

**Renovation,
Not Relocation:
The work of the
*Paguyuban Warga
Strenkali (PWS)* in
Indonesia**

**Wawan Some, Wardah Hafidz
and Gabriela Sauter**



137h: August 2009

**The role of local
organisations in
sustainable
development**

The roles of local organisations in poverty reduction and environmental management

All poverty reduction is local. This is easy to forget given how discussion and debate on the subject is dominated by bilateral aid agencies, development banks, national governments and international NGOs. But regardless of higher level commitments and decisions, what actually happens on the ground in particular localities is what makes the difference. Many barriers to poverty reduction are local — local power structures, land owning patterns and anti-poor politicians, bureaucracies and regulations. Much of what the poor require — schools, healthcare, water and sanitation, land, social safety nets, getting onto voter registers — must be obtained from local organisations within this local context.

Local organisations have a major role in addressing these realities, helping poor groups access entitlements and engage with government. They may be local NGOs, grassroots organisations of the poor, or even local governments or branches of higher levels of government. But they function on a local level, have intimate knowledge of the local context and should be accountable to local people. Many operate on very small budgets, outside the main funding flows and frameworks. Yet they are not isolated from larger governance issues; indeed, much pro-poor political change has been catalysed by local innovations and by political pressure from grassroots organisations and their associations.

This publication is one in a series of case studies and synthesis papers looking at the work of local organisations in development and environmental management. These publications were developed in collaboration with the local organisations they profile. They seek to encourage international funding agencies to rethink the means by which they can support, work with and learn from the local organisations that are such a critical part of pro-poor development.

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Executive summary

The city of Surabaya in Indonesia is promoting itself as an important international trade centre. This has prompted beautification programmes that are threatening the homes and livelihoods of the poor communities and street vendors who live and work alongside the river.

This profile describes how low-income residents have managed to change official policy on riverside development and evictions through a carefully considered and researched approach to negotiation led by their organisation, the PWS (*Paguyuban Warga Strenkali Surabaya*). They shifted the official policy from relocation to redevelopment by proposing a viable solution to the pollution and flooding that was occurring. The riverside communities now have five years to upgrade their homes and work with the government in cleaning the river and clearing space for riverside roads.

The paper describes how the PWS negotiated the solution, how the renovations are being facilitated by savings groups, and how the process is leading to stronger, better organised communities. It also reflects on the remaining challenges, such as on-going eviction threats and the lack of funding to support the communities' own processes and priorities. At the heart of the approach's success is, as noted by a member of the province's parliament, the fact that instead of saying "*Help us because we are poor*", the communities threatened with eviction have said, "*Listen, we have this problem and here is a possible solution*".

The PWS process represents an important step forward for democracy in Indonesia. By including the people in the decision-making process, a closer relationship with the provincial government and parliament has been built, and the nation has been shown that it is possible to negotiate fair solutions to difficult issues such as eviction and the environment.

Renovation, Not Relocation: The work of the *Paguyuban Warga Strenkali* (PWS) in Indonesia

Wawan Some, Wardah Hafidz and Gabriela Sauter

Introduction

The *Paguyuban Warga Strenkali Surabaya* (Riverside Community Organisation, or PWS) is a local organisation of riverside communities in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city (whose population now exceeds 2.5 million). As the capital of the Province of East Java, Surabaya is an important industrial and economic hub for the region. However, the city and provincial governments' desire to promote the city as an important international trade centre has prompted beautification programmes that threaten the homes and livelihoods of poor riverside communities and street vendors. This profile describes how the PWS formed as a response to riverside eviction threats that began in 2002. It documents how the organisation and local residents are convincing both local and provincial governments that they have the right to inhabit these areas and should be allowed to stay. It also shows how the process of resistance and negotiation has developed into something much more—a process of community development, cohesion, learning, improving and teaching.

The PWS: born from the threat of evictions

On May 31, 2002, the municipal government of Surabaya warned the people of Bratang, and other riverside settlements in six *kampung*s (villages), that they were to be evicted. The communities began to organise themselves to prevent the evictions. The process began with the formation of an NGO, *Jerit*, which organised into four main groups: the *Paguyuban Pembela Tanah Strenkali* (PPTS or the Riverside Community Rights Defenders), PKL (dealing with street vendors), PSK (dealing with sex workers), and *Anak Gelandangan* (dealing with homeless street children). PPTS broke away from *Jerit* in February 2005 to become *Paguyuban Warga Strenkali Surabaya* (PWS).

These *kampung*s have existed for over 40 years, and have a well-established sense of community and place. For them, uniting to fight this injustice was particularly important. Together, they began to learn about the relevant laws and developed the confidence to fight.

Along with Uplink¹ they lobbied the national Minister of Public Works, the ministry under which the policy was constituted. After meeting with the riverside communities in May 2002 the minister asked the local government to stop the evictions and instead form a joint riverside community/government team to prepare an alternative solution to propose to him. While the team did come up with a document, they failed to agree on recommendations: the government team continued to recommend the relocation of the communities while the people's team opted to remain in their settlements. This was the first step in a long-term struggle for security of land tenure for the people of riverside communities, who mostly have low and unreliable wages.

Although PWS works with nine sub-divisions (or RTs) in nine different *kampungs* (villages), in this profile we deal mainly with three, Bratang, Medokan Semampir and Gunung Sari. To give an indication of their population, Bratang has four sub-divisions, each of which can range from between 60 and 90 households. In total, PWS works with around 3,000 families, many of whom share their houses with one or two other families.

The negotiation process

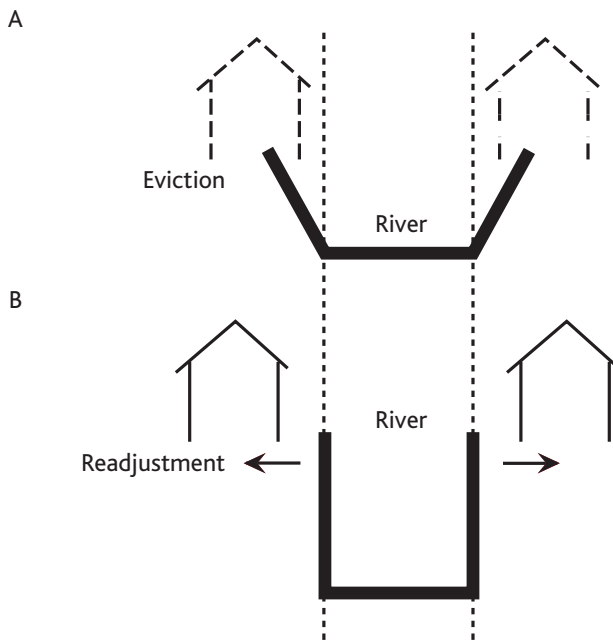
In January 2005 the governor warned the community of Medokan Semampir of future evictions. The PWS approached the government, seeking to understand why this eviction was considered necessary and to try to stop it. According to the provincial government, riverside dwellers' waste was reducing the rivers' capacity, resulting in rising water levels and flooding in the province. The PWS suggested that the government needed to determine whether this was really so. In response, the government created a special body to develop a policy on riverside settlements and to communicate with all riverside dwellers in the province of East Java. The PWS commissioned its own study of the rivers, with the help of an Indonesian environmental NGO, Ecoton, and the University of Gajah Mada (UGM). Ecoton's study looked at the source of the water contamination. It found that 60% came from factories, 15% from the riverside communities in Surabaya and Sidoarjo, and the rest from the province of Central Java.

The report highlighted the large and increasing pollution load from the 156 factories along the river between Surabaya and Sidoarjo, both in terms of chemical contamination and solid wastes. This showed that in fact the poor urban communities were not responsible for most of the waste or pollution in the river or for contributing to flooding or the degradation of the river's ecological integrity. The riverside communities and the university published and distributed the report to the government, the provincial parliament, and the community at large via the mass media. They also held discussions to determine whether it would be possible for communities to live on the riverbank without destroying their environment. This information was also disseminated via local and national newspapers, television and radio.

1. Uplink Surabaya is part of a national network of 14 secretariats across Indonesia, established in 2002 by the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC). UPC's focus is to show the strength of people, to help establish community organisations like PWS, and to support them throughout their development. This is one of four profiles of Uplink secretariats; the others are: *Reconstructing Life after the Tsunami: The work of Uplink Banda Aceh in Indonesia* (Ade Syukrizal, Wardah Hafidz, and Gabriela Sauter, Gatekeeper 137i); *Uplink Porong: Supporting community-driven responses to the mud volcano disaster in Sidoarjo, Indonesia* (Mujtaba Hamdi, Wardah Hafidz, and Gabriela Sauter; Gatekeeper 137j); and *The how, when and why of community organisational support: Uplink Yogyakarta in Indonesia* (Awali Saeful Thohir, Wardah Hafidz and Gabriela Sauter, Gatekeeper 137k). These profiles were developed with the support of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR).

The government's response to the pollution problem was to propose widening and deepening the rivers.² This would mean evicting the riverside communities and making concrete V-shaped riverbanks to prevent future flooding (Figure 1A). The government stipulated that a 12-15 metre space should be created between the riverbank and settlements. With broader margins on each side of the river, they would be better able to access the river to clean it regularly. This would involve demolishing 3,400 houses.

FIGURE 1: GOVERNMENT VS. PWS MODEL



On the other hand, the PWS's technical study showed that if the rivers were deepened, with vertical riverbanks (Figure 1B), only 3-5 metres would be needed on each side of the riverbank to allow river-cleaners to pass along it. In this case, the riverside communities would only need to vacate manageable amounts of space between their houses and the river.

The different perspectives and technical approaches between the communities (PWS) and the government created some difficulty in negotiations. According to Whisnu Sakti Buana, an MP in the provincial government: *"The government had a technical team, and the people had one too. And the judge was the Parliament – we had to decide which was better."*

From relocation to renovation

Between 2003 and 2006, while the government was deciding what action to take, the PWS began strengthening its organisation with encouragement from Uplink Surabaya. It introduced various programmes, including composting and recycling (as alternatives to polluting), community savings, the reintroduction of traditional medicine, and children's group activities,

2. Two rivers were involved in the work; River Surabaya and River Wonokromo.

and started pressurising government to reach a decision on the future of their settlements. The residents' aim was to demonstrate to the government and general public their guardianship of their environment, and their capacity to take the initiative on tackling issues like pollution. Indirectly, they were also developing a stronger sense of solidarity among themselves and improving the living environment of their neighbourhoods.

The PWS's efforts in building public support for the riverside communities via rallies, demonstrations and using the press, and by making their concept of community development a reality (with the construction of streets, housing improvements, settlement 'greening', etc.), eventually forced the government to make a decision. The provincial parliament assessed both the plans set forth by the government and the riverside community. They concluded that riverbank settlements brought an important element of life to the city; if these communities were evicted, there would be very serious social and political consequences, destroying the social foundations of the people of Surabaya and the neighbouring villages, towns and cities all along the river: *"We had a choice. We could have dealt with a low technical cost [referring to the government's riverbank model in Figure 1 (A)] and a high social cost, or with the people's model, we would have high technical costs, but low social costs."*³ The decision came down to a very basic cost-benefit analysis, which in the end came out in favour of the PWS. The government saw the advantages for them; they would get access to the river so it could be cleaned and dredged, maintain social stability, and communities would be the guardians of the river, or *Jogokali*. With this policy, the government was also able to limit the riverside communities to their current numbers, preventing the construction of new buildings and migration of new families along the river. PWS thus drove the change in approach from one of relocation to one of renovation.

Participatory law-making

The parliamentary body responsible for dealing with this issue came together with the riverside dwellers (represented by the PWS) and the provincial government to write a bylaw governing the future of the riverside settlements. This bylaw, enacted on October 5 2007, was a combination of the different stakeholders' ideas. As the government was unable to speak to each riverside dweller, the PWS represented the community, allowing for productive negotiations and the consolidation of the community's proposal; this is evident in the fact that it was only PWS communities who were involved in negotiating with government. The government made community visits to try to understand the issues they were facing and how they planned to renovate their communities to fulfill the regulations. Mr Whisnu Sakti Buana, an MP in the provincial government who was on the special team to deal with the riverside issue, explains:

There was special difficulty in trying to come to an agreement between the government and the villages, but we had faith it could happen if we directly involved the villagers. This is the first time in Indonesia that we made a regulation with villagers. This is the first time we made a regulation with three parties – it is usually just government and parliament.

3. Whisnu Sakti Buana, pers. comm., in a conversation on June 25, 2008 at the Provincial Parliament in Surabaya with the authors.

The mechanics of poverty reduction and environmental management

The renovation challenge

The new policy gave the riverside communities five years, from October 2007, to upgrade their communities, “downsize” their houses to make room for a road alongside the river, re-organise their houses so that they face the river and implement a community waste management system (including recycling). In that way the river would become the focal point of the community, and the toilets would be shifted away from the river, so that waste could be processed in septic tanks before entering the river. The government would take responsibility for building the riverside roads, deepening the river, and clearing the accumulated waste from the riverbed. The five-year time limit was chosen to correspond with the current party's term in government, and so that the community could demonstrate how it had changed over the years. If they fail to achieve everything within this time period, the government has the right to evict them. Five years provides communities with enough time to make the incremental changes that their savings will allow. However, whether or not five years is sufficient is a question many community members continue to ask (see below).

In Bratang, renovations began in March 2008, and every week a different house is renovated as a joint exercise. For most community members, this is the first step in changing the layout of their houses. *“The important thing is that we make the houses face the river so that if parliament comes, they can see that we have already started the upgrading process”*, states one Bratang resident. The intention is to install septic tanks for each group of five or six riverside houses between the first and second rows. *“This is togetherness!”*, laughs the same member. Once water leaves the septic tanks, it will be clean enough to enter the river.

In the second row, houses are also being made smaller to make space for composting and domestic recycling. Mr Andreas Suhadi, the PWS General Secretary, comments: *“This way we can really show the government that we can make this area better, not just how it looks. We need to change how the rest of the city sees us.”*

The houses are also being transformed in terms of their quality and structure. Mr Waras, the Renovations Co-ordinator from Gunung Sari, explains the renovation process. Together with the PWS he discusses the various parts of the renovations, from the width of the street and the materials needed, to the shape the houses will take once they have been completed. Unrenovated houses are mostly “semi-permanent” in that they are primarily made of wood. But wooden houses, according to many community members, have negative connotations (they are perceived to be ugly, imply poverty and lack sturdiness). Thus families in these riverside communities tend to rebuild or repair their houses with concrete. The new designs, however, depend on families' needs and of course their savings. Since the plots for these houses will be smaller to make room for the road, families need to decide whether they can afford to build a second floor to make up for the loss of living space.

Savings

The PWS has placed a strong emphasis on savings so that poor people can gradually collect money to finance their renovations. Savings also imply a capacity to make regular payments and to thus repay loans, if needed, for renovation. A member of Uplink explains: *“This is one way to organise people. If they are to renovate their house, they need money, so we form groups to save little by little. Here, there is not yet enough money saved for the renovations, but we hope by the end, there will be.”* Savings groups are also a mechanism for gathering community members and creating solidarity among the people (Box 1).

BOX 1. COMMUNITY SAVINGS IN RT 1 GUNUNG SARI

Mrs Kartika is the coordinator and a collector for the savings group in her neighbourhood, RT 1 in Gunung Sari. Of the 60 houses in this settlement, all are saving. Women mainly do the savings on behalf of their household; in each house, women are responsible for most of the household finances. They go to the market to buy food for their family, and keep the leftover money for their savings. Each household saves around IDR 1000-5000 (US \$0.11-0.50) each day, which is collected by four collectors. Households in RT 1 began saving in 2003, but not specifically for renovations. In 2005 the community established a savings programme specifically for housing renovations, as well as a short-term savings programme for income generation and short-term loans. Since the government policy of October 2007, the women of RT 1 have intensified their savings, spurred on by the five-year deadline. *“Aside from having saved money for our renovations, we have organised women to achieve a form of unity or togetherness so that we can distribute information from outside our community to reach everybody. Now it is not just the men who have all the knowledge. At the beginning of the Paguyuban, the men had all the power, but now the women have more power and are active in organizing”*, explains Mrs Kartika. The long-term savings are used solely for housing renovations, and are deposited in a bank. The short-term savings, on the other hand, are used for community income generating activities, such as selling food during Ramadhan, the Muslim fasting month. The profits accrued from these activities are redistributed to the savings members once a year. This fund is very important because it provides an easily-accessible source of money in harsh times if a family cannot afford to pay schools fees, for example, or if there has been a medical emergency. *“Before, the savings group had financial problems, but now, if someone falls sick, they can borrow from the savings group. And socially, it is also very different. Before the savings, people did not know each others’ problems, or a neighbour’s condition. When a community member comes to collect the savings, it is not just about ‘where is your money?’ but we share experiences, talk about things, ask about each others’ family. The community is more united than before, and there is a bigger feeling of caring between neighbours.”*

Savings in Bratang started in 2002, after the initial threats of eviction, but have intensified in parallel with the growing threat of eviction from the municipality. Mr Unu from RT2 of Bratang Village comments:

“We feel closer now that the community has been saving together. Before, we just met once a week or so, now we are much closer and have even started new activities. We feel that since we are closer, we have more negotiating power, because we are now involved in making the rules for riverside communities. This gives us a good opportunity to learn about laws, architecture, and planning with help from some universities and NGOs.”

For example, Atma Jaya Catholic University Indonesia, Gadjra Mada University (UGM) and Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS) are providing the community (as well as others) with technical advice; the University of Airlangga provides judicial guidance; and Petra University, Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) and the University of Tjujuhbelas Agustus (Untag Surabaya) help with children's study groups.

Beyond savings and renovations: the wider impacts of community organising

Dealing with poverty, environment and tenure issues does not only involve uniting communities via savings groups; these issues are also tackled through community activities, projects, strong communication and information dissemination. In Semampir, female riverside dwellers now hold a weekly muslim prayer meeting to keep in touch, maintain a strong sense of unity and discuss any new developments relevant to their community. On Sunday mornings, the entire community gets together to sweep the streets and river to keep the neighbourhood clean and respectable.

The community's Advocacy Officer in Semampir, Mr Kacung (a local taxi driver and riverside resident), regularly informs people of recent changes or updates from the PWS and the government regarding the evictions and the renovations process. He does this using the community bulletin board (which is present in each community), informal discussions and in monthly community meetings, which are often attended by other PWS representatives. The Semampir community built a library and meeting room in 2003 to demonstrate their commitment to education and their ability to organise the community. In Bratang, a library was recently opened for both children and adults. English is taught there and people learn to make handicrafts from recycled materials. Representatives from Gunung Sari attend meetings with the Provincial Government of East Java and Parliament, particularly Commission C, which deals with education, and Commission B, which deals with the environment and economy.

Some indirect changes from community upgrading include better access to people's houses and children now having a place to play that is supervised at night. Many inhabitants express their joy at having a cleaner living environment. Before the process began, houses were very crowded and open spaces were cluttered with rubbish. Now, the streets are safe, orderly, clean and green (Box 2). Organic waste is composted and inorganic waste is collected on a regular basis. After an exchange visit to Thailand (see below), there have also been many social changes, and the PWS communities have learned the value of teamwork, organisation and solidarity.

BOX 2. MEDICINAL PLANTS: A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Members from Bratang explain why they plant medicinal plants and herbs along their community's walkway: *"Not every house has healing plants, but there is at least one patch in every RT that is accessible for the community. We all use these plants and they are very important for us – not just to make the village look green. For example, we use kitolot (a flower) to heal eye problems, and binahong to speed up the healing process if we cut ourselves, like aloe vera".*

How external acceptance has led to internal development

Riverside communities have long suffered from a reputation as dirty slums that damage the environment or that harbour criminals. But alongside its renovations process, the community has begun a campaign to destroy this stigma in order to promote public support and help convince the government not to evict them. The PWS therefore publishes riverside communities' stories in local and regional newspapers to reveal what they are really like, how they are changing and what actions they have undertaken. These highlight that they can be a resource for the city in protecting the river's ecological integrity, and that they can contribute to the city at large. The communities themselves insist that they want to be the river's guardians and to show how they can achieve this they have organised many activities to build positive public opinion. For example, once a year they organise traditional ceremonies which are open to the public and which hinge on the belief that they are part of the river and must honour it. Last year, Bratang and Gunung Sari villages won a city-wide Green and Clean Village competition in Surabaya to motivate villages to clean and maintain their environment, inspire other communities, and show the city that they do not deserve their reputation as a dirty slum settlement. Such ceremonies and public recognition encourage community members to continue their processes of environmental management and community upgrading. In other words, generating acceptance from the outside helps a community develop from the inside.

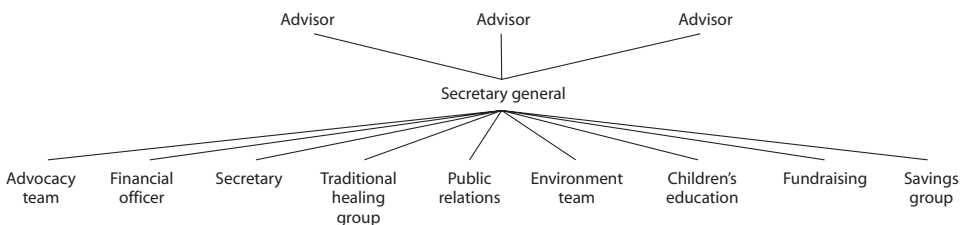
The organisation and structure of the PWS

The PWS holds a meeting once a month to share information from each *kampung*, make plans and identify and solve problems together (e.g. in programme management). As Mr Andreas Suhadi, the General Secretary of the PWS, comments:

I think this is the best way to organise the people and to make good plans for each community because this has become the problem for the whole of the riverside, not only for one community, or Uplink or community organisers, so we have to make plans, and make our own decisions for our own needs. Why do we do it together? Because even today they have their own customs, own needs, but eviction has become a common problem. That is why we need to work together and plan together.

The PWS has an organisational structure of three advisors (Figure 2) working with a secretary general who speaks on behalf of the communities when liaising with Uplink, the government, the parliament and the general public. Under the secretary general are a number of groups, teams and individuals (19 staff in total): one financial officer, an assistant to the secretary general, a traditional healing group, a public relations group, an advocacy team, an environment team, a savings group, a children's education group and a fundraising group.

FIGURE 2. PWS'S STRUCTURE



The PWS functions with hardly any funding. PWS has refused funding from some organisations because it places a strong importance on working with partner organisations who understand its history and processes, and allows it the freedom of independence. Although it has developed a number of income-generating activities, communities' lack of marketing knowledge and expertise has made it difficult for them to sell their products. In Gunung Sari 2 there is a block-making unit (for walkways/streets). Four community members are employed by this initiative, yet their salaries are highly dependent on sales, to the point where they often take very little income home. Some of the other income-generating activities include the sales of medicinal remedies from plants grown in the communities and others purchased elsewhere; the recycling and sale of plastics; the collection and sale of household compost; and the sale of homemade active micro-organism, an organic liquid fertiliser made from fermented fruit juices. Currently, these products are being sold through contacts with other organisations but sales remain limited for these environmentally-friendly products.

The support from Uplink

Uplink has helped the PWS in many ways:

- It has helped unite the diverse communities whom were threatened with eviction. Uplink representatives from other cities came to Surabaya and encouraged people to get involved in the PWS process.
- It provided the PWS with the know-how and encouragement to negotiate with the government. For example:
 - It demonstrated that all the communities needed to develop a common position and to put forward potential solutions that the government and parliament could work with, rather than simply opposing eviction.
 - It drew on knowledge from the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) in developing a strategy for action and mapping and planning the settlements. In 2005, ten representatives from the PWS participated in an exchange visit to Thailand where they learned about composting, planting, renovations and savings. Mr Ryono, a community member from Bratang, stated that the most important lesson he learned from the exchange trip was about the house upgrading process *“because I was really able to relate [what I saw] to my own situation, my own place of living”*.
- It has advised the PWS on how to change public opinion about the riverside settlements.
- It has a technical team that helps design houses, villages and their general environment; the team works by facilitating the villagers to make their own designs. Uplink also makes use of its national and international network to support communities with technical expertise; for example, three architects who worked on post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh came to Surabaya to help communities find less costly ways of building strong houses (see *Gatekeeper* paper 137i). They found that using bamboo rather than steel reinforcements has help cut back renovation costs, yet maintained the structural integrity of the houses. The Uplink team also brought in new ideas such as the takakura basket for composting organic waste, and how to develop a communal composting ground.

- Uplink networks help develop working relationships with other NGOs, universities, research entities, advocacy and law groups. For example, two environmental NGOs, Walhi and Ecoton, have teamed up with the PWS and Uplink (and many others) to get political commitments to deal with the region's many environmental problems (Box 3).
- Uplink team members have provided training to community members in traditional healing (acupuncture and acupressure); the training is cyclical so that more advanced trainees teach new trainees.
- Perhaps most importantly, Uplink is facilitating a form of community organisation that is not dependent upon other organisations, institutes or funding. When Uplink withdraws, the organised communities will remain.

Challenges and constraints

The short timeframe

Although government officials may think that five years is sufficient time to renovate all the houses, it seems they have failed to understand the difficulties for the urban poor in accessing finance. Many poor families are having trouble collecting the necessary money in this limited period of time. For this reason, the PWS places a strong emphasis on community savings. Andreas Sohadi explains: *"If we can't get funding, we will use our savings to renovate, if we can, then we will use our savings to pay back the loans. Either way, savings are very important. Each family needs to save."* Although these communities are relatively poor, they have demonstrated the capacity to save (though not large amounts), and would benefit from loans that they could pay back in the future. Loans would be beneficial for these communities because they would help them start and finish their renovations much earlier, and would also help extend the pay-back period so that the poorer families can accumulate their savings over a longer period of time.

Given the PWS's nearly non-existent budget, Uplink is applying for funding on its behalf. Currently, Uplink is seeking support for a revolving fund that could also be used in other cities. This proposal is still in the planning process, as Uplink and the PWS are trying to determine how much money would be needed from external sources.

Institutional challenges

Despite the 2007 policy, the municipal government continues to find new reasons to try to evict the riverside communities, particularly in Surabaya. This is frustrating the riverside dwellers' hopes for some form of secure tenure. Fortunately, the positive relations developed over the years between parliament and the PWS have meant that riverside settlements have some form of institutional support in their struggle, and since the river is under the jurisdiction of the provincial parliament, the latter has been able to defend the people successfully.

The challenge now is to overcome the municipal government's tendency to see this approach as a special case, or a one-off, and avoiding applying it in other situations. The PWS must now work to pressure government and parliament to make this case a precedent for applying this approach more generally.

Community challenges

The psychological stress of this five-year battle against evictions is beginning to take its toll on communities' energy: "What if after all of this, we get no results?". Others vacillate between wanting to renovate and feeling angry that they have to make their houses and living spaces smaller: "It belongs to me, why should I make it smaller?" asks one community member in Semampir. According to Andreas Suhadi, "There are always one or two people who get bored of meetings, asking 'why must we meet every week, every month?', but once they begin to understand the importance of these meetings, they come around. It is the commitment of the Paguyuban not to stop motivating people."

Many leaders point to the difficulties of mobilising entire communities. Often people do not realise that the eviction threats are real. To be able to present alternatives to governments, many people have to shift from being reactive to becoming proactive; otherwise their battle to protect their tenure will be lost. The question is no longer about how to move, but about how to move together in the renovation and development process even though everybody has a different starting point and different needs. Thus, prioritising activities and initiatives is key to moving together, as well as strengthening people's understanding of the situation and encouraging them to begin the process as quickly as possible. Many communities have yet to begin their renovations while they save money to purchase materials, but there has been significant progress in making room for the riverside roads.

Difficulties in scaling up

The PWS continually tries to mobilise other communities, but they have had difficulty encouraging others to join their union. In the past, many communities have not understood the PWS's purpose or intentions and have refused to join. The PWS is currently trying to include street vendors, who are threatened with imminent eviction, in its movement in order to protect their rights. The PWS is committed to supporting other groups, promoting its work and asking others to work for it; it also publicises its programmes beyond riverside communities so other communities and NGOs can learn from its positive experiences (Box 3). For

BOX 3. SEEKING GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO CONSERVE AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

On June 25, 2008, as part of a large coalition of NGOs/CBOs, the PWS, Uplink, and some 20 other local/national NGOs invited all the candidates for governor of the province of East Java to sign a letter of commitment to the environment. This letter of commitment includes a list of important environmental concerns in the province of East Java, including the man-made mud volcano disaster that is destroying the lives and environment of thousands of people in a city near Surabaya (see *Gatekeeper* 137j). This demonstrates how local organisations can and do help other situations; they work beyond their set mandate and work together to find solutions that can have influence at a greater scale than their particular geographic or thematic area of intervention. One of the candidates, Mr Sucipto, says in his speech: "I hope this area [referring to the riverside communities in Surabaya] will be a better place to live and that others will follow in your footsteps... I am excited about the togetherness of the riverside communities, and it is with this togetherness that riverside dwellers can build a better village."

example, the village across the river from Gunung Sari saw what was happening and the village leader came over to ask how to start a similar process. Although they have not yet joined the PWS, they are benefiting from its experience.

Some lessons learnt about influencing policy

The PWS process represents an important step forward for democracy in Indonesia. By including the people in the decision-making process, a closer relationship with the provincial government and parliament has been built, and the nation has been shown that it is possible to negotiate fair solutions to difficult issues such as eviction and the environment. Ultimately, the process demonstrates the strength and ability of ordinary people to take matters into their own hands and empower themselves. As Mr Wisnu asserts: *"This is the first time to open the mind of the government. How can we make the process better? We need to respect people, listen. It is better if people have control of their own problems. They know the problem best, so they can solve it best. Hopefully other governments will now follow this example."*

The PWS identifies the following factors that have helped its effectiveness in poverty reduction and environmental management:

- Its collaboration with other NGOs, organisations, and universities and its networks of contacts has allowed it to gain knowledge, understanding, and experience and has played a major role in its success when negotiating with government.
- The process of renovating, negotiating with government, and promoting the positive aspects of riverside community life (to lift their negative public perception) has created changes which have permeated every aspect of their relationship to each other and their environment.
- The PWS launched a strong campaign to change the government's eviction mantra to one of "renovation not relocation". This approach helped the riverside communities shape their argument and demonstrates how thinking in a slightly different way can benefit many.
- Fruitful negotiations require that the facts are understood and that alternative solutions are put forward. Rather than simply claim poverty and helplessness, the PWS proposed a solution and tried to show the parliament and government how it could be a win-win solution for all parties. As Mr Wisnu explains: *"People must be organised first, before they start talking to government to explain their situation, their problem. Otherwise, we will have a very fragmented understanding of the problem and it may appear very unclear, very abstract.... If you want to listen to what villagers want and if you want to include their wishes in a solution, people must have an argument, not just ask for help. There is a difference between saying 'Help us because we are poor', and 'Listen, we have this problem and here is a possible solution'. And that is what gave us faith that people would have the right solution."*
- PWS's strategic relationship with the media has not only had political impacts for the riverside communities, but by inviting city officials to public prayers, annual offerings to the river, etc. it has also refreshed and promoted traditional and religious culture within the PWS communities and throughout the city.

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