

**Interview by Jemma Purdey with Nurianna Thoha, Jakarta, 25 April 2014**

**MBA, Curtin University, 2002-2006**

**Australia Awards Office Jakarta employee, 2009-2014**



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| <p>[00:00:34]</p> | <p>Born in Tulungagung, East Java, but the family moved to Jakarta when she was seven. She started school there and did all her schooling in Jakarta. She is the sixth child, with ten years between her and her youngest brother and 20 years between her and her oldest sister. Her older siblings went to university in Bogor and Bandung so she grew up a bit like an only child. Her father ran his own businesses and her mother was a housewife. After finishing school she went to Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), majoring in Agribusiness. From 1987 to 1989 she studied an MBA at the University of Oregon on a scholarship from a private Indonesian university. Met her husband there, an Indonesian from Jakarta and IPB, he was also on a scholarship at Oregon.</p> | <p>Childhood; Family background; Undergraduate education; Scholarship opportunities; Studying overseas</p> |
| <p>[00:04:33]</p> | <p>That was her first trip overseas. She got 550 in the English test but it was difficult to understand the lecturers at Oregon. There had been no pre-departure training. Winter was cold, with snow, but it was a very good experience. When she came home she worked for the private university as a lecturer. She went part time when she had her first son. Her second son was born 18 months later. She was teaching at several universities, and working as a training instructor and a consultant, but just part time. Her mum minded the boys on the days she worked.</p>   | <p>Studying overseas; Living in USA; Early career; Family</p>  |
| <p>[00:07:45]</p> | <p>Her husband worked as a consultant for a range of companies. In 1998 she had her third son. In 2001 she saw an ad for the AusAID scholarships in Kompas and that families could go. She wanted to take her boys away from Indonesian education. They were 10½, nine and three. They were at a private school that followed the national curriculum but had to do too many</p>   | <p>Family; Scholarship opportunities; Motives to study overseas</p>  |

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|            | subjects and the content was rubbish and involved rote learning [examples]. She had lived with a host family in Oregon and saw that the education there was different.   |   |
| [00:12:11] | Her sons had been doing English classes with native speakers even before Nurianna saw the AusAID ad. She wasn't a civil servant so the competition was tough but she wasn't aware of that at the time. She and her husband had their own small consulting business, they had to close it down to go to Australia. Two of her colleagues had studied in Australia and couldn't finish, dropped out of the course, and Nurianna was worried that would happen to her too.  | Family; Application process   |
| [00:15:55] | She chose a university at Lismore from the IDP catalogue because it had the fewest stars and she thought it would be easier not to drop out. But she got a letter from the university saying that the course had been moved to the Gold Coast and she thought the Gold Coast would be an expensive place to live. She went to an information session about Curtin University and within two weeks the liaison officer had got her a letter of acceptance to do a MBA there. [Anecdote about being nervous to go to Curtin because it had four stars.] She left on 16 January 2002, on her own to start with, and felt reassured after talking to the director so the rest of the family joined her. Very glad they did, the experience of living in Australia for four years was priceless. [Description of how the boys benefited.] It was difficult for the boys at first but their classmates and teachers were very helpful. | Application process; Scholarship experience; Arriving in Australia                |
| [00:22:06] | The liaison officer took them to the housing department and they chose a house, near the city centre, not too far from campus. She lived with two other Indonesian women who also had families coming. The liaison officer gave them information about schools. When the families came the other women moved to share houses with other Indonesians but Nurianna wanted to mix with non-Indonesians so she stayed. The neighbours were mostly students from all over the world – the Maldives, Somalia, the UK and many others – and some had children. Her boys met them at the mosque. The family bought a car, it was much cheaper than cars in Indonesia.  | Arriving in Australia; Indonesian community in Perth; Family; Living in Australia |
| [00:26:44] | [Anecdote about how Nurianna found her husband a perfect part time job at the Clinical Education Centre who needed an HR consultant who could speak Indonesian, discussion about email and description of her husband's work.]   | Family; Living in Australia; Work experience in Australia                         |
| [00:32:59] | Went to the boys' school for assembly and  | Family; Friendships;  |

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|            | performances. Her husband took the boys to the mosque every second week, so they didn't miss school every week, and other families asked him to take their boys too. They became good friends with families from Malaysia, Italy, Somalia, the Middle East and many other nationalities. They went crabbing and fishing together. And the landlords' parents were very nice to them, took them out and invited them for barbecues.  | Leisure activities   |
| [00:35:34] | Her study went well, she had a very good supervisor and co-supervisor, and she worked hard. Worked in the library, or from second year her study room, to get away from home unless her husband was away with work. The boys rode bikes and skateboards together, joined basketball teams. The boys did well at school, the eldest was dux of year seven, the second got the Canning Medal for sport. They were often chosen for special things.  | Supervisor-student relationship; Studying in Australia; Family; Living in Australia                |
| [00:41:01] | Their Australian experience gave them a lot of confidence. The youngest won a junior high English speaking competition in Jakarta. [Stories about the boys achievements in a pageant and sport.] The eldest just graduated from chemical engineering at Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), is doing industrial engineering there and the youngest is in his first year of junior high. They think of Australia, especially Perth, as home.  | Family; Living in Australia; Ongoing connections with Australia                                    |
| [00:44:41] | In January 2013, when she was working for AusAID, Nurianna went to the University of Queensland, with people from the ministries. The boys keep in touch with friends they made in Perth.   | Ongoing connections with Australia; Professional networks  |
| [00:46:10] | While in Australia Nurianna was offered a job at the School of Business at ITB because they were opening a new campus in Jakarta for the MBA program in 2006. She was involved in setting it all up. The program was supported by Sampoerna cigarette company, the facilities were very nice, but the relationship only lasted for two and a half years, then they had to move out of the building. But after that more students came and the program has grown. Nurianna resigned four years ago but still teaches there part time and supervises postgraduate students. | Post-scholarship career; Professional network  |
| [00:50:08] | Nurianna wasn't looking for another job but she liked to attend alumni events and in October 2009 she met Michael Bracher who mentioned they were looking for an HR manager for their [Australia Awards] office. The hours were 8.00 to 4.00 which appealed because working long hours at ITB was exhausting and hard for family  | Alumni network; Post-scholarship career; Ongoing connections with Australia; Professional networks |

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|            | life. She applied and was selected from 200 applicants. Her role was to help the twelve ministries and five provinces to develop their human resources.  |  |
| [00:55:48] | The work involved helping the ministries to prepare candidates who were applying for scholarships, matching the people and qualifications to the ministries' priority development areas and presenting briefing sessions for applicants about how to apply for the scholarships and write research proposals. Also briefing sessions for successful candidates, workshops on soft skills for alumni and professional development activities for liaison officers, soft skills to help them manage the candidates and alumni.   | Professional networks;<br>Connections with Australia |
| [00:58:15] | Did the ministries' priorities change over time? Yes, every year. [Examples of this.] The liaison officers are ministry employees. The application form had 29 pages so was quite complicated for people. In the briefing sessions, Nurianna would go through the form page by page. The candidates have to have an IELTS score of 500. The PhD candidates are competing with the whole pool of candidates so having a good research proposal is important.  | Scholarships experience;<br>Application process      |
| [01:02:18] | How frequent are the meetings and talks about policy direction? It depends on the needs but there are two meetings a year with the liaison officers before the opening of the scholarship and after the review. And they are invited for two or three workshops as well. [List of the ministries.] The number they can send each year varies from ministry to ministry. Until 2013, 50 per cent were from ministries and AusAID projects, and the other 50 per cent were open category, non-key agencies, including other ministries. Now 70 per cent are from key agencies, GFAs (geographic focus areas, the provinces) and AusAID projects. | Application process;<br>Scholarships                 |
| [01:06:41] | Usually ministries working out of the key agencies are included in the targeted sector, like the ministries of Education and Religious Affairs. Usually Nurianna does a personal visit to the liaison officers to talk about the selection process and scholarship results. In the last two years there have been more visits to several ministries about the pilot projects, split site programs for masters, one year in Indonesia and one year in Australia, and short courses.   | Career; Scholarships;<br>Professional networks       |
| [01:11:01] | What kinds of candidates are wanted for the open category? Academics and people who work at private companies, people from ministries not under the key agency and targeted  | Scholarships;<br>Application and selection processes |

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|            | sectors. Anybody can apply as long as they fulfil the requirements. Usually there are about 4000 applications in total but less than 1000 from the targeted sectors. In 2010 or 2011, BAPPENAS launched the Spirit Program offering scholarships to the same targeted sectors and other ministries, to universities all over the world, with lower requirements and faster processing. That made it hard to reach targets.   |  |
| [01:15:06] | People from the key agencies who fulfil the requirements have a good chance of getting a scholarship. If not their portion is given to the open category. People don't understand what a small chance there is in the open category.   | Scholarships application and selection processes |
| [01:19:42] | Nurianna had to go back to academia because the Ministry of Higher Education announced that lecturers have to have a lecturer certificate endorsed by the university and DIKTI and if she didn't have that she wouldn't be able to return to be an academic. So now she works full time, teaching and doing research, for BINUS International, (Bina Nusantara University) that has MOUs with universities all over the world and the students study two years in Indonesia and two years overseas. The office hours are flexible and not too long because she doesn't have a management role. Also they offered her a higher salary than she had with AusAID. | Career; Professional networks                    |
| [01:23:41] | Australia Awards were a long-term employer and some of the staff had been there for more than fifteen years. BINUS also has many expatriots and there are courses delivered in English. This is a small campus, the international one, there are four other bigger campuses in other places. They have all kinds of faculties, and programs from kindergarten to PhD. The facilities are international standard, very clean and professional. It's owned by an individual and started in 1974 from a computer course in a garage.  | Scholarships; Career                             |
| [01:27:26] | Quality of students? Good, especially the international ones. There are internal scholarships for undergraduate, maybe for PhD too. Nurianna's husband works at a smaller private university. She did some lecturing and supervising and was an examiner while she worked for Australia Awards. Sees her boys every two weeks. In Perth they learnt to help with housework. They learnt about a healthy lifestyle there too. Her husband learnt to cook in America and that continued after they were married.   | Career; Family; Connections with Australia       |
| [01:32:21] | END  |  |