



## **Project Description**

### **LASEM PLURALISM TRAIL**

#### **A Pluralism Learning Programme in Lasem City**

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##### *1. Programme Background*

Social turbulences in Indonesia nowadays that in the surface seems triggered by religious radicalism are actually rooted in social and economic problems and inequalities. Local leaders of Lasem like HM Zaim Ahmad Ma'shoem (Gus Zaim) highlights the discriminative treatment among different races and ethnics, besides real repression over specific ethnicities as legalized by the New Order regime in the past. As an example is the policy of "nativization" for forcing Indonesian Chineses (Tionghoa) to change their Chinese names to become "more Indonesia".

The repressive situation prompts the Tionghoa to comply with powerful figures in the government and military as a survival strategy. Gus Zaim calls this the "balloon effect", when pressure in an aspect will be channeled into overacting in other aspect. As the Tionghoa society are inhibited to express themselves in social and political matters, they become dominant in the only field they are allowed to do: economic business. But then this economic success create more social jealousy from other ethnicities, resulting in prejudices and conflicts.

The Tionghoa in Lasem, who had lived in peace with other ethnics for centuries, were also trapped in this difficult situation during the New Order era, as the government banned expressions of Tionghoa culture in public spheres. The generation of Tionghoa people who experiences decades of harsh discrimination in the New Order era are still traumatic until today.

Local pluralist figures have made efforts to uphold the value of multiculturalism. Gus Zaim founded an Islamic boarding school in the Chinatown area, peacefully weaving a multicultural practices with the surrounding Tionghoa people who accept the Javanese-Moslems so well, they are reciprocally respect and help each other in daily life.

## 2. *Objectives and Goals*

### a. *Objective of the Programme*

To give a chance for programme participants to learn from real situations how multicultural people can live harmoniously despite ethnic or religious differences.

### b. *Goals of the Programme*

- 1) To promote pluralism as a successful practice in Indonesia
- 2) To prevent the spread of intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia

## 3. *Activities*

- a. A guided tour to historically and culturally important destinations in Lasem.
- b. Talks with pluralist prominent figures.
- c. Workshops on pluralism guided by experienced facilitators.

## 4. *Impacts*

- a. Participants that learn first hand about pluralism in Lasem are enriched and have more understanding about how to respond to social problems in their own local society.
- b. The practice of tolerance and peaceful multiculturalism among different ethnicities and religions in Lasem can be replicated in other cities.