000) to support more than 204 women, especially to save their small businesses. The SAPA Institute also distributed hand sanitizer packages and masks for their volunteers working to support victims of gender-based violence. They have since continued supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence using online-based consultations. These efforts demonstrate how civil society organizations are taking part in addressing the economic issues women are facing and supporting women to fight against violence despite the limitations in place during the pandemic.



## Paramitra Foundation Ensures No One is Left Behind During the COVID-19 Pandemic



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One of MADANI's partner, the Paramitra Foundation in Malang (East Java) is not only active in addressing child labor issues, but also works other socio-economic issues such as empowering poor families, organizing informal education programs, providing credit for rural communities, assisting communities to maintain agriculture, etc. The organization has consistently supported marginalized groups in East Java for years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Indonesia in March 2020,

Paramitra has taken a number of action to respond to the emergency.

First, they have helped marginalized groups by providing 100 food assistance packages to a group that supports persons with disabilities. Paramitra also actively encouraged groups of persons with disabilities to put aside their differences and unite through district-level joint forums. Third, Paramitra has initiated fundraising as well as advocacy activities to support people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in the districts of Tuban and Probolinggo through the *Komite Mata Daerah* ("Regional Eye Committee"). In addition to supporting people with disabilities, Paramitra has also given special attention to sex workers and elderly groups by educating groups in the cities of Malang, Tuban and Probolinggo on strategies for preventing COVID-19. Lastly, they have distributed equipment to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in Malang, such as hand sanitizers, masks, and hand washing facilities. This work is just one more inspirational example of how civil society organizations can ensure that no one in society is left behind.

## Wallacea Works Together with the Local Government of North Luwu to Support its COVID-19 Response



The unprecedented spread and impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic has changed major aspects of life in Indonesia, especially how we work and interact socially, as well as the politics and the economy of the country. Luwu Utara, a district located 532 kilometers from Makassar, the capital city of South Sulawesi, has also not been spared the upheaval of the pandemic. Despite the fact that the district is quite challenging to support due to many of the residents living in remote mountainous areas, MADANI's partner in the district, Wallacea, has initiated some activities to help the local people respond to COVID-19. In addition, the organization was officially appointed by the Regional Planning Agency (Bappeda) in Luwu Utara to join the Luwu Utara COVID-19 Task Force (Gugus Tugas COVID-19) to coordinate responses to COVID-19. The organization has thus far distributed 3,800 masks and hand sanitizers to local communities, conducted workshops on how to make safe hand sanitizers, and actively raised public awareness by providing reliable information about COVID-19 to the local residents. Wallacea also encourages local people to take the free rapid COVID-19 tests provided by the local government, especially for those who work in the traditional market.

The response to COVID-19 in Luwu Utara provides proof of how civil society can effectively work together with the local government in handling a crisis. In the spirit of *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), people in Luwu Utara are adjusting their social activities by preventing crowds and maintaining proper COVID-19 social distancing protocol. There have currently been only 58 confirmed positive cases and a 87% of recovery rate in Luwu Utara. The collaboration between civil society and local government is a key to being able to respond to the global pandemic effectively while supporting the residents themselves.



## Facing Disaster in the Middle of a Pandemic: A Story from Luwu Utara, South Sulawesi



Bupati Luwu Utara Indah Putri Indriani receiving donation from MADANI staffs  
@USAID/Documentation from Sahaka

*“The road is covered with mud and sand. I saw so many people running to save themselves. All the houses are buried in mud. It was hard to find a way because the road to Kantor Bupati or other buildings was blocked”* said Pak Sahaka, MADANI’s Field Coordinator in Luwu Utara district.

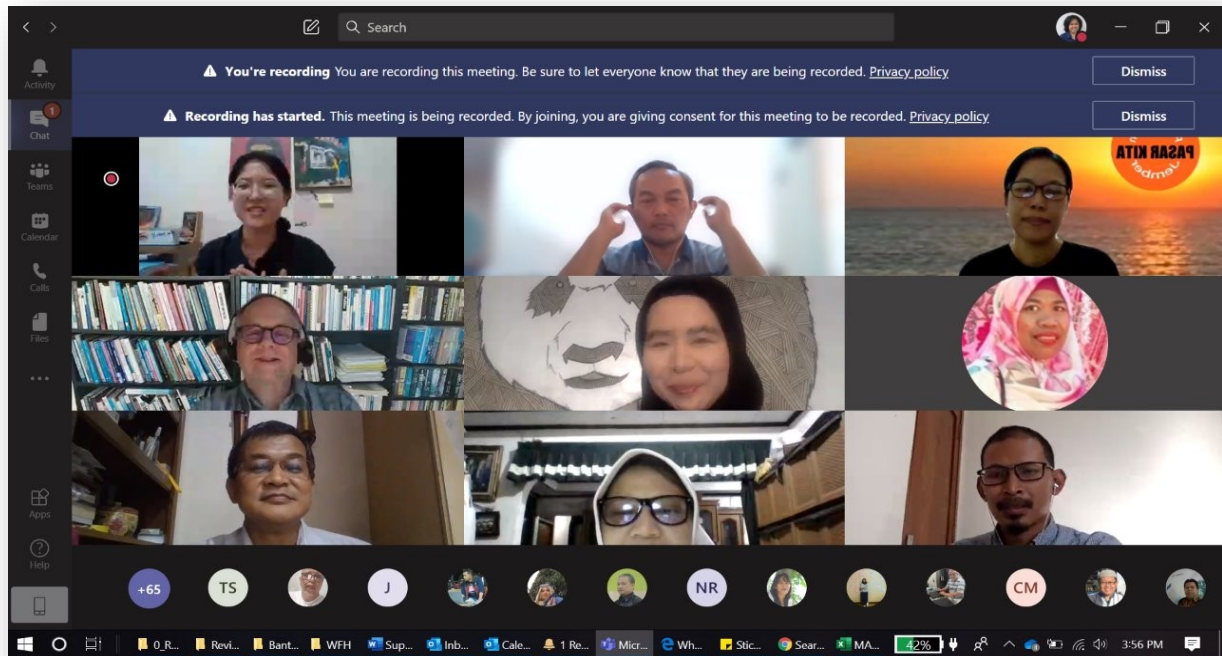
On the morning of July 13, 2020, Pak Sahaka was on his way to Masamba, the capital city of Luwu Utara in the northern tip of South Sulawesi province. Heavy rainfall the night before caused the Masamba, Rongkong, and Mely rivers to overflow – resulting in severe flooding that killed at least 38 people, injured hundreds of others, and buried houses and public facilities in meters of mud. Mudslides also blocked

access to the city of Masamba and several other local villages.

Pak Sahaka was traveling to meet MADANI’s lead civil society partner in Luwu Utara, Wallacea, to facilitate Wallacea’s organizational self-assessment, the first step in developing a capacity building plan that will strengthen Wallacea’s ability to more effectively achieve their mission and incorporate the development needs of the local community in their activities. When Pak Sahaka, who has been working on local governance in Luwu Utara for over ten years, could finally contact the members of Wallacea, Pak Sahaka and the organization decided to work together to help the local people. *“There was no signal, no electricity, and no clean water. It was chaotic and we needed to evacuate so many people to safer places. Some of them are still in the mountain area,”* recounted Pak Sahaka. The situation was challenging because this disaster happened in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was hard to follow the proper social distancing protocol due to the large number of people who needed to be evacuated, the victims of the disaster lacked personal protective equipment like masks, and it was difficult for them to reach supporting medical facilities. Further compounding the challenges in the district, the local government had to place survivors in tents or inside government buildings and concerns were raised about access to sanitation facilities, the need to ensure good hygiene, and the spread of COVID-19.

With limited resources, Pak Sahaka, Wallacea, and other local CSOs have worked together to build an emergency disaster response unit, identified the number of houses and farms impacted by the flood, monitored the condition of the rivers, provided food and medical supplies to locals, and are now designing a community reporting system. This work still ongoing two weeks later. Wallacea and Pak Sahaka are also actively working hand in hand with the local government, especially with the award-winning head of the Luwu Utara local government, Ibu Indah Putri Indriani, in anticipating the impact of the disaster, supporting the community, and ensuring that the disaster response activity follows proper COVID-19 protocols. Handling a natural disaster in times of pandemic is challenging, but this example from Luwu Utara proves that collaboration between civil society and government can truly help communities recover.

## AtmaGo and MADANI Organize Webinar on Civil Society's Response to COVID-19



MADANI and digital communication platform AtmaGo held a joint webinar on August 12, 2020 on “Civil Society’s Roles in Responding to COVID-19,” with more than 90 participants. This event was supported by USAID through the partnership between the USAID-funded MADANI Civil Society Support Initiative and Atma Connect, which manages the online AtmaGo platform for community-centered communication and content pieces, and forum for sharing information about COVID-19 in Indonesia.

During the past five months, AtmaGo has been running various capacity building activities with USAID funding on digital literacy and citizen journalism, to amplify community voices on COVID-19 in more than 110 districts and municipalities throughout Indonesia. The webinar was organized to announce and share the stories of the winners of the AtmaGo writing contest for “Community Stories in Actions Against COVID-19.”

The contest encouraged the communities reached by the AtmaGo platform to share their own experiences or best practices related to COVID-19 response, and attracted more than 160 entries, with the following winners:

- Sri Sulistiyani, “PASAR KITA” (Our Market), The Success Story of Women in the midst of COVID-19 Lockdown” (see the *full story above*)
- Yudi Wijanarko, “The Story of Gravediggers for COVID-19 Infected Corpses”
- Ayu Prawitasari, “The Acts of Self-reliance Women Farmers in Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic”
- Fafa Siregar, “Using the Village Budget to Facilitate Online Learning Towards Smart Villages”
- Nensi Indri, “Addressing the High Internet Cost Issue - Free WiFi from Community to Facilitate the Students Online Learning Activity during Lockdown”

During the webinar, the first place and the runner-up winners presented their stories and the reasons why they wanted to share it in the AtmaGo application. She believed that sharing good practices would help the community to see that they have many opportunities to do good, and in this case, writing about it in AtmaGo has no cost and is free of ads. Ibu Sulis is a humble woman activist and the executive director of *Gerakan Peduli Perempuan Jember*, one of MADANI's Lead Partner CSOs in Jember, East Java.

The second-place winner was Yudi Wijanarko from Boyolali (Central Java) who is also MADANI's Field Coordinator in Boyolali. Yudi reported well on voluntary-based grave diggers for COVID-19 victims in Boyolali. Their story and contribution have hardly been exposed, despite being deserving of much respect from the public, as despite knowing that their work was high-risk, they did it voluntarily. When the local government wanted to give them an allowance, they instead requested the budget to be donated for orphans, as they were also part of the Community for Orphan Care (PAYB) in Boyolali. The story highlighted how faith in humanity can be restored through the stories of such inspiring individuals.

The Head of Foreign Affairs Section of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, Ibu Youngest Non Itah (Ibu Noni), emphasized that multi-sector partnerships like the ones discussed by the participants of the writing contest are very important in responding COVID-19. "This writing contest has shown a strong collaboration of various parties for the good of Indonesia in responding to COVID-19. I am so happy with the collaboration between USAID-MADANI and AtmaGo. It would be a loss if we could not do better than yesterday, and lucky for us to be able to continue the collaboration for the future," said Ibu Noni.

The webinar was held not only to celebrate the winners but also all the contest participants' inspiring stories. MADANI and AtmaGo will continue to encourage the community to write about their actions in responding to COVID-19 through AtmaGo and to continue to share their challenges, best practices, and inspiring stories.

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