



NTA
East Indonesia Aid

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Note: All the items from the Pos Kupang below are summary translations from the Indonesian by the editor (Denis Fisher). Thus they should not be regarded as literal translations, though the editor takes pains not to go beyond the meaning and nuances in the original articles. Any comments, suggestions or feedback on this clipping service are most welcome and should be sent to d-fisher@homemail.com.au. Further information on the Nusa Tenggara Association (NTA) and its development assistance activities in NTT can be found at www.nta.org.au. Back issues of this press clipping service can be found on the NTA website.

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Glossary of Acronyms in This Edition

DPR	<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> : (National) House of Representatives
BMKG	<i>Badan Meteorologi, Klimatologi dan Geofisika</i> : Bureau of Meteorology, Climate and Geophysics
Undana	<i>Universitas Nusa Cendana</i> : University of Nusa Cendana, Kupang
PLN	<i>Perusahaan Listrik Negara</i> : State Electricity Authority
<i>posyandu</i>	<i>Pos Pelayanan Terpadu</i> : integrated (pre- and post natal health) service post
<i>puskesmas</i>	<i>pusat kesehatan masyarakat</i> : community health centre (usually at <i>kecamatan</i> or <i>kabupaten</i> level).

1. Items of General Interest (Nil this issue)

2. General Economic and Development Issues

2.1 **Community Welfare Coordinating Minister Visits East Sumba**

Kupang Post, 18 /4/10

The national Coordinating Minister for Community Welfare (Menko Kesra), Agung Laksono, accompanied by the head of the National Disaster Relief Agency (BNPB) (Samsul Muarif) and a DPR member from NTT (Anita Gah), visited East Sumba on 17/4 to brief himself on the drought and crop failure situation. While acknowledging the painful effects of the drought, Laksono said that the situation had not reached disaster proportions. There were food shortages but not everywhere. Nonetheless action had to be taken now to prevent the situation becoming worse and to avoid famine. The most important thing was to put preventive measures in place for the longer term so that in future the community no longer had water problems affecting their crops. This could be done, in part, by using pumps to make optimum use of riverine areas. But Sumba's infrastructure had to be upgraded as well so that irrigation could be used to the maximum extent possible. A gamut of water retention structures (check dams, dams, water holes etc) had to be built to catch rainfall and store water for irrigation and livestock. Pumping systems had to be developed to irrigate higher ground. That would require not a few pumps, as one *kabupaten* alone needed 700-800 of them.

The minister said that his department would develop a concept, based on careful planning, to prevent future crop failures on Sumba. It would be possible, he added, for a Sumba pump supply program to be rolled out in 2011.

Sumba's four *bupatis* each gave the minister details of the effects of the drought in his area: West Sumba: 17 000 ha affected; SW Sumba: 4 000 families hit by crop failure; Central Sumba: 11 000 ha affected with potentially dire impact on 43 villages, if immediate relief was not provided. Each *bupati* outlined the short-term measures he was taking and detailed his needs for the future (especially water pumps, but also tractors)...*(more)*

2.2 **743 More Tonnes of Rice Ready for Distribution in East Sumba**

Kupang Post, 27/4/10

Kupang: East Sumba's *bupati*, Gidion Biljora, said on 26/4 that 743 tonnes of *raskin* rice was ready to be distributed in East Sumba. The distribution cycle had been brokered by his government with the agreement of the DPRD in light of food shortages following recent crop failures. The *raskin* cycle follows the distribution of 100 tonnes of rice already distributed to the 54 villages (of the 121 affected by crop failure), which had already asked for help. The *bupati* denied that anyone who had asked for help had not been provided with rice. The government was not playing favourites in its relief efforts. Any village reported as being short of food would definitely receive help, he said. He reiterated that reports indicated that just over 24 000 ha of crops had failed in East Sumba (affecting 31 000 families)..... *(more)*

2.3 **553 Tonnes of Rice Stocks in Store to Meet Emergencies in NTT**

Kupang Post, 27/4/10

Kupang: The head of NTT's Community Welfare Office (*Dinas Sosial*), Emanuel Kara, said on 26/4 that the provincial government had 553 tonnes of Government Rice

Reserves (BCP¹) in store for one or two months of emergency relief in the event of serious food shortages or a natural disaster. Of that amount 153 tonnes were a “buffer stock” under the direct control of his office, which had already distributed 30 tonnes in response to requests for help. The extent to which further BCP rice would be distributed would depend on reports from local governments including on their use of their own reserve stocks of 100 tonnes each.

Commenting on recent crop failures, Kara said that such failures did not always lead to an immediate crisis in food supplies, as people often had other sources of local food (tubers etc.). The Government had made provision for the possibility of food shortages because of the low rainfall this rainy season, so people should not be unduly concerned. But he acknowledged that almost all of NTT was facing a tight food situation, the true scale of which would be evident in a month or so. The community should be thrifty in respect of food and make use of any available local foods to meet their needs. That said, if people were facing genuine hardship, the Ministry of Community Welfare was always at the ready to help. *(more)*...

2.4 Rice Distributed to 31 Villages in Central Flores

Kupang Post, 21/4/10 Report by Esthi Radja

Bajawa: The Regional Secretary of Ngada *Kabupaten* (central Flores), Elias Djo, told the press on 20/4 that during April his government had distributed 74 tonnes of rice, on a food for work basis, to families in 31 villages facing food shortages due to crop failures. Each recipient household had been given 10 kgs of rice in return for work done in their village. Djo said that almost every part of the *kabupaten* had been affected by crop failure to some extent, with the worst hit being the *kecamatan*s of Aimere, Jerubu, Riung and (to a lesser extent) Golewa. *Raskin* rice had also been going out since January to those eligible to receive it....*(more)*...

3. Health Issues

3.1 97 Malnourished Children in East Flores

Kupang Post, 27/4/10 Report by Romualdus Pius

Ende (east Flores): The head of the Ende *Kabupaten*'s Health Service, Dr Augustinus G Ngasu, said on 26/4 that 97 children across 15 *kecamatan* in the *kabupaten* were suffering from malnutrition. The Health Service was intervening to overcome the problem. Dr Ngasu commented that cases of malnutrition were identified by a program of weighing children in *puskesmas* and *posyandu*. Children found to be under weight for their age were given additional food to nourish them. He rehearsed the reasons for malnutrition (parents giving inappropriate or non-nourishing food to children (often because of their difficult economic situation), incompetent care provided by family members of working mothers etc). He urged that every child be given nourishing food that was appropriate to its age. *(more)*

¹ =Beras Cadangan Pemerintah

4. Education Issues

4.1 Poor National Exam Results: Who's to Blame?

Kupang Post, 28/4/10 Editorial

In 1998/99 69% of the National Exam (UN) candidates in NTT were successful. In the UN just completed NTT's pass rate was down more than 21% on 1998/99 figure. Alor *Kabupaten* again fared worst. The result is so bad that it has led a senior provincial education official to declare that NTT should fly flags at half mast as a sign of grief. That is a bit over the top, but the results show how badly our schools are run and should be a wakeup call for all those responsible for NTT's education (the government in particular, but also teachers and parents). Everyone concerned must look carefully at what went wrong and take action to improve the situation (and quickly). Schools which have done well (in some cases 100% pass rate) such as private schools (Catholic, Protestant and Islamic) should become benchmarks for poor performing government schools. NTT cannot afford to be left behind in the education stakes. Such a situation undermines the quality of our human resources and retards the whole development process..... *(more)*...

5. Primary Industries (Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, Mining)

5.1 Rain Has Fallen Around Kupang, But Farmers Beware

Kupang Post, 21/4/10

Kupang: The head of the weather bureau (BMKG)'s office in Kupang, Purwanto, warned on 24/4 that farmers in and around Kupang should not be beguiled by the rain that had fallen there over the previous few days. Before rushing to take advantage of the rain, farmers should bear in mind that the rain was a passing event and localized (due to unusual factors). Purwanto reminded people that NTT was already into the dry season, so crops should only be planted now if they were quick growing and a supply of water was available to sustain them until harvest. Otherwise, anything planted ran the risk of dying within a short period. A similar warning was sounded by Rakialek Polo, a lecturer in agriculture at Undana... *(more)*..

5.2 Crop Failure: For How Much Longer?

Kupang Post, 26/4/10 Op-ed Piece by Vincent Tarus PhD, Lecturer, Faculty of Agriculture, Undana

So Menko Kesra Laksono has had to visit East Sumba (*see item 2.1 above (Ed.)*) to lend a helping hand. A quintessential NTT issue: insufficient rain has again led to crop failure in several areas – something that happens every two or three years and sometimes for several years in a row. The question is: what can be done about it? Not a new question, of course, as governments and development workers have been trying to answer it for years - clearly without success, as NTT is still experiencing the same old problem. I want to delve a little into the causes of crop failure and suggest a couple of courses of action.

Two broad sets of factors are at play when crop fails: (i) climatological (i.e. rainfall) and (ii) edaphic (i.e. soil issues, particularly the depth of a soil's "solum" (surface and subsoil layers)).

As regards (i), although rainfall varies greatly from one area to another, NTT does not

have a climate characterized by extreme conditions. There are successful agricultural areas in the world which receive less rainfall than NTT. Our particular problem is that rainfall is very uneven over the course of the year, with rain falling, if it falls at all, in just 3-4 months. This is typical of a dry climate like NTT's and an important cause of crop failure.

Turning to (ii), in the case of NTT's dryland rain-dependent farmland, the extent to which crops do well depends on the capacity of the "solum" to retain water. That in turn depends of the "solum's" depth, which in NTT (particularly on the islands of Timor, Sumba and Rote) is generally around ≤ 30 cm. Typically without rain this sort of soil cannot retain moisture for more than 5-8 days. In that situation, plants wilt within 2-3 days after rain stops falling and, without further rain, die within 5-8 days, even if it rains just after the 5-8 day period. It is this precarious situation which NTT's dryland farmers face.

Any strategy to overcome NTT's crop failures must include a strategy to manage our soil in ways that guarantee a supply of moisture in periods of no rain. I recommend two courses of action here: (i) sinking dams in flat, irrigable agricultural areas (of 50 ha. or more) with the pipes or furrows/channels necessary for irrigation (existing dams in NTT mostly lack the wherewithal for effective irrigation); and (ii) using water conserving approaches to managing the soil so as to increase the soil's water retentiveness and optimize moisture usage (*the writer outlines several suggestions here (terracing, use of mulch, planting fewer plants per m² etc) Ed.*).

An effective combination of these two strategies would provide a good basis for reducing the incidence of crop failure in NTT and for making our dryland more productive. In the short to medium term we need, above all, to get better at retaining water in dams etc for later use and avoid having rainwater merely run over our soil into the sea or seep into the sub-soil out of reach of the roots of crops.... (*more*)

6. Infrastructure (Water, Roads, Electricity)

6.1 German Investment Likely in Kupang's Power Supply

Kupang Post, 26/4/10

Kupang: A German investor² is to collaborate with PT Ruhak Jakarta to built a 20 MW solar powered electricity plant in Kupang to overcome the power shortages plaguing the capital. The mayor of Kupang, Daniel Adoe, told the press this on 26/4, adding that government was not involved in the project, but had set aside 50 ha of land for the venture. The mayor admitted that 33% of the capital's population were currently not receiving power from PLN...(more)..

² Name not provided (*Ed.*)