

Building Cocoa Ambassadors: A Case Study on Youth Capacity-Building in Jembrana, Indonesia



Photos: Auditya Sari / Kalimajari Foundation

More than a million farmers in Indonesia are responsible for growing much of the world's cacao.¹ Indonesia has around 1.6 million hectares of cocoa plantations, almost entirely owned by smallholders.² Situated on the western coast of Bali, the Jembrana Regency's tropical climate provides an ideal environment for cacao cultivation. With mountainous areas in the north and lowlands in the south bordering the Indian Ocean, Jembrana has the potential to grow cacao in more than 6,000 hectares with more than 13,000 farmers incorporated in 108 subak abian (traditional farmers groups).³

Despite Indonesia's rich environment for growing cacao, farmers continually struggle with unproductive, unfermented, aging cacao trees they cannot afford to replace.⁴ Indonesia imports around 200,000 tons of fermented cocoa beans from Africa while, most often, only cheap, unfermented beans are bought from Indonesian farmers, who are simply not making enough to live.⁵ One of the greatest challenges cocoa farmers in Indonesia face is a lack of capacity to ferment beans, coupled with doubts from buyers about the quality of farmer-fermented beans. As the global demand for sustainably-produced cocoa continues to rise, it is crucial that Jembrana's farmers are able to access and invest in processes like fermentation in order to improve the quality of their cacao and increase their incomes.

Youth in Jembrana

Like many other regions and sectors, there is a dearth of young farmers entering the cocoa value chain in Jembrana. Only 10% of the farmers in Jembrana are youth. Many young students living in rural areas in Indonesia attend agriculture schools because they are an affordable and accessible alternative to traveling to major cities to study. Very few of those students pursue careers in agriculture upon graduation, and many seek more profitable career paths elsewhere, particularly in tourism. For the young people in Jembrana interested in the local cocoa sector, resources such as land, technical knowledge, and access to cooperatives, whose memberships traditionally comprise of male heads of households, are often out of reach.

In order to ensure future generations of leaders in sustainable agriculture, the Rainforest Alliance is working with partners such as the Kalimajari Foundation to lower the barriers for youth and increase awareness among youth about the potentiality of the cacao sector.

The Kalimajari Foundation and the Rainforest Alliance

The work described in this case study was carried out in partnership between the Kalimajari Foundation and the Rainfor-

est Alliance through the Sector Partnerships program. Based in Bali, the Kalimajari Foundation works on the development and empowerment of local communities through agriculture and green business strategies.⁶ Years of impactful advocacy, research, and development efforts have brought this organization to the forefront of Indonesia's cocoa sector, and it has shaped national cocoa policy and practice.

In 2017, the Rainforest Alliance and the Kalimajari Foundation launched the Sustainable Action and Advocacy in Kakao (SUBAK) project, a lobbying and advocacy initiative aiming to increase awareness about the potentiality of cacao. Since then, the Kalimajari Foundation has trained over 600 farmers in bean fermentation —and importantly, collected lessons about successes and failures. Kalimajari also created an evidence-based cocoa production model specific to the Indonesian context which has now been adopted as the country's official national model for quality cocoa. More recently, Kalimajari began advocating for gender equality by facilitating government programs targeting women cocoa farmers and youth.

YOUTH INTERVENTIONS

A key component of the SUBAK project is to increase awareness among youth about the cocoa value chain in Jembrana. Building upon the gender trainings, the SUBAK team began working closely with young farmers, paying attention to their needs and gaps in knowledge, and inspiring more young people to participate in the program. They also arranged awareness-raising events at local agricultural schools and held a Student Journalism Award to attract students to write about sustainability in cocoa.

In addition to increasing awareness of cacao among youth, the SUBAK team worked to tackle the barriers young people face in joining cocoa cooperatives. One notable success is with the Kerta Semaya Samaniya (KSS) cocoa cooperative, which has changed their membership regulations to allow



young people and women (including single women) to apply for membership. The cooperative also offers internships for young people, providing valuable experience to prepare them for the job market.

Awareness-Raising and Student Journalism Award

The SUBAK team's work on youth engagement began with awareness-raising. Building greater awareness of the benefits of agriculture as a career among young people is critical, particularly exposing them to avenues to enter the market and farming as a business opportunity.⁷ The SUBAK team invited 32 agricultural schools in the Jembrana Regency to send their best two students (male and female) to participate in the awareness-raising scholarship program. The key aim of the program was to educate students about the importance of Jembrana as a cacao producer, and to motivate them to pursue careers in the sector. Through three days of workshops and awareness-raising activities in a one-year period, the SUBAK team, with the help of local farmers, experts, government, and the private sector, taught students about the many opportunities available in cacao and shared stories of successful farmers in Jembrana.

Capitalizing on student interest and creativity, the SUBAK team then launched a Student Journalism Award to increase the involvement of high school-age youth and disseminate information related to cacao. The 64 students in the program submitted written articles about themes surrounding cacao and sustainability, and of those, ten were selected to participate in an in-depth research program called the AJS Student Research Scholarship Program.

AJS Student Research Scholarship Program

The next phase of the project aimed to increase the capacity of students to conduct deep research about cacao in Jembrana, and to disseminate that information broadly. This approach to capacity-building involved both formal and in-





formal learning, including classroom instruction, mentoring, field visits, data collection, and experiential opportunities. This combination is crucial, as capacity-building programs are most effective when they integrate different learning contexts by involving families, the local community, educational institutions, and the workplace.⁸

Over the following several months, the 10 students selected from the Student Journalism Award deepened their engagement with the cacao sector through trainings, internships, and visits to a local chocolate factory, farms, and cooperatives. The students conducted research related to five themes: Gender in the Cacao Value Chain, Cooperative Management, Fermentation and Certification, Cultivation, and the correlation between Chocolate and Healthiness.

Mentoring

Before conducting their research, the students were mentored on basic journalism to equip them with the skills they needed to conduct high-quality research. A professional facilitator hired by the SUBAK team led students in three days of workshops focusing on journalism skills such as writing, photography, and interviewing. With this knowledge, the students visited the field and interviewed government officials, a researcher at the Indonesian Coffee and Cocoa Research Institute, and a chocolate factory owner. As the students delved into each of the five research themes, they received guidance and one-on-one mentoring from the facilitator and the staff at Kalimajari and KSS about the content of their research.

When the students finished their research, the SUBAK team selected the three best projects and announced them at an event on the National Memorial Day of Young Heroes. The AJS scholars gave a speech in front of 300+ stakeholders, including the Vice Regent and related departments in Jembrana's government, buyers, Rainforest Alliance and Kalimajari staff, farmer members, financial institutions, and others.

Communications

After conducting extensive research and speaking with experts in the field, this cohort transformed from students



to ambassadors of cacao fermentation. The participants shared their experiences widely through social media networks and broadened the reach of the work. Through this cohort, Kalimajari began to see a movement of young people who are interested in cacao, and who may have simply needed guidance on how to get involved. The AJS scholarship provided a platform for the young people to learn more, engage more, and be more actively involved in cacao in Jembrana.

LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

The SUBAK project ignited excitement about cacao among the students, most of whom had little knowledge of the sector before the program. Through visiting different phases along the value chain, from the farm to the chocolate factory, students saw the potentiality of cacao as a business option and spread that information broadly. As the program wraps up this year, there are several lessons that the team has learned from the project.

This first is that **capacity-building is key**. The team focused heavily on capacity-building throughout the Sector Partnerships and SUBAK program and it has made a lasting impact. Through regular monitoring and evaluation trainings during the scholarship period, English trainings, and others, participants acquired new skills and knowledge that will contribute to their work far beyond the conclusion of this project. Importantly the capacity-building promoted entrepreneurship. At the final quarterly meeting, the team held a workshop on cacao lip balm and cacao soap-making, using unqualified cacao butter and powder that the cooperative often has left-over. Through this workshop, members identified another zero-waste way they can add value to their cocoa production.

Kalimajari's standing as a prominent organization, both nationally and internationally, made it a **strong partner** for working with youth in Jembrana. Because Kalimajari already had success working with adult farmers before engaging young people, they were well-positioned to challenge the norms of youth participation in the community. Several young people from Jembrana have now participated in international events such as Sustainable Development Goals meetings and con-



ferences in Paris and Berlin, and have received awards for their work. This recognition emboldens these **young people to continue claiming space** in unprecedented ways.

A final reflection is that through these interventions, the young people developed a sense of belonging to the project and the people in it. Students have shown a lasting commitment to staying involved after the project ends, which is key to the continuity of this work. In addition to expanding their knowledge about cacao, **these students have built a community** that cares about one another, and some have even decided to continue their studies in agriculture. Out of the ten students of the AJS scholarship program, three of them went to college this year and are pursuing bachelor's degrees in agriculture. These students are looking months and years ahead with excitement to contribute to the KSS cooperative, Kalimajari, and the Jembrana community. The SUBAK project concludes this year, with a strong cohort of students and staff dedicated to continuing its momentum. The partnership between the Rainforest Alliance and Kalimajari will continue, with plans to up-scale this work in other parts of Indonesia. 🌱

1: <https://kalimajari.com/cocoa/>

2: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-cocoa-factbox/factbox-snapshot-of-indonesias-cocoa-industry-idUSBRE89EIDL20121015>

3: Subak abian is a traditional farmers group that serves a much more complex socioreligious purpose. It is one of the cultural landscapes of the island of Bali linkages between farming management, traditional beliefs, and social organizations. Subak Abian are primarily involved with dry crops such as cacao, coconut, coffee, and other plants. (Janiawati, n.d.)

4: <https://kalimajari.com/cocoa/>

5: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/articles/making-indonesias-cocoa-policy-a-reality-through-advocacy>

6: <https://kalimajari.com/>

7: <https://ypard.net/news/9-ways-engage-youth-agriculture>

8: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-yp-guiding-principals-soft-skills.pdf>



The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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