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Stop Pollution of Soils through the Living Culture of Friendly Environment

An interview with Ambassador of Environment of Indonesia - Shafa Tasya Kamila

When we talk about the environment in Indonesia, we talk about a paradox. On one side, actually Indonesia is blessed with abundant natural resources and has the highest biodiversity in the world. On the other side, Indonesia is a country with the highest level of environmental damaged in the world. The rate of deforestation reaches two to three million hectares every year. 92% of our coral reefs are in severely damaged condition. 25 000 species of plants and 1000 sub-species are threatened with extinction. Not to mention the matter of environmental pollution, whether it is pollution of soils, water and air.

Contamination or pollution is occurring because of rapid population growth. It is not supported by the carrying capacity of the environment and the population does not pay attention to environmental rules and the protection of natural resource.

Listener, following is the result of our interview with Shafa Tasya Kamila as Ambassador of the Environment in Indonesia on the theme "Stop Pollution of Soils through Living Culture of Friendly Environment".

Well , please Tasya, you could say hello and introduce yourself to the all listeners.

Insert 1:

"Ok, I'm Tasya Kamila, my full name Shafa Tasya Kamila. I was appointed as environment ambassador by the Ministry of Environment that now bears the name of Ministry of Environment and Forestry. I was lifted from early 2006, so it's been almost 10 years since I got title of environment ambassador and I've done many activities as ambassador".

First, maybe Tasya you can tell us as long as 10 years what is the most interesting of your experience becoming an environment ambassador?

Insert 2:

"Actually, the main task of the environmental ambassador is to give motivation and invite the people to love and care for the environment. I got a lot of interesting experience but I'm most happy if I can come to an area which is already having a high concern for the environment. I also feel amazed when I see their passion to improve the quality of the environment around their house, even if they do not realize they have contributed a great deal for Indonesia. And, myself also, I feel happy and very proud to have become the environmental ambassador because I can be inspired by the Ministers, the environmental activists and I was also thinking how the method to make my environment around the house a good environment and convenient for us to live in it".

Generally, how do you compare the environmental conditions in the several regions in Indonesia you have visited?

Insert 3:

"Indonesia is located in a tropical region. The nature and environment of Indonesia is very conducive to live. We have beautiful natural resources, beautiful beaches, beautiful mountains and a productive forest... So substantially, Indonesia is rich with natural resources and these natural resources can support our economy but unfortunately their exploitation coupled with people's lifestyles is conducive to an unfriendly environment that has lowered the quality of the environment in Indonesia. We've certainly seen a lot of pollution happen and also natural disasters such as floods, landslides, smoke from burning forests. This was also felt from neighboring countries and now, already, we feel the impacts of global warming and climate change. According to me, the problem is the behavior and an awareness of friendly environment that is still lacking in Indonesia. If it is carried out continuously and we are not friendly towards our environment, then later on certainly in the future there can be hazard. Indonesia could experience the crisis of energy, food and may also crisis of water".

Tasya, from year to year, how do you see the progress of the government role and the other stakeholders related to the environment problems. Is there an impact that has been made or is there still many other home works?

Insert 4:

"According to me, it is getting better. Perhaps, it's because of the impacts of climate change that we already feel directly. So, it is not a mere issue but we can feel the impact as unpredictable weather, crop failure and so on... It makes people more aware about our environment and since the government has an environment ambassador, it is getting more intensive in promoting friendly environment behavior. Now, I see a lot of the environment community and activist of the environment are increasing in number and are getting more solid again. In the various regions of Indonesia, in urban areas, it is getting better. For example, Surabaya city, has become one of the pilot cities where waste management has improved, getting better and more countries are willing to cooperate in helping of the environment management. I also went to Palembang. In the 1980s, my mother lived in Palembang, it was still polluted. In the 1990s, it was still

undeveloped. Now, I see a city that is clean and that has been able to get an award from the ministry as well. So, I see year by year actually, public awareness about the environment is getting better and it's a good sign for the future of our environment."

But, we see there are still some problems such as forest fires, garbage everywhere... According to Tasya, what is the main source of the problems?

Insert 5:

"I think the problem is because of a bad habit for garbage. For the forest fires, I think there are intentional and unintentional fires. If it's intentional, it's because of a lack of concern for the environment. They want to burn forests in order to have lands for plantations but in a way that is cheap and they do not think about the impacts. I think this is a really careless behavior which is very detrimental to many parties. For the rubbish problem, in my opinion it was due to a lack of awareness and to our habits. Maybe also, waste management in our country I think still is somewhat lagging behind other countries. We still use landfill (TPA) and also we still have not integrated or not spread and we have not the safety equipment or advanced to the household waste management. Our own people are still unfamiliar to sort garbage, to manage waste themselves, to recycle and do things that are friendly to the environment."

According to you, how are the soil conditions in Indonesia? Can we say there are still a lot of fertile soils or a lot of soils have been damaged or polluted?

Insert 6:

"I am not an expert on soils, meaning that I have never conducted research or made in-depth observation, but to the naked eye, actually we can still plant but our need for food exceed our capacity so we import from outside. It may be that our soils can't be planted for some crops, that our lands are getting reduced by the existence of settlement and so on... Also, of course, it is due to a decrease in soil quality that may make our harvest less than our expectation. In my opinion, it is like that and certainly there was no shortage and the pollution occurred probably because there are domestic waste, agricultural waste and also industrial waste. But perhaps the soil pollution can occur because the lack of our awareness, willingness and our ability to not pollute the soils with friendly environment activities and use of friendly environmental products. It may also occur due to a lack of prevention on the pollution itself".

So far... as long as you have become an ambassador of environment together with the government, what specific activities have been carried out to overcome the damaged and pollution of soils around us?

Insert 7:

"With the Ministry, with their program for soils certainly they have. They already have desk officers that are tackling domestic waste and industrial waste as possible so that certainly affect policies that impacts for soils pollution. I, as an ambassador, work for more sensitization within the community. We did a communication campaign for one of the programs that can reduce waste in the landfill (TPA) and, of course, this has an

impact on the reduction of soil pollution. Also, due to our communication about the waste bank in one of the residential neighborhood or a school building or an office building, the garbage are now sorted between the organic and an-organic waste. The organic waste can be processed into fertilizer while non-organic waste can be recycled or can be processed further: plastic can be the plastic again and so on, paper may be recycled again. These activities would reduce the waste in the landfill. Beside, we also communicate about the 3R (reduce, re-use and recycle) and the good behavior: not to throw garbage carelessly, garbage sorting have to be done to reduce the use of disposable items that may not be decomposed by soil naturally, therefore reducing the use of plastic, styrofoam, we also encourage to re-use it, try to buy things that maybe we can refill and so on... like a drink so we do not immediately dispose of it but we could refill and recycle. We need to use our creativity to reduce waste as well so we can make handy craft from the garbage. For example the rest of the garbage become a bag, it could be a pencil case, it could be a wallet, it is possible to make clothes... Myself maybe, I do not have the ability to process it, but I support UMKM (micro, small and medium enterprises) that produce recycled goods and I buy their products.

Are there or not obstacles, a particular party or other things that may prevent to be able to overcome the environmental problems, including the problems of soil pollution?

Insert 8:

"Emmm, the obstacle is like I said before, maybe we should put an extra effort to change our habits to become friendlier to the environment and to adopt good habits. The obstacles may be overcome by teaching environmentally friendly behavior as early as possible so I also communicate and do sensitization in schools ranging from kindergarten to elementary school. We need to begin to teach environmentally friendly behavior because if we do not teach not to throw garbage carelessly, rubbish dumped carelessly, it will pollute the soils."

Does your family and external parties support you and your activity? Is it enough?

Insert 9:

"Thanks to my God... related to the environment. Because that is for all of us and for the goodness, in the religious term also He told us to keep this earth, to keep its contents, and to maintain its sustainability. From my family, they are certainly supportive. The school and campus are also supportive. On campus, I was a few times invited as the speaker about the environment to encourage young people to share about what we can do for our environment and especially now that we want to make a green movement Indonesia, an environmental foundation, hopefully many people are willing to support the program so it can run".

Perhaps for the latter, please Tasya you can give a message or invite the listeners, a message to keep the environment and also the soils...

Insert 10:

"Hello I'm Tasya Kamila. I would like to invite all friends not to pollute our soils and let's live in a friendly manner towards the environment, starting from ourself: start at home, from small things like do not throw the garbage carelessly, manage waste by reducing, reusing and recycling and use compost fertilizers instead of chemical fertilizers when planting."

Alright Tasya, thank you for your spare time to share stories and experiences as an ambassador of environment with all our listeners.

Listeners ... nature and environment is a place to live life for all of us. Therefore it is proper we keep the earth from all forms of environmental damage.

The people around the world depend on soils. The quality of soils affects the human life on earth today and in the future. Therefore let us keep the soil from pollution by implementing the living culture of friendly environment.

I'm Noor Chasanah and I guided this interview. Thank you very much for your attention and please accept my apologies if there were any words that made you uncomfortable.

This program is presented by the Community Radio Network for Democracy (JRKDem).

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