

THE PULSE OF THE MARKET: NANI'S JOURNEY TO FEMINIST HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

The Seeds of Change in Ambon

For Sarni Siyauta, known as Nani, the path to LAPPAN (Lingkar Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak/Circle for the Empowerment of Women and Children) Ambon, a work began with a chance encounter on the streets of Ambon. While selling goods to support her family after finishing her degree in Islamic Guidance and Counseling, she met Kak Bai, a mentor who recognized her potential and invited her to join the LAPAN. Nani started as a teacher for a small community preschool (PAUD), where she taught children from low-income families not just the alphabet, but the vital "basic words" of life: "please," "thank you," and "sorry". "Change isn't just about knowing A, B, C," Nani reflected, "but the simple ability to say thank you and excuse me, that is a great transformation".



Photo: Ita/Penabulu

NANI'S STORY



Photo: Ita/Penabulu

A Leap Across the Archipelago



In December 2025, Nani was selected to join a Pre-Crisis Market Analysis (PCMA) training in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, organized through the ACT Project, with support from SHIFT Asia to strengthen Women's Rights Organizations in humanitarian work. She represented LAPPAN Ambon, member of WLHL Consortium Network, an opportunity that placed her at the meeting point of gender justice and disaster preparedness.

Being chosen felt like a turning point. She was selected not just to attend, but with the hope that she would bring the knowledge back to Maluku. For Nani, a young single woman, it was also her first time traveling that far alone. The journey, transiting through Makassar and Surabaya, was long and exhausting. But somewhere between those airports, she realized something deeper. "In my heart, I knew, I can actually go this far alone. I'm brave."

The two-week training itself was intense. Market analysis sounded technical and intimidating at first. She worried whether she could really understand it. But the facilitators and participants created a space where questions were welcome, and unfamiliar terms slowly began to make sense. Nani started to see PCMA not as complicated data, but as a practical tool, something that could help ensure humanitarian aid truly supports communities without unintentionally damaging local markets.



Photo: Ita/Penabulu



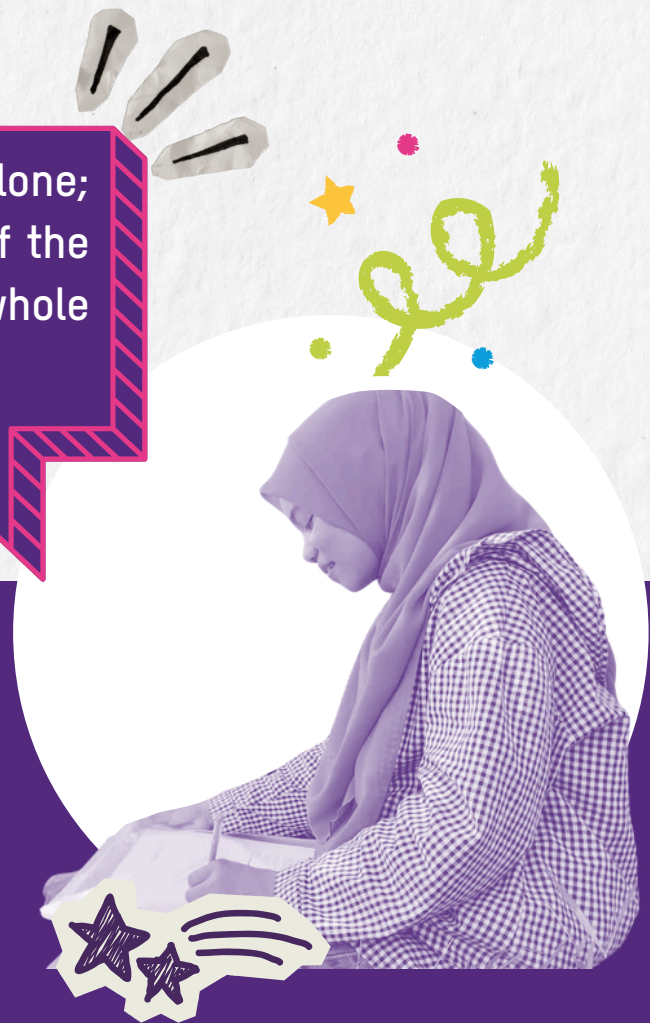
Understanding the Web of the Market

In Kupang, Nani met her trainer, Jermaine, who introduced her to the core philosophy of PCMA: that every humanitarian action has a ripple effect on the local economy. Through a symbolic exercise using a ball of string, Nani visualized how government, farmers, and traders are all inextricably linked.

"There is no such thing as standing alone; everything is connected. If one part of the market system is missing, the whole system is chaotic".

This technical realization took on a human face during a field visit to Desa Bena. Nani's group was tasked with interviewing "marginalized" farmers, those with less than one hectare of land, to see how they fared after Cyclone Seroja.

She discovered the heart-wrenching reality of the "Ijon" system, a predatory debt cycle where farmers borrow a small amount of seeds but must repay with massive quantities of grain, keeping them perpetually impoverished. "After a disaster," Nani realized, "the market system can actually make the poor even poorer".



Lessons in Humanity and Resilience

Kupang also challenged her personally. As a Muslim woman in a predominantly Christian area, she experienced moments of culture shock, from different prayer rhythms to unfamiliar landscapes. Yet what stayed with her most was the generosity of the villagers. Farmers paused their harvest just to talk with her group. Some even refused to eat until their guests had been served.

She met a farmer who had lost all 11 of his cattle in the floods and had no savings to rebuild. She noticed children wearing shoes so worn they barely held together. These moments reshaped her understanding of solidarity.



**“BROTHERHOOD DOESN'T HAVE
TO BE ABOUT BLOOD OR RELIGION,”**

“IT'S ABOUT HUMANITY.”



Bringing the Knowledge Home

Nani returned to Ambon not just with data, but with a mission to build local resilience. She began sharing her PCMA insights with local fishing communities, explaining that when chili prices spike, it is often because they are overly dependent on air transport from other islands. She encouraged them to plant "mini gardens" at home to reduce their reliance on volatile markets.

Looking ahead, Nani hopes humanitarian initiatives like the ACT Project and SHIFT Asia will continue addressing root causes, climate change, waste management, and structural inequalities, not just emergency responses. She dreams of farmers producing their own seeds, free from debt traps.

For Nani, PCMA is not just a technical framework. It is a way to ensure that aid is delivered with care and dignity, so that the right support reaches people at the right time, without harming the very systems they depend on.



About SHIFT Asia and ACT

SHIFT Asia (Supporting Humanitarian Initiatives for Transformation in Asia) is an initiative that advances women's local humanitarian leadership and drives gender-transformative change across Asia, working specifically in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

The Asia Community Preparedness and Transformation (ACT II) program is a three-year project (January 2024–December 2026) aimed at enhancing the disaster resilience of vulnerable communities and local humanitarian actors in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, and Indonesia.