INTRODUCTION

Five years ago this paper was presented in WIVS Conference: Indonesian Women and Crises: Past and Present; Opportunities and Threats, at the KITLV Institute, Leiden, Netherlands (December 9-12, 2000). This topic is still adhered to be discussed today.

The four diseases (malaria pneumonia, diarrhea and malnutrition) are commonly cause a worse health condition in Bamiem valley, especially to women and children. This condition is relatively the same in a region where women are to be valued less than men. The poor health condition among indigenous Irianese people (including Da-ni ethnic group) is mostly related to the community level who is still far behind development in all aspects, such as education, socio-economic condition, lack of information on health care, etc. Older women’s health reflects their life-long experience of discrimination, deprivation and neglect.

The older women of Asia-Pacific today, which is stated in Women’s and Gender Perspective in Health Policies and programmers (1999:1) faced similar situations of poverty, malnutrition, poor health care, physical overwork and unhealthy work environments in their younger years. This picture can also be found in Bamiem valley, where women’s lifes are loaded with economic burden. A significant loss of economic security for women in Bamiem valley is apprehensive on all that situations.

Furthermore, lack of economic security for women in Bamiem valley will be a serious condition during long dry season where people are in hunger. This situation becomes a serious consequence in the economic and political crises in Indonesia. Actually, in Bamiem valley the crisis has very clear picture on gender dimensions.

In connection with livelihood, daily activities and consumption in Dani people at Bamiem
valley are strongly defined by cultural definitions of status, role and position of woman in her family. This paper also demonstrates how women in Baliem valley use certain tactics during the crisis. They already had crisis a long time ago as a latent crisis before Indonesian crisis. This crisis is more crucial during and after Indonesian crisis. In fact, some of them could survive but their health condition was worse.

ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING, WEARING AND MEANS OF LIKELIHOOD

Baliem valley is located in the district of Jayawijaya mountain Irian Jaya (Papua) Indonesia, most eastern province. The area is very mountainous. The temperature varies between 14.4 and 25.6 degree Celsius. Because of the high altitude, it is rather cool for a tropical area. Rainfall is moderate and almost the same throughout the year, except for occasional showers in February and March (Kasniyah, 1997:11).

In general, the majority of the Dani peoples still live in the village, quite isolated. Most of the non-Irianese population live in the capital district in Wamena. Dani settlements are centered predominantly around the extended family. The Dani live in round, domed root huts (honay). The smallest unit consists of a male house, in which up to ten or twelve men live, and huts where the wives, children and other female relatives of the men live. There is also a long hut, where meals are cooked. The huts are surrounded by fence. The Dani traditionally wear virtually no clothing. Women wear shirts, while men wear only dried yellow grounds, called koteka.

The Dani are slash and burn agriculturist and because of the climate, it is possible to plant and harvest sweet potatoes throughout the year. The sweet potatoes are staple diet of the Dani. Besides that, for income per capita, women make vest and shirts as a mean of obtaining extra income. Sometimes they make it for themselves.

POPULATION, EDUCATION AND NUTRITIONAL CONDITION

The Dani people who live in Wauma village are divided into two hamlets, i.e. Wauma and Maplima. There are 40 osili (kampong), i.e. the unit of residence in extended family. The total population is 1268; they are low educated and uneducated, particularly in an old age groups. Many students in preliminary school drop out. The most important reason was poverty.

Malnutrition is high among children and mothers. The people give several reasons for this issue for example that men eat first, then children, and the last is women. It is quite common for Dani people and may be in other cultures throughout Indonesia that man eats first because man (father) is household chief. Values and norm in patrilineal pattern oriented likes Dani people is man should be valued to be the highest person in family power. For instance, when they have mutual cooperative work to open the new field, after they work in the field, they together do the bakar batu ceremony. In approximately two hours bakar batu finishes and men and women then open the traditional oven together. Women are responsible to distribute the food. Firstly, the guests who will receive the food secondly are men, thirdly the children and the lastly the women. Women always receive the food left over because they are the last person who receive food as daily routine and ceremony food distribution as determined by the tradition (Kasniyah, 1995:18). As mentioned by Levelink (1991:40-41) measuring the arm circumferences of women shows that malnutrition is worse during pregnancy and when women have more than one child. Factors that have negative influence on maternal nutrition are worked out. Furthermore, Levelink stated that women, especially pregnant women do not consume enough calories. They loose 100 to 400 kilocalories daily. There is also a shortage of protein of 10 to 40 grams. Unpublished paper of “Malnutrition Problem in Jayawijaya Regency II” from Health Official (Non date:1) reported
that result of the survey indicated that
malnutrition rate of under five years and
mothers in Jayawijaya regency were worse. It
is negative impact for health status and inhibit
the development of human resources in
Jayawijaya. Some specific factors influencing
the malnutrition in Jayawijaya are latent crisis
of food production due to unfertile soil, and of
work overload. These conditions were
complicated by less of frequency and variety
of dietary intake which was only two times a
day with quality of foods of poor quality.

FOOD PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND
CONSUMPTION

Sweet potatoes, being a vegetable tuber
is unlike the grain, which is cultivated by Dani
people. Sweet potato is the staple food for
people in the high land Jayawijaya, Papua.
There is only one kind of plant, which is planting.
A low cost processing plant was built using
local simple expertise and equipment. In
addition, the manpower still practice nuclear
family members, especially women (mothers
and young women). Sometimes in special job,
for instance, to open the new field or to engage
in planting a new field, they work on mutual
cooperation and men do it (Kasniyah, 1995:16).

There is a very distinct job distribution in
gender perspective as mentioned in slash and
burn agriculture practices and cultivation
technique. Slash and burn technique is man’s
job and cultivation is purely a woman’s job. This
source of income system from the beginning
in the past as, a long time ago up to in the
present, this system still exists in Ja-ya-wijaya
mountain areas. The subordinate woman
culturally has root in gender job division of labor.
This division is based on symbolic association
between woman with nature and man with
culture. In reality, in the research area, the role
division based on gender expresses an
unequalibrium because woman is subordinated
by man, as a gender imbalance. The
manifestation of gender imbalance is in
perception that gives a value and decision of
labor between woman and man. Nevertheless,
gender analysis on the economic activity can’t
be separated from analysis of family. Family
and economy are two institute which are
mutually in contact in the traditional system as
in Baliem valley. In their job distribution, woman
has full responsibility of work in the agricultural
field and in the household. The Dani women
have a heavy responsibility (Kasniyah,
1995:16). As also described by Hartati (1994)
the sorrow of women in Baliem valley is very
dramatic. However, in the reality they never say
die. They are always certain in doing their
activities. Women work long days and half-day
of their time is used for working in the field.

In food production, women’s physical work
load is very heavy. Their tasks consist of
planting, weeding and daily harvesting of food
in the field. Women take care of the children
and sometimes together with her husband and
the pigs. They collect drinking water and cook
the meals. In contrast, husband have job
irregular of collecting firewood, building or
repairing houses and fences and cultivating
field. One of the tasks of man is to clean and
spade the field. Men work together and usually
clean more than one field at a time.

Everyday women work in the field for
planting and harvesting sweet potatoes. Sweet
potatoes could not be stored more than two
days, so harvesting is done regularly. The
harvest gathered is for sale and family
consumption with their family at home. Sweet
potatoes are grouped in three kinds, i.e. (1) the
big sweet potatoes for sale, (2) medium size
variety used for daily meals, (3) the small size
variety used for animal food, mainly pigs.

The women also have the obligation of
providing food for their family. If their health is
worse, it will effect the whole family, especially
young children. It is necessary that female
relations will help the woman who is sick by
bringing food from the unirrigated agricultural
field for her family. Nevertheless, man never
do this. In this case, when I asked health cadre:
“why don’t you help or replace her when your
wife can’t go to the field? He said that “it is taboo if woman’s job is done or delegated by man. The other reason is that man can’t find the right potatoes as good as woman”. Similarly, with Levelink (1991:45-46) reported that man, who was interviewed, said that “If my wife does not go to the field, I will not eat that day. I don’t go the field myself, because I can’t find the right potatoes as good and as fast as she does. I am rather lazy”.

The Dani women can be reported that traditionally they eat and drink twice a day. This daily food in take doesn’t improve the situation. The staple food is only betatas or hapire (sweet potatoes). Usually they add the cooked leaves of potato plant. Dani woman eats an average of three sweet potatoes a day. The Dani eat in the morning before the wo-men leave to the field and in the afternoon, after they come home. Sometimes, their fields are far from home.

The woman cooks the meal for her family in the communal kitchen together with the other women. The food is also eaten there for women and children, but men eat their food in the men’s hut served by their wife. So, a factor that influences to the quantity of food is the distribution within the family. This cultural factors may also play a role in food consumption during pregnancy in quantity as well as quality. It is striking, however, that no taboos or restrictions were mentioned by Dani men and women in relation to preg-nancy, nevertheless pregnant women do consume enough calories and proteins.

Food can be made in two ways, either directly in the fire and ashes or in the cookpit. If potatoes are eaten, the Dani put the potatoes in the hot ashes. When there are also vegetables, it’s cooked in the whole, in the ground with hot stones (bakar batu). Women and children start eating right after the cooking pit is opened. A large part of the vegetables and the biggest potatoes are set a part for men. According to that diet, there is a shortage of calories and protein in the daily food of women, because of their one folded diet.

LATENT CRISIS OF FOOD

During the months of dry season, May-June, there was shortage of food, and almost no potatoes were on sale in the market. Quite a few men have just started cleaning field again. There are also months in which there is not enough food coming from the fields. Since, the Dani don’t store their food, and sweet potatoes can be kept only for a short time, there is hunger during these months. This situation regular in the dry season is a latent local crisis.

The latent local crisis was followed by the disaster of long day season in 1997/1998 where people in the high land of Jayawijaya mountain have crisis of food. They couldn’t cultivate sweet potatoes. They were hit by hunger. Many people went through hungry. Among them were reported died of starvation, however they didn’t know how to fight it. In addition, farmers in particular were careful in the management and very efficient on their food distribution and consumption. They eat only one time a day. Women have strategies to manage food consumption carefully.

The crisis is alternated with national crisis, which make more complicated thing to the hunger peoples. The GO’s help the people by giving them a kind of cassava food called gugik (Java) something like crude cassava flour, to replace the staple food in Jayawijaya mountain. This program is reported successful and change the system of food pattern.

The NGO’s (WATCH Project) also gives the improvement to decline the mortality and morbidity rates in Jayawijaya mountain by focussing on nutritional pro-gram related to general health program. This NGO’s program has been taking place until now to improve development in Jayawijaya mountain.

DISCUSSION

The traditional aspect of gender discrimination in Baliem valley discrimination was institutionalized within all usual structures of society: family, the economy, education and
cultural systems. However, it’s very easy to demonstrate the significant discrimination against women. Although, this may be partly true, there are aspects of current Dani society that encourage the continuation of this cultural tradition. They live modestly and depend on the natural environment.

Some specific factors influence the malnutrition in Jayawijaya. One thing is a chronic hunger as a consequence from a crisis of food production on the infertile soil and simple technique, overloading of work and problem with staple food of belonging to the tuber group likes sweet potatoes, and also less frequency, variety and quantity of food are lacking.

The impact of the crisis was in serious on women' malnutrition because woman (1) eat left over, (2) often go to the field all day without food, (3) work hard, (4) they miss sources of vitamins, fat and low in calory-protein. It is because quite common for sweet potatoes and potatoes leaves as daily meal. Livelihood strategies maintained by women, which adjusted with the consumption pattern for look out the latent crisis. The impact of that strategies are that particularly women in worse health because quantitatively and qualitatively food consumption were very lacking of nutrients.

In the past and until at present, Dani women are still apprehensive about the condition as a marginal group in gender dimension. Although, they are still in that situation, mainly they don’t care about the distinction because it is as a system in their tradition.

The daily meal substituted with cassava by GO’s has been reported successful. We know that there is a difference in cooking cassava and sweet potatoes. It is not so easy on the cassava cooking process for Dani women. They always use a simple way for cooking sweet potato before; only burn or sometimes it’s boiled. Nevertheless, Dani women should change suddenly on their patterns and food habits in different way. From the news, the planners said that the system change is successful. I wonder with successful program in order to change the pattern and behavior on daily staple food has to acquire a taste of food as of a socially and culturally process. The study on social and cultural influences on food habits and food consumption pattern of families in Indonesia (The Research Teams of Center for Research and Development Nutrition Institute for Research and Development Ministry of Health and the National Development Planning Board/BAPPENAS, 1986:25) stated that from history that those particular communities had maintained their food habits inheritedly for a long time. My question that “what is the appropriate strategy in improving food pattern in Dani people? The three most significant reasons of Dani women to be able to survive are (1) they don’t care and submissive, (2) they can’t do more and apathetic, (3) continuously catching the economic consequence. So, crisis is not quite necessary. Is it true? To whom they will protest? May be they don’t know, and how?

CONCLUSION

The important points make issues regarding women and crisis in Baliem valley that nutrition status worse. Particularly for women, some specific factors influencing in malnutrition are chronic hunger, overloading of work, problem with staple food, less of frequency, lack of variety and quality of food. The condition comes seriously during and after Indonesian crisis and the impact worsens the condition of women health. On the other hand, livelihood insecurity is the bad root cause of women health.

Improving nutrition program and behavior to change the food pattern should be taken into account to increase the health of women in Jayawijaya mountain. In the improvement, nutritional food should be added to supplement potato or cassava as a tuber group. The other consequences are subsistent change from the slash and burn agriculture to non-irrigated cultivation system. Behavior and technique...
system on food production and food cooking have to be changed in related to development program. To improve the program, it is necessary to study environment and socio cultural feasibilities in order to increase the potential region in dealing with economic decline, especially economic and political crisis causing exacerbation of social imbalance, and the disintegration threat.

REFERENCES