

Interview by Jemma Purdey and Ahmad Suaedy with Inge Komardjaja, Bandung, 30 April 2014

PhD, Women's Studies, UNSW, 1991-1995 (AIDAB Scholarship)



[00:00:20]	Born [in 1946] and raised in Bandung with three younger brothers and one younger sister. Her great-great grandfather came from China and married a Javanese woman. Her father worked for the government electricity company and her mother was a home dressmaker. They lived in the centre of the city and Inge did all her schooling in Bandung and then did psychology at Padjadjaran University (Unpad). Then she worked for the <i>Research Institute for Human Settlements, Agency of Research (ed.)</i> and Development of Public Works (PU) in Bandung and did research into housing for low income earners, especially the social aspects.	Background; Childhood; early education; early career
[00:03:53]	In 1990, after 14 years of working there, her boss asked her if she wanted to study in Australia. She went to Jakarta, with some colleagues, for an interview and English test and was accepted. Previously younger colleagues had been given the opportunity but only two of 18 passed the test so this time older people were sent. Inge was the only one accepted from her office, along with two or three from Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) and two from another public works research centre. The idea of further study hadn't occurred to her but she had thought of traveling to the US.	Scholarship application process
[00:06:27]	In Bandung, AIDAB asked her to have a medical check and she was given the OK. Previous trips overseas were to Singapore and Japan for short visits. Inge had a bad attack of polio when she was eight but her mother was determined that she have as normal a childhood as possible. The doctor recommended she go to Holland so her father borrowed money so Inge and her mother	Scholarship application process; Childhood; Family; Experience of living with disability; International mobility

	could go. Inge was there for 14 months and her mother for six months. Inge stayed in an institution for disabled people. She could speak Dutch because she had been to Dutch school in Bandung.	
[00:11:23]	Back in Indonesia, in 1956–57, another doctor recommended she go to a foundation for the maintenance of disabled children in Solo. Inge's mother was western-orientated and thought anything Dutch was good so Inge was happy in Holland and didn't miss her family much. Inge appreciates that her mother brought her up in such a way that her disability didn't matter. Her father was softer.	Childhood; Family background
[00:16:16]	She stayed three or four months in Solo, but she didn't like it. She felt culture shock after her time in Holland and because her mother ran their home in Bandung like a Dutch house. The family wasn't religious but Inge's mother had been Pentecostal before converting to Catholicism. The children went to a Dutch Catholic school and much later they and their father were baptised. Inge left the Catholic Church almost 30 years ago and is now more Protestant.	Childhood; Family
[00:20:33]	School in Solo wasn't Dutch and had a very different culture and she didn't like it. Speaking Bahasa Indonesia was difficult in Solo. Inge's mother saw she wasn't happy and missed her so she came home to Bandung and went back to the Catholic Dutch school until the Dutch were evicted. Inge didn't feel disabled as a child, only when she got older.	Early education
[00:23:56]	Inge was 45 when she went to Australia. PU decided she and her two younger colleagues would study town planning. She thought she could investigate apartments for people with low incomes but after talking to staff at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) she decided to focus on women's studies for her PhD.	Arriving in Australia; Choosing field of study
[00:26:40]	In Sydney she stayed at International House and enjoyed meeting people from all over the world but also having her own room. It was close to campus. When she first arrived in Sydney she was taken to a hotel in Chinatown that she had to pay for herself. The next day her two colleagues visited and helped her get a room at International House and she stayed there for the rest of the time, four years and four months.	Living in Australia; International House
[00:30:13]	No one met her at the airport. It was Easter and her plane arrived early, at 4.00am, and the airline	Arriving in Sydney; Studying in Australia;

	staff phoned AIDAB so eventually a woman came. It was a PhD by research but she did a statistics course and found it very difficult because it was taught in English. Had done an English course soon after arriving but it wasn't very useful, her English improved through practise in Australia.	Challenges, language
[00:34:32]	Inge enrolled directly in a PhD. Did her research in Bandung. The topic was the meaning of home for women in Bandung. She had two supervisor's, a main one and a co-supervisor, Susan Thompson, who did not have a PhD but was strong in women's studies and town planning. Inge was a pioneer in women's studies at PU.	Studying in Australia; Fieldwork in Indonesia
[00:37:29]	In 1993 she went back to Bandung for six weeks to interview single women. It was quite difficult to find them, she asked everyone she knew to help. Inge interviewed about 30 women in different living circumstances. She could have stayed longer but wanted to enjoy her life in Australia.	Fieldwork in Indonesia
[00:40:55]	Learnt a lot from her supervisor about interviewing. Most women were quite open in their interviews but one spoke very quietly. Inge learnt to speak loudly from an English teacher in Australia. The interviews were quite personal and Inge was uncomfortable about this at times.	Supervisors; Mentoring; Fieldwork
[00:44:49]	At international house half the residents were Australians and half from elsewhere in the world. The dining tables were round in the hope that people would mix but the races tended to sit together. Inge sat with other Asians. She tried sitting at a white table but it didn't work. She made a good friend in Sydney, Maria, the mother of one of the residents of International House. They're still in touch now and chat on skype.	Living in Australia; Friendship; Ongoing connection with Australia
[00:49:54]	Attended Randwick Baptist Church. At first went to a white Australian church but didn't feel comfortable there and found the priest's accent difficult to follow. Randwick Baptist Church had an Asian prayer group. Now she goes to the International Church in Bandung. Found the Randwick Baptist Church through a Malaysian resident at International House, it had quite an international congregation.	Living in Australia; Community activities; international student network
[00:53:10]	Was physically strong in Sydney and could walk a lot and use public transport. Didn't need any medical help while in Australia. She learnt that if she tried to do things people would offer to help	Living in Sydney

	her.	
[00:56:34]	In 1991 Australia had more facilities for disabled people than Indonesia. When Maria invited Inge to visit in 2009 (and paid for her fare), the facilities had improved even more. Accessibility in Indonesia is not a priority compared to other issues, e.g. poverty. Inge has had articles published in Kompas and The Jakarta Post about it. Has done some research into accessibility through her office. [Discussion about accessibility initiatives in Solo.]	Living in Australia with disability; Returning to Indonesia; Friendship; Ongoing connections with Australia; Disability activism
[01:02:26]	Has retired now but would like to write a biography or a book about her mother. Was impressed by how user-friendly Sydney was for a disabled person compared to Bandung. At International House Inge applied to be a senior resident but wasn't able to walk up to the third floor or run to help people. She was impressed that this didn't affect her application.	Retirement; Living in Australia
[01:06:16]	Seniors got a larger room and were paid. The payment covered the cost of the room so Inge was able to travel to Darwin, Kakadu, Adelaide, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock, Cairns, Barrier Reef, Perth and New Zealand. Went to Melbourne and saw the <i>Phantom of the Opera</i> . Enjoyed those trips very much and other cultural outings.	Living in Australia; work experience in Australia; Travel in Australia; Australian culture
[01:11:28]	Some of the international students organised an international lunch for the professors. She got on well with her supervisors, Bob and Susan. Bob advised her to read Australian novels e.g. <i>The Road from Coorain</i> . Both supervisors gave good advice about writing.	International student network; Mentors
[01:15:29]	Kept a journal, but not regularly, and wrote letters home, but her family didn't keep them. Maria recommended she read <i>Wild Swans</i> and Inge was inspired by the women's stories. Still has it.	Mentors
[01:18:26]	When she came back to Indonesia she returned to work in the same section at PU. What she learnt in Australia wasn't applicable though and women's studies hadn't developed yet. People laughed at the term 'gender studies'. She wasn't asked to present her work but she was promoted to a higher level because of her PhD.	Returning to Indonesia; Post-scholarship experience; Promotion
[01:22:18]	At first she wanted to be more prominent in the organisation but it didn't happen so she concentrated on writing and decided to do a private study on disability and included disability whenever she made a presentation. If she'd known about disability studies when she was in Australia	Post-scholarship research and writing; Disability activism

	she would have included that in her thesis.	
[01:23:58]	Makes presentations in Indonesia and occasionally overseas, going overseas is not so easy because of red tape and the cost. In 2001 she was invited by a disability NGO in Belgium to present at their seminar. Applied to do research in Australia but it wasn't accepted because she was too old. Stayed in touch with Bob and Susan for a while but not now.	International mobility; international networks; connections with Australia
[01:26:37]	Finished her PhD on schedule, four years four months. It was hard work at the end but the campus English support unit helped.	Studying in Australia
[01:27:42]	It was a bit disappointing there was no interest in her PhD at home. She applied to a number of universities to lecture but none accepted her. There may be more interest now but not then.	Returning to Indonesia; Post-scholarship career
[01:30:19]	Awareness about disability issues is increasing e.g. there are building regulations to improve access for disabled and elderly people. But not yet for public buildings. Inge is involved in an NGO called BILiC (Bandung Independent Living Centre) founded by Ibu Yati and Cucu Saidah among others.	Disability activism; Activist networks
[01:35:45]	The problem is getting bigger as the population ages and disabled people are venturing out more nowadays, not staying at home. [Discussion about difficulties disabled people have using public buses and footpaths.]	Living with disability in Indonesia
[01:41:06]	One thing Inge doesn't like, as an elderly, disabled person, is whenever she goes to the supermarket, or hospital, she's always asked why she's alone. Soon she's moving into a studio apartment, maybe there will be other singletons living there.	Living with disability in Indonesia
[01:43:37]	What were the main things she learnt in Australia? An appreciation of language, and using it correctly, especially Bahasa Indonesian and English. What were the challenges? One day she sat in the front seat of a bus so she could get out quickly, if necessary, and an older woman glared at her for not giving the seat to her. The same thing happened on a bus in Germany (Inge got a research grant to go to Germany for three months). It's not the same in Indonesia.	Reflections on living in Australia; Challenges; International mobility
[01:49:40]	It was difficult to mix with white people in Australia so she mostly mixed with Asians there. Maria and her son were a special case. Keeps in touch with what's happening in Sydney sometimes on the internet. She remembers	Reflections on living in Australia; Challenges; Ongoing connection with Australia; Social

	Australia Day celebrations, fireworks at New Year's Eve and having dim sum in Chinatown. And International House had organised events like annual balls, trips to the Hunter Valley. Sometimes residents would borrow the car and go to a restaurant e.g. Korean, Thai. The food served at International House was mostly Australian food, some Asian.	networks in Australia
[01:54:47]	Has never been back to Holland, except in transit at Amsterdam airport on the way to Belgium. [Discussion about other disabled alumni] .Sometimes Inge is invited to ADS events in Jakarta and in 2007 or 2008 presented a paper. Is still interested but there seems to be less activities now.	Alumni network; Ongoing connections with Australia
[01:59:53]	The last time Inge met AusAID people was in 2011 or 2012 at a meeting organised by AusAID for disabled people, it was a half-day workshop. She was also invited to an alumni function at the embassy with Greg Moriarty. As far as Inge know's there's only four disabled Australian alumni. She likes that AusAID and ADS don't discriminate against disabled people. In 2011 she did some data entry work for them.	Alumni network; Ongoing connections with Australia
[02:05:09]	Inge retired in May 2011 and AusAID granted her funding to do independent research into disabled women. There was only funding for three or four months but she interviewed disabled women and involved colleagues from her office. She finished with a presentation at the Bandung Kompas office and invited the AusAID and ADS representatives. The grant was 50 juta and she could pay her colleagues and the interviewees. [Discussion about AusAID and ADS staff and recent changes.]	Retirement; Alumni network; Ongoing connections with Australia; Research funding from AusAid
[02:11:22]	END	