Discussing the Social Entrepreneurial Movement as a Means of Provoking Normative Change in West Kalimantan, Indonesia:

An Interview With Kinari Webb

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Kinari Webb is a Yale-trained physician and currently runs the healthcare and environmental non-profit organization Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI) that is based in Sukadana, Indonesia. She has lived and worked near Gunung Palung National Park in Indonesian Borneo for 20 years. In this interview, conducted through email correspondence in March, 2013, Kinari talks about the social entrepreneurial movement, provides background on social and legal norms as they relate to illegal logging in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, and discusses the structure and methods used by ASRI to provoke positive societal change.

Kinari Webb ist eine in Yale ausgebildete Ärztin und leitet derzeit die gemeinnützige Gesundheits- und Umweltorganisation Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI) in Sukadana, Indonesien. Für 20 Jahre lebte und arbeitete sie in der Nähe des Nationalparks Gunung Palung in Borneo, Indonesien. In diesem Interview, das mittels E-Mail-Korrespondenz im März 2013 durchgeführt wurde, spricht Kinari über die soziale Unternehmensbewegung, gibt Hintergrundwissen über soziale und gesetzliche Normen und deren Bezug zu illegaler Abholzung in West Kalimantan, Indonesien, und diskutiert die Struktur und Methoden der Organisation ASRI für die Förderung eines positiven sozialen Wandels.

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BETHANY D. KOIS: William Drayton said, "The job of a social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is stuck and to provide new ways to get it unstuck. He or she finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps."[2] As a social entrepreneur yourself, how do you define social entrepreneurism?

KINARI WEBB: I love that definition. However, I think it suggests that the entrepreneurs come up with all the ideas and execute those ideas themselves. In my experience, idea creation

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2 Leviner, N., Crutchfield, L. R., & Wells, D. (2007). *Understanding the impact of social entrepreneurs: ASHOKA's answer to the challenge of measuring effectiveness*. ASHOKA Working Paper. Retrieved from https://www.ashoka.org/sites/ashoka/files/UnderstandingtheImpactChapterPDF.pdf

doesn't happen like that – and if it did, the ideas wouldn't be as good as those that are created collaboratively. I define social entrepreneurism a little differently. For example, I'm good at creating a space where great ideas happen. I'm good at recognizing when an idea is potentially game-changing and at working together with others to bring those ideas to fruition. I think we need to be careful about supporting Drayton's definition of social entrepreneurism because it encourages people to work individually and not truly honor the communities and staff they work with. In my experience, the best ideas always come from the people who are experiencing the problem. We need to support collaborative idea creation and social entrepreneurs can, absolutely, facilitate that type of action.

KOIS: Social entrepreneurial ventures are increasingly targeted towards sweeping, long-term change instead of immediate, small-scale effects. Why do you think that is?

WEBB: Because sweeping long-term change is what is necessary. We cannot view world issues as a series of discreet problems solvable on their own. We exist in an interconnected web of culture, economics, and law. If we fail to recognize that, we can actually make things worse. For example, working towards decreasing poverty in a way that results in lowered human health and higher environmental degradation will not improve a community's well-being in the long run. Making one thing better by making others worse is not a sustainable solution. I think that's why many people are working to tackle these problems on many fronts.

KOIS: Let's talk numbers. In the 26 countries studied by the *Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project*, citizen organizations now employ 19 million workers and engage the equivalent of another 11 million full-time volunteers.[3] The UN Human Development Report estimates that one in five people participate in a citizen organization.[4] What do you think is driving this explosive growth?

WEBB: I think there are two things. First, I just read the brilliant book *Better Angels of Our Nature* by Steven Pinker. He persuasively argues that throughout all human history our circles of compassion have been expanding – from family, to tribe, to ethnic group, to nation, and then slowly beyond those borders to encompass all humanity. I would also argue that we are expanding our compassion to include other life on earth and even the earth itself – the global boat that we all share. That is the first reason I think we care more about others. The second reason is that, for the first time in human history, many of us no longer have to worry about our basic needs. People are realizing that material things do not, in fact, bring happiness. If that doesn't bring happiness and meaning, what does? The answer I, and millions of others, have found is that working to make the world a better place is fulfilling in a way that nothing else is.

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3 Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies. (2004). *Global civil society: Dimensions of the nonprofit sector* (vol. 2). Retrieved from http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/comparative-nonprofit-sector/cnp-publications

4 United Nations Development Programme. (2000). *Human development report 2000*. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2000_ch0.pdf

KOIS: Salamon has observed that "we are in the midst of a 'global associational revolution', a massive expansion of structured citizen activity outside the boundaries of the market and the state."[5] Do you think this movement has the capacity to provoke widespread societal changes?

WEBB: Absolutely! I agree that an almost unseen revolution in the way the world is governed is taking place. People are removing power from governments and, in many cases, governments are struggling to keep up with changes that have already taken place. And we mustn't forget that much of what is happening on a global scale is also happening across national boundaries. Globally, people are working together on issues they care about. This is possible today largely thanks to technology. For example, here in Borneo, global communities are partnering with the local communities to protect a national park that is home to 10 percent of the world's remaining orangutans. This is happening partially because the Indonesian government does not have the capacity to protect it. What amazes me is that the world has not woken up to how powerful a force this kind of citizen action can be, but they will. It gives me enormous hope for the future.

KOIS: You work in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, in an area near Gunung Palung National Park. From my understanding, there has been extensive deforestation in this area in recent years. Can you tell us about illegal logging there?

WEBB: Twenty years ago, when I first came to West Kalimantan to study orangutans, it was said that an orangutan could go from coast to coast without touching the ground. That is no longer the case. Borneo has had the fastest rate of deforestation the world has ever known, with more wood coming out in the 1980s than from all of South America and Africa combined. Sadly, this has left the few national parks as islands of forest and made their conservation even more critical. But, in reality, these parks are just paper parks and a few major factors have led local people to continue cutting down the forest. First, the lack of education means that local populations have few alternatives to logging, even though one of our village surveys suggests that 100 percent of village loggers would prefer alternative work. Second, there are very few local sources of liquidity. If people need money for health care or education, one of the easiest ways to get it is through illegal logging. Ninety-nine percent of the people around the park want to protect it, but what choice do they have if they need to log to pay for their child's health care? Having to choose between long-term and short-term well-being is a horrible choice. Third, there are now few sources of timber outside the park. This drives villagers to enter the park to get timber for income.

KOIS: It seems that the traditional approach to illegal logging, through the Indonesian legal system, doesn't adequately address these local problems. Could you describe the methods that ASRI uses to stimulate and produce societal change? Do you work toward creating new social norms that provide social sanctions to villagers who continue illegal logging?

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5 Salamon, L. (2002). *The state of nonprofit America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

WEBB: In a round-about way, yes. We work to harness social pressure using a variety of methods. First, we employ local leaders to monitor the logging of their villages and to advocate for a reduction in logging. We call these local leaders Forest Guardians. This program was the idea of the local communities. There is a Forest Guardian for every hamlet that borders Gunung Palung National Park. They work together with individual loggers – most of whom are their childhood friends – to find alternative livelihoods. Second, while locals can always access care in our clinic, patients that come from non-logging villages are provided a 70-percent-reduction in the cost of their health care services. Rainforest conservation donors provide the funds to cover the remainder of the bills. The bill reduction determination is, thus, made on a village level, not on an individual level. This is partly because we could never get data on an individual level, but also because the whole community has to deal with the negative effects of deforestation, not just the loggers. Therefore, we hope the whole village will work together to stop it. Third, we provide community education on the importance of protecting the forest for people's long-term well-being. However, our experience is that we are often preaching to the converted and sessions are more a time for people to talk about how they value the forest and want to protect it. People talk about how critical the trees are as a watershed to prevent flooding and that malaria seems to increase in logged areas.

KOIS: Do you think your efforts begin to change the logging behavior of villagers?

WEBB: Our data suggests that it is. We have taken various village level surveys to try to understand how our methods have impacted the community. Sixty-two percent of the people we surveyed and who knew about the health care discount had discussed it with others. And 95 percent of the people who discussed it believed that our methods were decreasing logging in their village. As for the Forest Guardian program, in its first year of operation, we found that 60 percent of the loggers who had worked with a Guardian stopped logging and another 25 percent were considering stopping.

KOIS: It seems that ASRI doesn't condemn illegal logging with inflammatory rhetoric or personal attack of villagers. Is this an intentional strategy?

WEBB: Yes, it is absolutely intentional. We do not see our relationship as confrontational, but rather as a partnership. Together we are seeking solutions where both people and nature benefit. All the best ideas have come from the communities themselves. One man once said to me, "Some conservation organizations just tell us what to do. Don't they realize we are trying to do that? It seems like they don't care about us. But we know that everyone at ASRI truly cares about us and wants what is best for us. That is why we like working with you. We have also never experienced a program where we feel like we own it. We get to design what happens."

KOIS: Can you see the ASRI model being effective at producing positive societal change, introducing new social norms, and improving compliance with environmental law in other places as well?

WEBB: Absolutely. We believe the key elements could be universal. Truly listening to the communities for what the best solutions are, working together to bring in skills and resources from outside when they are not available locally, and seeking ways to enhance both environmental and human well-being at the same time. Our plan is to replicate next in Indonesian Papua. Ideally, people all over the world could address the problem of unsustainable practices in this way.

KOIS: What social or legal norms would improve ASRI's effectiveness?

WEBB: If the rule of law actually worked in Indonesia and people who violated the law could be prosecuted, that would be a wonderful thing. In every nation on earth there are cheaters and people who think only of themselves. Even a tiny bit of negative reinforcement would go a long way. Recently, one of the biggest exotic animal traffickers was caught and prosecuted. That is a wonderful thing. It remains to be seen whether he will be sanctioned or just pays to be released. I am very much in support of Indonesia's efforts to combat corruption. When corruption is not tolerated, both socially and legally, it is a huge help. As an organization, we also work to change corruption. We never pay bribes. My co-founder, Hotlin Ompusungu, has an effective way of responding to a request for a bribe. When asked for one, she lovingly turns the conversation around and instead asks for a donation so we can continue helping people who have no other source of healthcare. We haven't got any donations yet, but they do back-pedal and promise to help us without 'extra' fees. It's interesting, the head of our regency recently told us how much he liked working with our organization because of how ethical we are. It is likely that he is directly or indirectly involved in corruption, but still the norms are changing and even someone participating in the system does not like corruption. I think this is progress for Indonesia and I hope it continues.

KOIS: How has ASRI evolved since its foundation in 2007?

WEBB: Well first off, we have grown from 8 staff to over 90. We estimate that we have had direct contact with about 25,000 of the 60,000 people around the park and with many more indirectly. But this is just the beginning. Changing social norms, improving people's lives, and protecting a precious biological treasure is not a short-term project. Our results are impressive so far. Our surveys indicate a 68 percent decline in logging households and an increase from 6 to 10 out of 30 villages that have completely stopped logging over the last year and a half. Health improvement indicators suggest an 18 percent decline in infant mortality and a 49 percent decline in diarrhea rates. We now have enormous social capital. We have begun to see success in our organic farming program, the Forest Guardians are seeking solutions with their communities, and the health of the community is improving as we improve access to care, immunizations, water, sanitation, and health care knowledge.

KOIS: From a leadership perspective, what have been some critical challenges you have overcome that significantly contribute to the success of ASRI?

WEBB: A year and a half ago, I was stung by a highly venomous jellyfish and almost died. After that, I had residual damage to my autonomic nervous system. I am still not back to full capacity. That was pretty terrifying. I wasn't sure if my team could go on without me. But everyone rose to the challenge. Hotlin has done a fabulous job running the program and taking over managing the staff and grants. One of our Indonesian doctors, Nurchandra Bunawan, took over the clinic operation and the training of all our young Indonesian doctors, as well as the volunteer medical students and residents. We sent him to Yale for further training and they were so impressed with him they gave him a lectureship position. A young woman from the village, who had only a grade school education and had never used a computer when we hired her, is now doing almost all the accounting after taking a correspondence course and learning what I could teach her. Truthfully, they are now running the program better than I did and I am now able to focus on replication. It has been a joy to watch them succeed.

KOIS: Besides from more capital or other tangible assets, what are some intangibles you need in order to be successful?

WEBB: It used to be said of a woman in the 1800s that her most precious possession was her reputation. After living out here, I totally understand that. ASRI has a reputation for listening, for carrying through on its promises, for caring about people, for integrity, and for honoring all ethnicities, religions, and national backgrounds. That reputation is our most precious possession. We guard it jealously.

KOIS: What's next for the social entrepreneurial movement? What needs to happen to continue to build support for and interest in social entrepreneurship?

WEBB: I think an awareness of how powerful small citizen organizations can be – possibly more powerful than governments – is important. Recognition of this truth, research studies that show it, and funding of people who are working on bottom-up solutions is critical. When we first came here, the biggest obstacle was getting our staff and the communities to believe that change was possible and that they could do it themselves. They used to be pessimistic, felt disempowered, and cynical. The change five years later is amazing both in the communities and with our staff. They can't wait to tackle the next issue and are proud to receive global attention for their success. My wish is to give this sense of empowerment to everyone on the planet.

KOIS: What's next for you?

WEBB: Replication first, but I also want to think about social change on a global scale. We are at a critical time in the history of humanity. Population growth and climate change threaten all life on earth. The big question is whether the twenty-first century will be a Great Turning or a Great Ending, as Bill Plotkin calls it. I worry that there are not enough people talking about the possibility for us as humans to create great change. I have spent the last

seven years watching it happen on a small scale. I want to convey hope and encouragement to others. We don't have much time left and, if we are going to save our planet, we have to expand our circle of compassion to include the whole earth. Each of us has to work on personal, community, and global scales. On a personal level, we have to honor others and the planet that gives us life. On a community level, we have to work on finding ways to live together more sustainably. And, on a global level, we have to be willing to work across the planet, offering our skills, passions, and resources wherever they are needed. My experience is that what is needed in one place happens to be excess in another. By working together we can do it.

KOIS: Thank you for participating in this interview. It was wonderful talking with you!

WEBB: And wonderful to get to think about your great questions! Thank you.