

ALOYSIUS BENEDICTUS MBOI and
NAFSIAH MBOI-WALINONO

Between the grand plans conjured in national capitals and the realities in distant provinces lies a chasm of daunting proportions. This is a problem shared by most developing countries, but it is especially acute in those, like Indonesia, of great size and heterogeneity and where the nation itself is still young. To regional officials—like Dr. ALOYSIUS BENEDICTUS MBOI and his wife NAFSIAH MBOI-WALINONO, Governor and senior health official respectively of Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur Province—falls the urgent and complex task of bridging this gap.

The 111 inhabited islands which comprise Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT, part of the former Lesser Sundas) lie to the east of the island of Sumbawa and south of Sulawesi. Dominant among them are Sumba, Flores, and the western half of Timor. Most of the province lies beyond the range of the monsoons which dependably water the rest of Indonesia; here rainfall is sparse and erratic, and the dry, rocky land is a stingy provider. BEN MBOI says that these arid islands are the dirt flicked into the sea from the fingernails of the Creator as he tidied up after having made the rest of the world. Connoisseurs of textiles know the region for its fine ikat weaving, but most of the world would be unaware of NTT were it not for its famous dragons, the giant lizards unique to Komodo Island.

Some three million people inhabit NTT, the vast majority of whom are Christian (53 percent Catholic; 32 percent Protestant), and live in small villages and hamlets scattered across the mostly mountainous islands of the province. Ninety percent are subsistence farmers who cultivate maize and, in a few moist areas, rice. In Timor, Sumba and a few of the minor islands, cattle graze freely over open grasslands. Some 60 distinct languages are spoken in the province, and this linguistic diversity, combined with physical isolation and differences of customs, culture and religion, contributes to a climate of rivalry and mistrust. Competition for scarce resources exacerbates the problem. It has apparently always been so: each tribe or clan has its own distinctive war dance.

For centuries the area's products—cattle, horses, sandalwood, textiles, mother-of-pearl, and in earlier days its people—were sold abroad. The profits therefrom enriched a few but did little to improve the life of the common man. Today the region's links to the modern economy of Java and the rest of the world perpetuate this pattern; its resources are extracted but its economy is only beginning to develop. By 1986 per capita income there was still only one third that of the Indonesian average.

Historically the area was dominated by local rajahs, whose tiny kingdoms waxed and waned and were sometimes loosely incorporated within one or another of the great empires based on Java. Europeans, first the Portuguese and then the Dutch, entered the region beginning in the 16th century and subjected some of its kingdoms. Yet it wasn't until the turn of this century that the majority of the rajahs relinquished their sovereignty. Among them was MBOI's grandfather, the Rajah of Manggarai, whose territory became a tiny part of the huge Netherlands Indies—a subsection of Flores District in the Residency of Timor and Dependencies, which was in turn part of the province called the Great East. Under the Dutch the rajahs kept their titles and a modest degree of local authority, and they and their families remained persons of privilege if not always of wealth.

ALOYSIUS BENEDICTUS MBOI was born in Ruteng, Manggarai on May 22, 1935. His father's eldest brother was Rajah Bagung of Manggarai. But his father, Mathias Mboi, who had attended a Dutch mission school and was the first of the family to adopt Catholicism, chose to rely upon his income as a sanitation officer in the Health Department of the colonial administration to support his family. His mother Yohanna was also a descendant of a minor rajah. BEN, as he has always been known, was the second of three boys and four girls. Despite his royal lineage, he grew up as an ordinary village boy, working in the household and in the family fields. At his father's insistence he helped a member of the household (but not of the family) sell food from door to door. As a lark he would slip into the Dutch tennis club and sometimes act as a ball boy. This he had to do surreptitiously because his father had once reprimanded him: "We are kings in our country, and the children of kings should not fetch balls for foreigners."

Another and different childhood memory was of a Dutch doctor scolding his stern father and his father accepting the tongue lashing. The inferior position of his father relative to this "greater" man impressed the boy deeply. "From that time on I wanted to become that man . . . to become a doctor."

BEN attended Dutch language Catholic primary schools on Flores during the period of Japanese occupation and post-war turbulence (1942-49), but the occupation and war had little impact on his life or studies. In 1949, the year Indonesia achieved independence, MBOI was sent to the provincial capital of Kupang, Timor—an exciting boat trip of two days—for middle school. Although that same year his father died in a car crash, by dint of hard work on the part of his mother, and school jobs, he managed to complete middle school in Kupang and high school in Malang, Java (1955). From there he went on to the University of Indonesia in Jakarta as a medical student. After the first year the costs of his education were borne by the regional government of Flores, which was eager to sponsor a native son who promised to return home as a doctor.

During his six-year medical course MBOI taught science, hygiene and other subjects on the side and became a student leader. In 1959-60 he chaired the Student Council of the Medical School and was a member of the Presidium of the University Student Council. He also joined the Young Catholics movement, and took up the great issues of the day. Particularly important was President Sukarno's call for the "return" to Indonesia of the last of Holland's Southeast Asian territories, West Irian, the western half of the island of New Guinea.

Because of this unresolved territorial problem, when his class graduated in 1961 BEN and the other new doctors were inducted into the military and sent to officers training. In 1962 he found himself dropping by parachute into the jungles of southern Irian in a poorly planned but daring effort to dislodge the Dutch. His company commander was the present Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces (1988), Benny Moerdani, who is also Catholic. For six months BEN's outfit skirmished with stray units of the colonial forces and fought the jungle elements. So remote were their operations that when Holland signed the agreement relinquishing West Irian in August 1962, the news took two months to reach them. When at last the men came out of the jungle, Sukarno welcomed them as heroes. Lieutenant Doctor MBOI was promoted to Captain and decorated for bravery. He had been the only doctor to volunteer for the mission.

The army next assigned BEN to the surgery staff of the military hospital in Jakarta. This was a boon for it permitted him to bring to fruition his courtship of ANDI NAFSIAH WALINONO, a medical student from South Sulawesi whom he had met in 1958. Their romance had repeatedly foundered on the rocks of religion, for like the vast majority of her countrymen NAFSIAH was Muslim; indeed her parents were hajjis,

having made the pilgrimage to Mecca. “We broke up about a hundred times,” NAFSIAH remembers, “everything and everyone was against our relationship.” But they persevered in their affections, and when NAFSIAH graduated in 1964 they were married. Days before she had converted to Catholicism. In their efforts not to give offense, the couple were married twice: first in the customary Islamic and local ceremonies of her homeland, then in Catholic rites in Jakarta. It was an unusual marriage, and from it grew an extraordinary team.

ANDI NAFSIAH WALINONO was born in 1940 at Sengkang, on the island of Sulawesi. She was the eldest daughter of Haji Andi Walinono, titled Aru Wage (later Ranrang Tua), whose kingdom in South Sulawesi, like those on Flores, had long since been subsumed as a dependent territory within the Netherlands Indies. Despite the turbulence of the times—occupation by Japan followed by the national revolution—NAFSIAH recalls a childhood free of care: “We had everything we wanted.” Her mother, who had previously been widowed, was her father’s second wife. NAFSIAH was the oldest girl among the six children of this marriage and the eldest of her father’s daughters. Although her mother had been the first woman of her area to break with tradition and attend a Dutch school (but was married before she could finish), her father was stubbornly traditional and believed girls should stay at home and marry young. It was only at her mother’s insistence that NAFSIAH and her sisters continued their education beyond primary school.

Once decided, however, her family provided the best Western education then available, and NAFSIAH soon proved an outstanding student in a succession of exclusive Catholic girls schools in Ujung Pandang (Makassar), Jakarta and Surabaya. This intensive and positive exposure to Christianity paved the way for her eventual conversion, and she now credits the teaching Sisters of the Order of the Holy Family and the Ursulines with awakening in her a compassion for the poor and other unfortunates. “We had always lived a relatively easy life,” she says, “but because of the nuns . . . I was able to also see the other side of life.”

When she was 12 the family moved to Jakarta because her mother recognized that with independence and democracy the influence of the rajahs would wane and power would be based on intellectual achievement. She therefore persuaded her husband to study for a law degree which he completed at age 42. NAFSIAH attended junior high at St. Ursula’s (1952-55) and high school at St. Maria’s (1955-58) in Surabaya. She had long wanted to attend university and study medicine and, since her mother wanted one of her children to become a doctor (“to take care of her if she became old and sick”), NAFSIAH was able to get her to

agree to her training.

NAFSIAH began her medical course at the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, in 1958. Aside from her studies and intermittent courtship with BEN MBOI, whom she met in her first year, she was caught up in the extracurricular life of the school and of her Catholic women' dormitory. "I never had any problem in studies and I had fun organizing and chairing committees," she comments. On reflection, she attributes to these experiences valuable lessons in working in organizations and with women. She was the first Buginese woman to become a doctor.

When she graduated on July 4, 1964, Indonesia was locked in confrontation with its neighbor, Malaysia. President Sukarno opposed the newly formed federation. NAFSIAH, as well as the other young doctors, was assigned to three and one-half months of military training. She completed her course (but was not given a military rank) and was assigned as a "volunteer" at the border. She might have been sent into action—although there turned out to be little of it—had not her mother, in order to get her released from military service, suddenly consented to her marriage to BEN. He had just been appointed, coterminously, Military District Doctor and District Medical Officer in Ende, Flores. After their wedding NAFSIAH was posted to Ende, too, as director of the General Hospital. Thus began their partnership of service to Nusa Tenggara Timur.

Together BEN and NAFSIAH constituted half the doctors on Flores—an island of 750 thousand people, 750 kilometers long. While NAFSIAH managed the 100-bed hospital and treated 30 to 50 private patients on the side, BEN traveled the length and breadth of the island, often walking for hours from one remote village to another, treating the very ill and setting up small rural clinics to be managed by local nurses or midwives. For BEN this was a homecoming and the fulfillment of his pledge to be a doctor to Flores. But for NAFSIAH, this was a new world in which she was an outsider, and at first she felt the usual insecurities of the newcomer. People warmed to her efforts and she was soon at home; but more than 20 years later she still remembers with appreciation three, tiny, barefoot Florenese nuns who came to welcome her with a gift of bananas on her first Patron Saints Day.

As a doctor NAFSIAH was naturally esteemed, and as a clever linguist she was in no time able to address her new neighbors and patients in the local language. Furthermore, NAFSIAH was the first woman doctor to serve the area, a predominantly Muslim one where women were constrained in their interactions with men. She provided an opportunity for

them to have access to medical service which was psychologically comfortable and socially acceptable.

Among her initiatives at the hospital was the creation of Ende's first dependable blood bank. As there were no facilities for storing blood in Ende, her bank was made up of willing volunteers, ready to be donors the moment a transfusion was needed. In establishing her blood bank NAFSIAH worked through local Catholic parishes and encouraged hesitant donors by saying, "Christ gave his blood for us, so why should we not give our blood for other people." In 1966 NAFSIAH gave birth to their first child, a daughter, Maria Josefina Tridia Mboi, called Tridia, a name created by NAFSIAH and BEN by combining *Trikora* and *Dwikora*, the names of the two volunteer military operations in which they had served.

For his part, BEN tackled the problem of gaining dependable financial support for his rural clinics. Ad hoc offerings of fruit and vegetables from poor patients would not, in the long run, be able to support even simple on-going health services. Innovating, he introduced a rudimentary pre-paid program in which prospective clinic users made annual contributions in non-perishable commodities—of beans, rice and the like—which the clinics could sell for cash. To his knowledge, it was Indonesia's first experiment with a rural health insurance scheme.

In addition to discharging the taxing responsibilities of District Medical Officer (military and civilian), BEN was also Dean of the Ende branch of the Malang (Java) Teachers College. He played a part in military operations directed against the Indonesian Communist Party following a coup within the army in 1965—events related directly to the assumption of power by Lieutenant General Soeharto and the realignment of national power giving a strong role to the military—and was promoted to Major.

In 1967 BEN was posted to Kupang as Chief Medical Officer and Medical Commandant for Nusa Tenggara Timur Province. For the next several years he discharged these responsibilities, at the same time shuttling back and forth between the province and Jakarta—where he had a seat in the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR, national parliament). BEN, a reluctant parliamentarian, had been appointed one of the 75 members of the pro-government Army Faction. "I saw myself incompetent as a parliamentarian," he says. "There you talk and talk, you see, the work is only talking. And I do not like talking. I like action." Nevertheless, he used his influence as an MP and as Vice Chairman of the Commission on Social Welfare to promote a health centers program which

emphasized preventive health care in rural communities, and to lobby, unsuccessfully, for the adoption of his rural health insurance scheme. Of his years as an MP he disclaims any personal achievement and likes to emphasize that, in Indonesia, "it is more a group accomplishment."

BEN MBOI believes that in the early decades of Indonesian independence, contentious and self-serving rivalry among political parties thwarted the achievement of important national goals. Therefore, as Indonesia prepared for its first legislative elections under Soeharto in 1971, he worked actively as provincial campaign chairman for Golkar, the president's non-party coalition of "functional groups." He was quite successful in electing Golkar candidates in NTT. However, when asked to retain his own seat he declined, and he and NAFSIAH embarked, instead, upon an intensive agenda of postgraduate study in Europe.

When her husband began his double life as Provincial Medical Officer in Kupang and MP in Jakarta, NAFSIAH found a house for them in Jakarta and returned to the University of Indonesia Medical School to specialize in pediatrics. Her program included working as a pediatrics assistant at Cipto Mangunkusumo General Hospital, Jakarta's largest, as well as research and teaching. She pursued it with characteristic energy and at the same time carried on a private practice for as many as 50 patients a day. Their second child, Gerardus Mashur Mboi, was born in 1970. A year later she completed her pediatrics training, just in time to join BEN and travel to Belgium.

They settled in Ghent with the children. NAFSIAH entered the Rijks Universiteit in Ghent for advanced studies in pediatrics while BEN, with a scholarship from WHO, earned his Masters Degree in Public Health at the Prince Leopold Tropical Institute in Antwerp. He later took several brief courses and surveyed national health insurance programs in Belgium, Norway, Holland, England and West Germany and spent a short time studying management at the University of Louvain. Meanwhile, NAFSIAH moved to Amsterdam to follow a course in Social Pediatrics. In choosing this she had her husband's career in mind. "He loves his province very much . . . and I felt that somehow he would like to go back. And I would go with him. I knew in that area there were no big hospitals. So I thought I have to be prepared. If we go back to NTT then my knowledge of primary health care or social pediatrics will be much more of a benefit than my clinical knowledge."

During this year and a half abroad they saw foreign aid from a new perspective. Supporting the fund raising activities of groups concerned with third world development such as Elf-elf-elf Action and the Bishops'

Conference—“Every weekend I gave lectures on Indonesia and my wife danced,” recalls BEN—they discovered that the money came not from the rich, but from people who had themselves been poor and who now wanted to help others.

Returning from Europe BEN immediately reassumed his post as Provincial Medical Officer with NAFSIAH as his senior staff member; she became Deputy Director of Kupang’s General Hospital, and, amidst other official duties and her private practice, established the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service in Kupang. BEN took up his political activities as Provincial Chairman of Golkar, and narrowly avoided being appointed Vice Governor. Instead he was called to Jakarta to head the army’s Institute for Preventive Medicine.

As the senior health officer in the Indonesian Army (December 1974–July 1978) and now colonel, BEN worked to enlighten his colleagues, “particularly among the general staff,” about the desperate need for preventive health care within the services. One measure of his success was a five-fold increase in the budget for preventive medicine during his tenure in office. As BEN campaigned for his cause, NAFSIAH had their third and last child whom they named Henry Dunant (Hade) Wanggur Mboi, after the founder of the Red Cross.

Settled in Jakarta again, NAFSIAH resumed her practice in pediatrics and was prevailed upon to take over the Blood Transfusion Service of the Metropolitan Jakarta Red Cross. She replaced a system based upon paid donors with one of volunteers. With typical panache she did so by convincing Jakarta’s Governor Ali Sadikin (1971 Ramon Magsaysay Government Service Awardee) to require all new applicants for automobile licenses to present themselves for examination as potential blood donors—a fair plan, she thought, as bad drivers were the cause of automobile accidents whose victims were among the primary recipients of transfusions. Despite the predictable uproar, her stop-gap plan succeeded. At the same time, NAFSIAH launched a campaign to promote a truly voluntary system. Through mosques, churches, schools, radio and television and the business and diplomatic communities she explained the need for blood. She modernized storage and distribution facilities and made donating blood easier by building up a fleet of bloodmobiles. By the time she left, Jakarta’s 11 biggest hospitals were being provided safe blood by a large and well organized pool of volunteers.

“I prayed day and night so that he will not become governor,” admits NAFSIAH about BEN’s return to Nusa Tenggara Timur as its top

official in 1978; and even BEN acknowledged that, given a choice, he would have preferred to be Minister of Health. "I have no idea about how to be governor," he said, "as for Minister of Health, I do."

Despite reservations, BEN and NAFSIAH now returned to Kupang for what turned out to be two five-year terms. Here they would bring to bear upon the daunting problems of the neglected province the fruits of their splendid educations, their useful connections in Jakarta, and what practical wisdom they had gathered from years of preparation—in the province, in the capital and abroad. President Soeharto signed the order naming BEN Governor on the 16th anniversary of his parachute drop into Irian Jaya.

As a native son and long-time civil servant in the province, BEN was in many ways familiar with NTT. He had traveled the territory from one end to the other as district and provincial health officer, and had observed the deleterious impact of rural poverty and backwardness upon health, and upon health care. But as far as politics and public administration were concerned, he felt unprepared.

In the beginning, fortunately he says, he could do little but react to the chain of calamities that assaulted his province during his first two years. Earthquakes, tidal waves, drought and plagues of grasshoppers and mice followed one on the other; "we were always on our way to some disaster area." The worst of these was a famine in Paga District, Flores—already gripping the land when he and NAFSIAH arrived—that the government succeeded in relieving only by bringing in rice by boat from Java. As the new governor observed, this happened when some other districts in NTT were producing a food surplus. He soon discovered that transport connecting the many regions of his province was almost non-existent.

BEN refers to the early disasters as "blessings in disguise," for it was from a critical examination of their causes and consequences that he came to understand what was wrong in NTT, and what changes were necessary. His medical experience stood him in good stead, he believes, because "a doctor is trained from the first day with a systematic way of thinking." Consequently, BEN approached each calamity as though treating an illness—taking the history, making a diagnosis, formulating a therapy, and making a prognosis—and applied the same technique to the province at large. The disease, he concluded, was generalized and so must be its treatment.

The combined forces of nature, history, culture and chance had

conspired, he observed, to trap NTT's people within their own vicious cycle of backwardness, and this had been compounded by years of official neglect. In a way, the province was unknown until 1978 when, working within the broad guidelines of the government's five-year plans, Governor BEN MBOI began applying his therapy to the beleaguered patient.

He recognized that the true impediments to progress in NTT were not physical but cultural—habits and ideas imbedded deeply among extraordinarily diverse ethnic groups splintered by religion, language, and custom, as well as by a geography of islands and mountains. Moreover, he recognized that civil servants did not leave their prejudices behind when they accepted government employment. He felt that it was his task to change attitudes within the government as well as in the province at large.

The most needed change was in the lower rungs of the bureaucracy, where suspicious, foot-dragging and lazy officials could prevent even the best of programs from taking root. To combat these tendencies in the early years BEN and NAFSIAH traveled the province, encouraging, chiding, teaching, praising and rebuking officials high and low and setting an example of curiosity about the problems of everyday life and of closeness to the people. The work of local officials was made complicated, BEN learned, by their own competing loyalties to family, clan, community and the formal government. This problem was aggravated by conflicts between clans over land and other matters; by the weak impact of national laws, especially agrarian laws; and by unclear local boundaries. Moreover, local officials often did not know enough about agriculture or population or social welfare issues to be effective instruments for change.

To improve and rationalize local administration, Governor BEN introduced the Village Strengthening Program (Benah Desa). The first program of its kind in Indonesia (and eventually much praised and copied), it sought to strengthen democratic institutions in the villages and to clarify the often confusing procedures for allocating and managing the province's sparse farm lands.

Later in his term (1985) BEN instituted a program of "community leadership consultants." As their first assignment these graduates from the provincial civil service academy worked with village heads and local officials. This he hoped would help inculcate attitudes that comport with the needs and the machinery of development and underscore the primary importance of the village. In the longer term, NTT awaits the

maturation of a new, more Indonesia-minded generation of citizens now being educated in the vastly expanded school system of the province.

Food was his next priority. To begin with, most of NTT's farmers wrested their sustenance from porous, rocky land too infrequently rained upon. What fertile land there was they had already cultivated to excess, weakening it. They depended upon a limited range of crops which experience had shown to be dependable, though not abundant, and whose consumption was ordained by tradition. Maize and rice predominated. Averse to risk, they clung to their customary crops as well as to traditional ways of farming—for many this meant slash and burn—and lived precariously from season to season, much of the time in idleness.

Among Governor MBOI's first initiatives, therefore, was to encourage diversification and intensification among NTT's farmers—hoping to improve food production and nutrition and to provide alternatives to vulnerable staples. Mobilizing the entire provincial government to support his efforts and wheedling extra assistance from Jakarta, he introduced new plant varieties, fertilizers and pesticides, tools and techniques. He badgered reluctant villagers to try the new crops and to work harder, and on occasion used the army to rouse sleeping farmers to till their fields in the early morning. The result: fields under intensive cultivation (on which fertilizer and pesticides were used) expanded rapidly from 5,000 to 150,000 hectares, and year by year NTT achieved an ever larger capacity for feeding itself. Food imports dropped dramatically.

Among the successful innovations was the introduction of the *Leucaena leucocephala*, or *ipil-ipil*. This tree was eminently suited to the environment and to the needs of the province, providing erosion control, cattle fodder, and firewood. It has been so extensively planted—over 500,000 hectares—that NTT accounts for 40 per cent of all *ipil-ipil* trees in Indonesia. The success of *ipil-ipil* served a secondary purpose. Seeing the miracle of *ipil-ipil* people were more willing to trust suggestions from government officials and try other new crops. Governor MBOI therefore proceeded to address the problem of income generation and vigorously encouraged the expansion of commercial crops for export, including cloves, cacao, coffee and vanilla.

One reason Nusa Tenggara Timur had not prospered was that the scattered islands, poor roads and remote farms made transportation onerous and expensive. It was cheaper to import food and other

products from outside the province than to transport them internally; this is why Paga's famine was relieved by foodstuffs from Java. In the entire province there were but a few hundred kilometers of paved roads, most of them in Kupang District and most of them in wretched repair. A slightly greater mileage of primitive earth roads existed, but for the most part people traveled by horseback or foot along ancient pathways. The province contained only one harbor with a modern wharf, and only one ship's fueling station. Boats plying between the islands adhered to no schedule. Air traffic was sparse and erratic. Little wonder that NTT's farmers and the Governor himself now discovered that surplus staples and potentially valuable commercial crops were so expensive to move to market that profits were marginal at best. At worst, local stockpiles of high yielding but vulnerable grains—the bounty of intensified farming—were ruined by pests before they could be moved, and farmers, having borrowed money to buy the new inputs and to develop crops on a commercial scale, fell swiftly into debt.

Governor MBOI attacked the problem on all fronts. He repaired and extended roads and built modern quays and bunkering stations throughout the islands. Trucks can now go far into the hinterland to pick up farm products for market. Ships tie up in fifteen harbors, and take on fuel in eight, this with the telling result that the price of fuel is now the same in NTT as it is in Java. To protect farmers from falling into debt as a consequence of taking new risks, the governor introduced credit and marketing cooperatives and, using his clout, protects them from being taken advantage of by middlemen and regional commodity dealers. "We see to it," he says, "that there is a vertical cooperation—between the farmers as the primary economic unit, the village cooperatives, the local entrepreneurs, and . . . the exporters."

Concentrating fundamentally upon basic human needs and upon improving the livelihood of NTT's ordinary citizens, Governor BEN has not neglected to court investment from the outside and to encourage domestic capitalization. His province now boasts a 25,000 hectare livestock ranch, new commercial fisheries, and a mother-of-pearl venture with both Indonesian and Japanese principals. A new plant in Timor provides cement for the province, and a new hotel invites tourists to Kupang, "gateway to Eastern Indonesia."

BEN MBOI is a "hands on" Governor. His face and voice, and his gregarious, forceful personality have become widely familiar to the citizens of his far-flung province as a consequence of incessant tours, on which he is often accompanied by NAFSIAH. On tour he inspects critically the progress of his various projects, praising and blaming his

subordinates without inhibition; indeed his temper is famous.

He works just as hard among the relevant agencies of the national government, willingly using his connections in military and Golkar circles—he is known to be close to the president—to direct national resources toward NTT. By virtue of having a “first couple” who are articulate and attractive, stories about the province now appear regularly in the national media. President Soeharto has visited four times; so has the Vice President. This attention helps. More meaningful, however, has been the increase in the provincial budget. It is now 30 times larger than when BEN assumed office. Both in the province and in the capital the zeal with which he and NAFSIAH promote the interests of their province is infectious.

Governor MBOI’s impact upon NTT has already been profound. It is an invigorated, growing regional society he now leads. But what is extraordinary about his tenure as Governor has been the equal vigor and critical participation of his wife. For in the past several years NAFSIAH MBOI-WALINONO has wholly transcended the role of an official wife, and has placed her own special stamp upon the transformation of Nusa Tenggara Timur.

More than BEN, NAFSIAH had been upset by the prospect of a governorship, distressed that they would have to leave their children at school in Jakarta, and intimidated by her duties as an official wife. True, she would assume an official post of her own as a government health officer, and in this respect her work would be independent of her husband’s. But in Indonesia wives of public officials are expected to perform a wide array of ceremonial and quasi-official roles and, in proportion to the rank of their husbands, to exercise leadership within the highly organized and hierarchical official family. (As a professional woman she tended, she acknowledges frankly, to view the organizations she would be expected to chair as clubs “for women who had nothing to do but compare clothes.”) She really had three jobs at once: civil servant; official wife; and leader of women’s activities. For eighteen months she took stock, touring the province with BEN and learning how to make her activities support his drive for change in NTT.

Rural women in NTT pay a disproportionate price for the region’s backwardness. Within the village economy it is they who toil hardest to secure the family’s survival, often walking great distances to secure adequate supplies of firewood and water, as well as cooking and child-rearing and working in the fields alongside their husbands. Fewer women can read and write than men; little girls drop out of school, or

are withdrawn, earlier than their brothers. And because of the physical demands of their work combined with the stress on their bodies of frequent child bearing, women are often in poor health; these factors, compounded by dietary restrictions for pregnant women imposed by custom, mean that too frequently their babies are born underweight and sickly. NAFSIAH understood that these women needed attention desperately, yet little assistance was available to them. By exploiting creatively her role as leader of various women's organizations she harnessed the power of NTT's women.

Dharma Wanita, the national organization of officials' wives, of which she was perforce Chair, became one of NAFSIAH's first organizational vehicles. Established to provide support for families of officials moved from district to district or province to province, it was inward looking. NAFSIAH found it had no clear identity in NTT, nor did it have a staff, office space or records. In building up NTT's Dharma Wanita, NAFSIAH worked to turn its attention outward to the community at large. She used it to train its 37,000 members to be effective leaders in church and social work, and in village development. She harnessed them to help poor women utilize government services such as family planning, credit and health and nutrition counseling, and to provide literacy training as well as lessons in child care and household budgeting and improvements.

To enhance the income of urban women in 1980 a Dharma Wanita task force in Kupang introduced a women's credit cooperative based on models successful in Java—the KSUWC, or Koperasi Serba Usaha Wanita Cendana. It was established independently in 1982 as part of Governor BEN's program of overall development in NTT. KSUWC operated a cooperative store carrying household and family necessities and provided loans to its members, who numbered 250 as of 1985. In KSUWC the repayment of loans to individuals was guaranteed not by individuals alone, but by small groups of fellow members; this reduced the likelihood of default and encouraged group responsibility. In keeping with NAFSIAH's plans to train women for leadership through experience in women's organizations, the positions of chairperson, secretary and treasurer in local KSUWC groups—which also administered KSUWC's activities for their members—were rotated twice a year. The provincial Board ran training seminars for each new set of officers. Building upon the lessons of KSUWC, in 1985 Dharma Wanita established a small loans program to help its members supplement meager official salaries by setting up businesses. Members applied for these loans through their local chapters, and could avail themselves of train-

ing in such fields as catering, raising poultry and managing a store.

Another organization for which NAFSIAH was officially responsible was the Village Family Welfare Movement, or PKK. This national movement of volunteers aimed to improve family welfare at the level of the village and the urban neighborhood. Local PKK Action Teams are automatically led by the wives of the presiding officials. When NAFSIAH began her life as a governor's wife, however, few people thought of the PKK as a viable partner in planning and decision making. By linking PKK volunteers to field staff from government technical departments, she made it the lead agency in village development—in introducing family planning, for example, and appropriate technologies for sanitation, safe water and roofing, and in encouraging new income enhancing activities for women in rural areas. The PKK became one of NAFSIAH's vehicles for encouraging private activism among women who, unlike many "official wives," will make their lives wholly in NTT. By 1986, of 32 members of the province level PKK Action Team, all but three were natives.

To coordinate the often overlapping activities of her women's groups—including the military counterpart to Dharma Wanita, the Ikatan Kesejahteraan Keluarga ABRI—NAFSIAH created the Coordinating Board of Provincial Women's Organizations.

In 1979 NAFSIAH asked Karen Houston Smith—a North American who had been working in Indonesia for many years with women's groups—to accompany her to talk to Johanna Nasution about problems she faced in the province. Nasution, National Chairman of the Coordinating body for Social Activities and 1981 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Public Service for "leadership of the volunteer movement, institutionalizing social services through cooperation by diverse civic and religious groups, schools and government agencies," urged her to establish a province-wide coordinating body, and promised: "just start, I will help you."

Following her advice NAFSIAH initiated the Badan Koordinasi Kegiatan Kesejahteraan Sosial (BKKKS) which specializes in bringing together worthy social development projects—residential schools for disadvantaged girls, hare-lip clinics, care for lepers—with funds made available by a wide range of donors. The latter include the provincial and national governments, Dharma Wanita, and Indonesian philanthropists and charitable organizations. Foreign assistance has come from various embassies and foreign government agencies (USAID), international foundations (Ford and Asia), and religious and charitable

organizations (Christian Children's Fund, Foster Parents Plan). NAFSIAH has, like the governor, gone to considerable lengths to draw attention to the problems of NTT, and to draw new sources of funding into the province. The results are dramatic. In 1985-86 seventeen donor organizations contributed to BKKKS-coordinated projects, and the budget for welfare activities has swelled from Rp.250,000 to some Rp.76,000,000 (US\$76,000).

Often called the "Women's Governor," NAFSIAH prefers to be addressed as "Ibu Doktor"—*Ibu*, literally "mother," expresses respect and deference—and this reflects her continuing commitment to her profession. Indeed, interwoven with her other activities NAFSIAH has remained a senior member of the provincial health department. In this capacity she utilizes her other positions to advance public health goals, particularly for children. She has urged the people to "join the war against the killers of children in NTT," and involved all her organizations in diarrhea control, immunization, nutrition improvement and introducing better pre- and post-natal maternal care. From the time of the 1980 census to 1986, infant mortality in NTT dropped dramatically—from 124 per thousand, to 87 per thousand. NAFSIAH keeps abreast of the latest medical studies and has frequently participated in workshops and seminars in Indonesia and abroad. In addition she has continued to head the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Program in the province, as well as the Family Planning Program.

In all of her activities NAFSIAH MBOI emphasizes problem solving and institution building. She encourages the open, consensus-forming style of decision making preferred among Indonesians, and at the same time is building wholly new structures and employing new forms of communication, which, she says, "I think will last." Like her husband, she seeks not only amelioration, but substantive change. No woman in the history of the area has had as high a profile as NAFSIAH MBOI, and, again like her husband, she is popularly revered.

A tireless worker who devotes 17 hours a day to her endeavors, NAFSIAH often hops up from a family meal to attend to yet another task. (The governor, acknowledging her efforts in his official report at the end of his first term of office, commented that she "goes to bed later and gets up earlier than I do.") Her command center including seven computers is located in a wing of the governor's residence, although some organizations now have separate offices. It is here that her many colleagues and staff—32 paid staff members—keep tabs on her multifarious projects and rapid comings and goings. Her team is often augmented by short-term outside consultants who bring expertise in such

diverse fields as nutrition, accounting, development research and plastic surgery. The longest serving of these is Karen Smith, who has been working with NAFSIAH since 1979 and resident in Kupang since 1983. She speaks with particular appreciation of Smith's contribution in the areas of organizational development, training and fund raising.

Although Governor BEN MBOI's second and final term of office ends in 1988, Nusa Tenggara Timur is unlikely to be the same again. This, certainly, is his and NAFSIAH's dream. But each of them quickly acknowledges that there have been failures and misfires, and that few of the gains are as yet safely institutionalized. Symbolic of the ongoing struggle is the tragedy of the *ipil-ipil* trees which are being decimated by a *syllid* (plant louse), apparently introduced from the Caribbean. And, they hasten to say, their endeavors must be seen as aspects of a long process in which all of Indonesia is engaged.

Governor MBOI believes in the ideals of the New Order as defined by President Soeharto, and it is his aim to achieve its goals in NTT. Thus, although he is quick to criticize poor performance of both high and low, he seeks fundamentally to make the system work—to jog it, needle it and inspire it to respond to the needs of his province, and at the same time to make his people responsive. As a high ranking military man (he is now Brigadier General), a Golkar leader and senior civil servant, and as a scion of a local noble house, ALOYSIUS BENEDICTUS MBOI is ideally placed to move the system. NAFSIAH, on her side, has tried to ensure that the government led by her husband will find increasingly responsible partners among NTT's citizens, especially its women.

Fully aware that their term of leadership is running out, both the governor and NAFSIAH are preparing younger leaders to carry on. Governor MBOI urges them to be missionaries for progress, and pushes them to work with zeal and without let-up. He and NAFSIAH have set the example.

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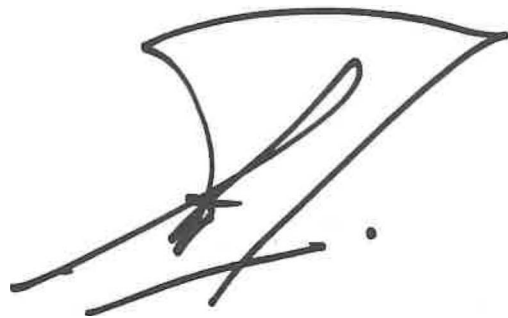
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