

Interview by Jemma Purdey and Ahmad Suaedy with Sumbangan Baja, Makassar, 25 October 2014
Phd, Geoscience, Sydney University, 1990 cohort



[00:00:03]	<p>Started his first degree in 1984 at Hasanuddin University (Unhas), in the Faculty of Agriculture, specialising in soil science. He was the best student and the rector offered him a job as a lecturer as soon as he finished in 1988. In 1992, after teaching for a few years, started his MA degree in remote sensing, mapping science and spatial planning at Massey University in New Zealand on an NZODA scholarship. Was also granted a Master of Philosophy with high distinction because of his marks and offered the opportunity to do a PhD but he wanted to go back to Unhas. He met his wife in New Zealand, an Indonesian student from National University (UNAS) in Jakarta.</p>	<p>Educational background; Early career; Studying in NZ; Family</p>
[00:04:35]	<p>When he came back from New Zealand he was involved in a lot of international projects using satellite data, because of his mapping expertise. He did that for two years then did his PhD in Australia. In 1998 he got two scholarships, one for Waterloo University in Canada and one for Sydney University but he chose Sydney (it sounded better and the Olympics were scheduled for 2000). He contacted Professor David Chapman who was well known for his work on satellite mapping.</p>	<p>International professional networks; Scholarships opportunities; Existing connections with Australia</p>

[00:08:23]	He had two children by then and his wife and children joined him after six or eight weeks. The older child was two and the younger just a baby, six months old. The whole family really enjoyed living in Australia. They lived in a flat with other families, some Indonesian, some not. He studied in the Department of Geography, School of Geoscience, there were 30 PhD students from many different places. Because of his experience in mapping he was invited to lecture to the other students, he was paid the same as other lecturers on top of his scholarship. His proposal was very developed so he could teach, undergraduates as well, without jeopardising his own work. He was also appointed as an assistant in the IT section.	Family background; Living in Australia; Studying in Australia; Work experience in Australia
[00:12:47]	His proposal was submitted to the Department of Land and Water Conservation for funding and got enough money to employ students as research assistants to collect data, they could develop projects under his direction. The project was land use planning for the Sydney region. During his studies, the newly formed Olympic Coordinating Authority (OCA) needed a geospatial scientist to organise the environmental databases and David Chapman gave them his name so he joined the team in 1999 until the year after the Olympics.	Leadership; Work experience in Australia
[00:17:06]	He was worried about his thesis, at first, but his supervisor said it would be OK and he could delegate a lot of his research and just focus on the analysis and writing. For the Olympics he helped plan for and monitor the environmental effects of the Olympics – pollution, land clearance and use, water quality. It included the protection of endangered species. His job was to maintain the quality of the information and maps that were published to the public. The OCA was a national body, only in existence for those few years. After it disbanded the data went to other departments.	Studying in Australia; Work experience in Australia; Professional networks in Australia
[00:22:00]	He was one of the most productive students in the department because he published many international papers from his PhD and OCA work. This meant Unhas offered him a professorship soon after he arrived home. In fact, Sydney invited him to stay on as a lecturer after he finished but he decided to go back to Unhas. [Discussion about making the decision.]	Career; Returning to Indonesia

[00:25:48]	His wife had a good job as a site manager for Shell. So she could have stayed, it was a hard decision. The scholarship terms were that he return to Indonesia and he thought about his students at Unhas. They were in Sydney for four years. The children went to childcare and kindergarten. They enjoyed it and can still speak English. It was their first language and it was difficult for them to understand Indonesian at first when they went back to Lombok.	Family in Australia; Returning to Australia
[00:29:02]	On weekends they did gardening and had barbecues with the Indonesian community. Also Prof Sumbangan's parent-in-law visited for a few weeks and he and his wife took them to Canberra, Brisbane and showed them around. They had two cars. He also went to conferences, in Brisbane, Canberra and other NSW universities to present papers. He is still in contact and collaborating with people he met there. One of the lecturers from Sydney University comes to Unhas to lecture and they do research together.	Living in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia; Family in Australia; Professional networks in Australia; Ongoing connections with Australia
[00:32:06]	They came back in 2002, it was a bit difficult readjusting, at first, different facilities. He taught and did research. In 2003 he got substantial funding to form a research group for three years. In Australia they had all the technology they needed but it wasn't available in Indonesia so they had to adjust to what was available. He has continued to get funding from DIKTI and local government. There's money available because regulations must be supported by research and academic documentation and they have a good relationship with the authorities.	Returning to Indonesia; Career; Professional networks
[00:37:03]	Overseas funding? Yes, his deputy is the coordinator of the food and agriculture cluster of the Australia Indonesia Centre (AIC). They also have funding from Sydney University to do collaborative research (Sydney, Unhas and Bandung Institute of Technology) into soil mapping in southern Indonesia. [Discussion about AIC funding.] There is also collaboration with CSIRO and ACIAR.	International professional networks; Connections with Australia; Research collaboration

[00:40:55]	Prof Sumbangan's parents were originally from Buton, an island south of Sulawesi, but he was born on Taliabu, a small island in North Maluku, where his parents were cocoa farmers. He is eldest of nine siblings but he's the only one who went to university. There was only a primary school on the island but, fortunately, a junior high school opened so he went there. It was very new and small. He liked maths and writing.	Family background; Childhood; Early education
[00:45:45]	After he finished junior high school, the school had a graduation ceremony and, as the top student, he gave a speech about how he thought that would be the end of his education, and that he would become a farmer, because there was no other school and his parents were poor. [Emotional story about how a local businessman and his Dutch wife heard his speech and invited him to live with them and go to senior high school.]	Early education; Childhood
[00:51:34]	He was 15 or 16. He went to stay with them in a big city on Sanana island, he'd never been to a city before and it was scary. The couple had five or six children, two were about his age and went to the same school. The family liked him because he offered to cook for them, he liked cooking and had done it with his own family. And his parents sent him some pocket money when people from his village came to the island.	Childhood; Early education
[00:56:01]	He enjoyed school and did well, topped the class in the first semester. At first he felt strange being a village boy. When he was 17, after a couple years of getting top marks, he looked around for a better school. [Story about changing to a school in Sulawesi even though his foster family didn't want him to go, his own family didn't understand and the principle didn't help him. It was sad and difficult.]	Early education
[01:01:59]	He caught a sailboat to Bau-Bau, the capital of Buton island, it took seven days and he cooked for the crew. His uncle was there but didn't know he was coming and he had never met him before. Fortunately someone on the boat knew his uncle, because he worked at the port, and his uncle said he could live with him.	Childhood
[01:05:25]	[Story about getting into the best school in the city without the official letter and how he became the top student again.]	Early education

[01:08:22]	He got a scholarship to go to Unhas in 1984, his family couldn't afford to send him, but he knew some other students there. He's still in touch with his foster family from Sanana. He did agriculture because his family were farmers. He went home every year. He was top student in first year, in 1987 he was elected as a model student and was elected as the best alumni of 1200 in 1988. His dream was to become a lecturer and he was offered the job in front of all the graduates and their parents. Unfortunately his parents could not afford to come but his foster parents were there.	Scholarship opportunity; Undergraduate education; Family background
[01:12:29]	His siblings didn't have the same opportunities. Even now there is only a junior high school. All his siblings still live in the village and work on the farm. His family thinks he is very high up. There are only four professors from the whole province and none from his island.	Family background
[01:14:45]	When he was born, the village had only about 20 people, two or three houses. His father couldn't decide what to name him for seven days but then he had a dream where someone told him if he named him Sumbangan Baja the child would grow up to go away and really become someone. He still goes home to the village and has done research there.	Family background; Childhood
[01:18:21]	When he came back from Australia and became a professor, he was one of the youngest professors. He was also elected head of the department in 2005. His wife wanted to be with the children rather than work. After four years he was appointed as director of the Centre for Regional Planning until 2015. In early 2014 he was elected as faculty leader. The faculty has 140 lecturers with 40 professors, four of whom applied. Of the 40 professors, about half have studied overseas, from many countries, but Prof Sumbangan is the only one from Australia in his faculty.	Career; Leadership; International networks

[01:22:03]	The Olympics? Had tickets that they applied for a year before. As a member of the OCA he had a pass to go anywhere but not to the games so he had to get tickets for that. He saw the soccer and badminton, sat next to the players, the final was Indonesia and Korea and Indonesia won gold. All the Australians barracked for Indonesia. He played badminton in Sydney. He was president of the PPIA (Indonesian Students Association of Australia). There were a lot of Indonesian students in Sydney and the PPIA organised activities and events, especially when official visitors came to Sydney. He met some important Indonesians, some came during the Olympics.	Living in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia; Leadership
[01:24:38]	[Comparison of Prof Sumbangan's story to <i>Laskar Pelangi</i> and discussion about his daughter helping him to write his autobiography, he gives Jemma one of the books he has written, about Buton.] [Exchanging contact details.]	Biography
[01:33:36]	It's a big job being dean of the faculty. There's 65 admin staff, 140 lecturers and 2000 students. The term is for four years. Hobbies include badminton, he plays three times a week. He played hockey when he was an undergraduate, might have gone on to a higher level but went to New Zealand. Played hockey and soccer in Sydney, in mixed teams. Is still in contact with friends from Sydney, via Facebook.	Leadership; Recreation activities; Friendships with Australians
[01:36:32]	END	