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Member Insight

by **Maria R Nindita Radyati**

My journey in the third sector started in early 2001. It was by sheer coincidence that my journey in this area actually started. My initial ambitions centred on international finance where I gained a masters degree.

Remembering that quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson "Life is a journey not a destination," the real benefit to me and others that I can influence is not the destination rather it is the journey and all of the joy and challenges that will present themselves. I never thought that finance was the destination but also I was not clear of the journey. I cannot forget the significant role of Samiul Hasan that helped shape my new journey into the world of the Third Sector and Governance, one of the many joys along my journey.

At the end of 2001, Samiul and I joined forces to undertake a qualitative research project. The project involved philanthropy research across eleven ASEAN countries including my place of birth, Indonesia. This project proved to be joyful but challenging. On the joyful side--the start of the research provided my boss, the Rector of Trisakti University, with a platform to establish a research center, The Center for Entrepreneurship, Change, and Third Sector (CECT). He assigned me to lead the organisation. Part of the research was about the history and legal environment of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs). That way I learned considerably more about TSOs within the Indonesian context. On the challenge side--to achieve valid and comprehensive data to support our research, required working past midnight on many occasions to get and maintain good internet connections. The terminology of Philanthropy and Third Sector were very new to us and that was my first time doing qualitative research and writing a research report in English. It was the first time as well for me to form contracts with my colleagues, who had quantitative research backgrounds, to help me with the research. It was not easy at all to organise people and mentor them to conduct qualitative research, which I was not sure myself whether I was doing the right thing.

In early 2002, the research was finally published in the website. Apparently it had to be updated every six months. This way my skill was enhanced and I started to have a new network in the TSOs area. In that same year, Samiul Hasan suggested to me to present our project's research at the ISTR Regional Conference in Beijing. On the challenge side--it was the first time for me to present at an International Conference, and I was only provided 10 minutes to present the findings. On the joyful side--it confirmed this was the journey my life would now take. I became passionate and emboldened to want to make a difference not only in Indonesia but also globally. It was at this conference that I enrolled as a member of ISTR.

In early 2003, Sami involved me again in the Research about "Asia's Third Sector Governance for Accountability and Performance" together with four other countries (Philippines, China, India, and Thailand). My role was to lead the Indonesian aspects of the research. This was a three year research project (2003-2005). Here I learned more about qualitative research, because I had to interview 100 organisations and more than 40 key informants and make content analysis. The Ford Foundation provided funding for the research.

Then in 2005, I joined the ISTR Regional Conference in Bangkok to present "Governance of Third Sector Organisation in Indonesia." In September 2005, I commenced my Ph.D at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). I was lucky that during my study, in 2007, again I was able to get a grant from the Ford Foundation for a project called "Business for Social Responsibility," where I established a post graduate program with specialisation in CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). This period of study and the establishment of the CSR masters degree program (2005-2010) was not easy, but it highlighted further joys and even more challenges along my journey. I finished my study in early 2010.

On the challenge side--I missed many of the ISTR Conferences, I had extended periods of time living away from my kids and family, working entirely in English, and living and adapting to a new culture. On the joy side--it gave me greater insights into the Third Sector, many new colleagues, lifelong friends, and a raft of new ideas that I could bring back to Indonesia to really make a difference.

Then in early 2010, Samiul Hasan again encouraged me, but this time, to apply for an "Expression of Interest" to host ISTR Regional Conference for 2011. This required a comprehensive submission and presentation at the Regional Meeting in Istanbul in 2010. Our contenders at the time were Australia and Hong Kong. My strategy was to show many beautiful pictures of Bali in the presentation to win the heart of participants in the meeting to choose us as the host. Finally, I won their heart! One of the great joys on my journey but the challenges lay ahead.

Hosting the ISTR Regional Conference was a very valuable experience that gave me mixed feelings, wary and excited. The most difficult challenge was to get sponsorship from the private sector. This sector perceived that an academic conference will not bring many participants, therefore sponsoring such event will not give them much exposure or return on their investment. In Indonesia, academic conferences are not perceived as a popular seminar to go to, because they could not find solutions for their business. They would listen to theories that most of the time are not linked to real situations. Nevertheless, I thank God that I could finally convince my dear friends, who had position and power in their companies, to provide us with some sponsorships.

We provided delegates at the Bali Regional Conference, with a variety of Indonesian experiences including at least five different styles of Bali dancing. At the dinner the participants were given the chance to sing, dance and take pictures with the Bali dancers on the stage. The next day we organised a field visit to a social enterprise, Telapak, that operates certified fishery and coral adoption programs with a mission to preserve coral in the sea near Serangan Village. The delegates collected about USD 150. This was used to 'adopt' some corals being grown by Telapak. The corals were tagged with the ISTR name on them. We then went by a small raft to have the corals 'planted' in the sea. The field trip ended with a visit to "Ulu Watu Pura", a temple, which was located up in the hill, where we could all see the beautiful scenery and enjoy the spectacular sunset. After viewing the sunset the participants enjoyed "Kecak Dance", a very famous local dance which brought Bali ISTR Regional Conference to a close.

After hosting that event, I was honoured to be given the chance to become one of the Academic Committee for the PhD Seminar in Siena, Italy, in 2012. I was also lucky and honoured to be offered a place as a Board Member of ISTR. The first experience as a board member was a meeting as part of the ISTR Regional Conference in Korea, in 2013. At this point of the journey two other colleagues deserve a mention as part of the major joys I have experienced so far, Margery Daniels and Wendy Earles. Due to their professionalism, passion and patience they provided mentorship as I navigated the challenges of being a board member.

Being part of ISTR as an individual member and one of the board members enables me to analyse ideas from different perspectives, broaden my network, enrich my academic experiences, enhance my confidence and continue my journey. I am very grateful to be part of ISTR.