

Story from the farthest North of Indonesia about Tolerance

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As many as 5,982 students of Universitas Gadjah Mada are dispatched to 115 regencies in 34 provinces for two months to do student community service programme (KKN) that develops their empathy and care about real problems arising in the society.

Some of those students are assigned to stay at the Dalum village, Salibabu district, Talaud regency in North Sulawesi, or the northeast part of Indonesia lesser known by the majority of the people.

In fact, it took quite some time for the students to get to the area. Departing from Jogja on 13 June, they only made it to be there on the 17th.

“We went by bus from Jogja to Surabaya (East Java), by plane from Surabaya to Manado (North Sulawesi), and by ship from Manado to Talaud for 28 hours straight,” said team coordinator, Furqan, on Thursday (13/7).

Field supervising lecturer, I Made Andi Arsana, Ph.D, recounted the moment he visited the students in Talaud during Ramadhan. The entire community of Dalum village are Christians, but he witnessed

the atmosphere of tolerance in the area, as told by his students.

Fian M. Rofiulhaq, student of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, said he stayed with a young couple in the village. The next early morning he arrived, he got up and went to kitchen to prepare for the pre-dawn meal for the fasting. He found out that their hosts were busy preparing their meal.

“As a student that lives in a dorm, normally I'd have meatballs for the pre-dawn meal, but here we did have a full course, which was prepared by my hosts who were not even fasting. This almost broke me to tears,” he said.

Another student, Azis Musthofa, confessed it seemed like he had re-discovered his childhood moment when he had a good friend of different faith.

“We used to play football together. When it was time to pray, we would help each other. When I was praying in the mosque, he would wait for me patiently. And when he went to the church, I'd wait for him before we both played football together. I found that atmosphere again here with these children. I felt I was reminded of an important lesson in life, and I'm determined to keep this attitude with me when I get back,” he said.

Still another student, Ridho Ilahi, told Andi about his appreciation of staying there, to learn Indonesia better and have a more open mind.

Andi said this aptly described the true meaning of tolerance and he appreciated that this value truly manifested in the students. “I got carried away hearing those students told their stories, I felt that night the true essence of Pancasila, tolerance, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity), the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and UUD45 (State Guidelines). Those genuinely have the soul, embodied in social media hashtags like *#SayaIndonesia* or *#SayaPancasila*, which went viral,” he said.

This all reminded Andi of the late Prof. Koesnadi Hardjasoemantri, former Rector of UGM, who in the 1950s became one of the KKN students in Kupang. While Koesnadi in the 50s bumped into a smart local kid by the name of Adrianus Mooy who later in life became the Governor of the Bank of Indonesia, the UGM students here in Talaud, according to Andi, had found the true essence of Pancasila in the form of tolerance attitude.

“So if someone asks me why we have the student community service programme still in place, now I would be able to confidently reply that sustaining that programme was one of the best decisions ever

made by Universitas Gadjah Mada," he concluded.

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