Removing The Chains From Indonesia's Mental Health

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INTRODUCTION

A 50–year-old man sat in the dark. With both of his legs chained, he was barely able to move. The chains were quite old and rusted. These chains were linked with padlocks to a longer chain, which was locked to a 1.5 meter long piece of wood from a coconut tree. He remained in the corner of a dilapidated, wooden house kitchen and was never spoken to. He had been silent. For more than fifteen years, this had been his state (*Website Situnis*, 13 May 2013). This story was told by a volunteer who worked in the Mental Health Aceh-Indonesia program.

Pasung, which translates to "shackling," is the inhumane practice of shackling and imprisoning the mentally ill in Indonesia. This practice has been banned since 1977, and in 2010, the Indonesian government initiated a program called "*Aceh Free Pasung* 2010,**"** which releases the mentally ill from their restraints and provides them with the appropriate medical attention and medication. Since the ban, there have been a total of 300,000 cases of pasung reported by psychiatric facilities and faith healers within the last 5 years.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

I interviewed workers from several different mental health organizations in Indonesia who are working continuously on providing proper medical care and support for the mentally ill.

One of the organizations I spoke with, the Asian Australia Mental Health Association (AAMH), targets countries mainly in the Asia Pacific region and Australia.

A second organization works in Bali, where Dr. Suryanti (right) takes care of her patients. The two other organizations that I spoke with are from Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.

DATA AND FINDINGS

Dr. Corcoda Yaya Lesmana

1. How long has this organization been around? *Since 2005.*
2. What has the organization done to help the *pasung* population? *Every once in a while, the organization receives packages from out of state containing medicine boxes and help from different countries near Asia.*
3. What is the goal for your organization? *We strive to help the Balinese people become more intelligent, independent, creative, as well as physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually healthy.*
4. What do you think the government can do to help decrease reported shackling cases? *Shine more "light" on it.*
5. Is it possible for this organization to provide medical help to victims who are severely affected with mental illness? *Yes.*
6. When dealing with cases of mental illness in Indonesia, what was the worst the organization has dealt with? Victim wise? *Rather not think negatively, appreciate all the help they've got.*
7. Would it be possible for the organization to partner up with me in fundraising money to provide certain families in need of proper medical attention? *Yes!*

Movement Global for Mental Health MGMH

1. How long has this organization been around? *Since 2007.*
2. What has the organization done to help the *pasung* population? *Held an emergency crisis meeting for a "Mental Health Disaster" that occured in Bali.*
3. What is the goal for your organization? *Spread awareness.*
4. How is the organization helpful? *Help different countries with different issues.*
5. What do you think the government can do to help decrease reported shackling cases? *(Not covered) Have not talked about.*
6. Is it possible for this organization to provide medical help to victims who are severely affected with mental illness? *Yes, we have been working on it.*
7. When dealing with cases of mental illness in Indonesia, what was the worst the organization has dealt with? Victim wise? *Deaths.*
8. Would it be possible for the organization to partner up with me in fundraising money to provide certain families in need of proper medical attention? *Yes.*

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Based on my interviews and the feedback I received, evidence indicates that the shackling of mentally ill people is still a major issue in Indonesia.

The organization workers, doctors, and volunteers that I interviewed all mentioned that they are trying to raise more awareness around their cities with a particular focus on the poorer areas, because that's where most of the cases of pasung have been reported.

Another goal of various mental health care professionals is to bring the issue to the government officials, as the government has yet to enforce the ban on pasung, and anti-pasung efforts are badly underfunded. Only 1.8% of the funds are used for mentally ill--including hospitals, facilities, and medicine.

Two organizations from Jakarta requested that I keep in contact with them, as they are interested in working with me to partner up with a nonprofit organization in the United States to supply medication for them. This will be an ongoing process.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS:

This project will be ongoing. I plan to partner with NAMI so that I can get help providing medicine and proper medical care to patients in the psychiatric facilities, hospitals, organizations holding mentally ill victims in Indonesia.

I plan to continue to spreading awareness in bigger cities and educating more of my family members and connections to any government officials who can potentially bring attention to the issue.

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