



Banja and Juni represent their village Matawai Pawali during inter village workshop at Weingapu, July 2nd-3rd 2019.

Banja and Juni, "People in the House Who Leave the House"

By: Rambu Luciane Lingga Rebo

"When I was told to come forward, I felt nervous and scared, because I had never talked in public. But I just tried to move forward, even though I was really trembling. Fortunately, when I was in front, I was able to talk to the end, even though what I was talking about was only what I understood. There were also participants who laughed when I spoke, but I was happy to be able to talk in public, it was the first time for me", said Banja Oru (32 years). Thus, Banja Oru or often called Banja, tells her experience when presenting changes that occurred in her life, during the Workshop "Sharing Experiences of Land Distribution and Joint Action Plan" on July 2nd-3rd 2019 which involved participants from 6 assisted villages consisting of Village Government, *Maramba* (master/nobleman caste), *Kabihu* (non-caste) and also *Ata* (servants/slave caste).

Banja and Dopu Mbita Juni or Juni (45 years old) is women representative from their village, and at the same time were *Ata* who came from Matawai Pawali Village, Lewa sub-district, East Sumba District.

Banja and Juni are *Ata* of Umbu Pendi Ngara, a leaders of *Kabihu* (Clan) Matolang from Matawai Pawali Village. Banja is *Ata* from Umbu Pendi Ngara's Wife, namely Diana Rambu Day Wei. She is commonly called Diana's Rambu

or by the name of hers nobility (*Ngara Hunga*), she called: *Nai Banja* which means mother of Banja. In *Maramba* tradition of marriage, the parents whose the daughter would be married will give their daughter's husband: a servant/ *Ata* (man or woman) to serve them for a rest of their life.

Although Banja and Juni are both the *Ata* people, there are differences between them. In the tradition of East Sumba, Banja is a servant who must not be far from her master. She will be in charge to serve all the needs in the household of her master. To fulfil the daily needs such as food and drink and other, Banja and her two children still depend on their masters. While Juni is an *ata* who is also a widow with 5 children and she is already independent (without master). Although she is not entirely separated from the responsibility to fulfil her large needs such as animal needs for the traditional ceremony, she still depends on her masters. Juni herself is in charge to guard and maintain his master's traditional house. The house is separated from the house where the master live. Therefore, food, drink and other needs are in her own responsibility. While her master, Umbu Pendi Ngara, gives Banja and Juni both rice fields to manage about 0.25 Hectares per person. Their income comes only from these fields.

In the tradition of East Sumba, *Ata* is the person behind. They are not given a large amount of freedom by their masters. No one can leave the house without the master's permission; on the other hand, *Ata* also realize their position and are reluctant to appear in front of the forum.

Most of them lose confidence and always feel inferior. The same thing happened with Banja and Juni.

However, by intensively assisted to the *Ata*, some *Maramba*, especially Umbu Pendi and Rambu Diana, are very supportive so their allow their *Ata* get involved in the project activities.



Banja published a picture of changes in his village
Waingapu, 2 July 2019

In addition, Banja and Juni both are two women from 82 families who were proposed by the village government to become member of community forest group (*Hutan Kemasyarakatan/ HKM*), to manage production forest in their villages area. When project asked Banja to be involved in workshops outside Sumba Island, Umbu Pendi and Rambu Diana agreed to let her involve in those workshop. According to Umbu Pendi and Rambu Diana, Banja need to see the outside world. Therefore they can learn new things that they did not get in the village. Moreover, Umbu Pendi and Diana gave their blessing to Banja to attend VOICE Linking and Learning activities which took place in Jogjakarta (Java Island).



Banja and Juni represented Desa Matawa Pawali in the
workshop, Waingapu 2 - 3 July 2019

This workshop (Waingapu and Jogjakarta) was the first experience for both of them. So far, they have never been involved in either meetings within the scope of households or villages, because of *Ata* is attached to them. They can only go out of their house to attend the customary ceremonial,s events, if they are told to do so by their master, even then they will be assigned only in the kitchen. So, they have a happy feeling and pride as well as they can be involved as participant in those activities.

Juni explain that, “ I used to be behind (at the kitchen), to prepare food and drink, but now I can sit in the front, talked with people from another village, I'm very proud and happy, even though on the first day I was scared and very nervous. But at the second day, I was getting used to it.

In the village, I usually take part in government charity program called PKH (Program Keluarga Harapan/ Family Hope Program) meetings because I am a PKH's beneficiaries. After this, if there is PKH meeting, they asked for my opinion. I am brave enough now to express my opinion. I'm also very happy to be able sleeping in a hotel. This the first time I slept in a hotel, the bed was really good”. Juni told her story with a little shy.

According to Banja, appearing and speaking in public were not as scary as she thought all this time. If there was a meeting and she was involved, and when she had an opportunity to speak, then she would speak. Likewise Juni, Banja said that there was a proud feeling to be able to take part in the workshop, and she hoped to be involved in village meetings to familiarize herself to speak in the public forum.

The presence of those two *Atas* in public workshops, are result of a process from The Humba Hammu Consortium, supported by VOICE. The *Ata* had the opportunity to gain new experience, opportunity to interact with new people and share experiences so that they are expected to know the new world. They had an access to speak out and appear, and also had an access to have arable land to improve their economic. Juni and Banja had a hope, to send their children going to school for their right of education.



This result is also possible because of ideal relationship between *maramba* and their *Ata*, where Umbu Pendi take care of them, and guarantee their daily life as well. Although not all of the needs of the *Ata* are fulfilled. However, Umbu Pendi provide 0.25 Hectares/*ata* of his land to be managed by *Ata* as a source of income. So, when in several villages many *Ata's* chose to run away from their *maramba's*, Umbu Pendi still has a lot of loyal *Ata's* at his house.



Juni and Banja are very grateful to VOICE, because besides getting new experiences, they are also a beneficiary from project (named: The Right to Land for Marginalized People) and get access to HKm land to be managed. Both of them hope, through HKm land, they can plant various plants to enhance income of their family, like: turmeric, hazelnut and *kabota/porang*.